

Environment Committee
Monday 20th June 2016 at 7.30pm
All Saints Room, Civic Hall



Minutes



Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a true and correct record by the next meeting of this committee.

PRESENT

Councillors: Mr B Cooper
Dr A Nash
Dr J Nash (elected Chairman)
Mr B Service
Mr B Shaw (arrived 8pm)
Mr A Thompson

Officers: Mrs K Fiander (Town Clerk)
Mr T Hudson (Deputy Town Clerk)
Ms B Andrews (Outdoor Services Manager)

Others: One member of public – Mr B Dagless (Didcot Royal British Legion)

48. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr B Dagless of the Didcot branch of the Royal British Legion spoke regarding item 8 on the agenda – the potential designation of part of Smallbones Rec as a Centenary Field.

Mr Dagless highlighted the importance of memorials generally and recounted the history of the memorials in Didcot. On behalf of the Royal British Legion he recommended to the Committee that not only the immediate area around the memorial be designated as a memorial field, but that a wider area be considered.

49. ELECTION OF A CHAIRMAN

One nomination was proposed and seconded for the role of Chairman.

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Dr J Nash as Chairman for 2016/17.

50. ELECTION OF A VICE-CHAIRMAN

One nomination was proposed and seconded for the role of Vice Chairman.

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Mr A Thompson as Vice-Chairman for 2016/17.

51. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Mr A Dearlove and Mr J Louth.

52. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Members were reminded to declare any interests they may have on any item on the agenda in accordance with Didcot Town Council's code of conduct.

Councillor Mr A Thompson declared that he was an allotment tenant¹.

Councillor Mr B Service declared that he was an ex-member of the armed forces².

53. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED to agree the minutes of the 14th March 2016 as a true and correct record and that the Chairman sign them as such.

54. QUESTIONS REGARDING PROGRESS OF ITEMS IN PREVIOUS MINUTES

The following updates were provided.

Bee World: the person responsible for planting the garden had been busy meaning it had been temporarily put on hold, but the plan would be moving ahead in the autumn.

Dog bags: The contract from Tikspak was currently with the Town Clerk.

Didcot in Bloom: To move forward it would need a working group to be set up.

55. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Councillor Mr B Cooper asked why there had been a reduction in funeral receipts. The Outdoor Services Manager explained that this was down to the mild winter, which meant only half the average number of funerals had been held, hence the £4000 decrease in income.

The financial statements and budgets to 14th of June 2016 were noted.

¹ Clerk's note: There were no discussions concerning allotments and Mr Thompson remained in the meeting for the duration of the meeting.

² Clerk's note: This is a non-pecuniary interest and in accordance with the Council's code of conduct Mr Service remained for the duration of the meeting.

56. CENTENARY FIELDS

The Committee considered a request from the Royal British Legion that sought designation of the garden of remembrance area at Smallbones Recreation Ground as a Centenary Field.

Councillor Mr B Service noted the need to future-proof remembrance events in view of Didcot's growth and suggested that a greater area be considered. He suggested designating the land up to the footpath, which would allow the bowls club space to expand. He also noted the importance of the paperwork being agreed and operational by 11th November 2018.

Councillor Mr B Service put forward that the money come from the future projects budget.

Councillor Mr B Cooper sought clarity on the financial implications, which the Town Clerk reported to be legal costs and the fee payable to the Land Registry.

It was agreed to **RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL** that the garden of remembrance area of Smallbones Recreation Ground up to the footpath be designated as a Centenary Field and that funding should come from the Future Projects budget.

57. OUTDOOR SERVICES MANAGER'S REPORT

The Committee considered the Outdoor Services Manager's report that listed completed grounds works as well as allotment availability.

Councillor Mr B Cooper highlighted the thanks given by Oxfordshire Play Association for the helpfulness of Ms B Andrews, Outdoor Services Manager.

Councillor Mr B Service referred to the cleaning of the memorial to babies by the Co-op stonemasons as part of their community hours considering that some gratitude should be extended.

The report was noted.

RESOLVED: that the Chairman should write a letter of thanks to the Co-op and that officers write a press release about the activity.

58. APPLICATION FOR EVENTS

The Committee considered the report of the Outdoor Services Manager that sought the Committee's permission for events on Council-owned land. The Committee was advised that a number of the events listed had already happened, and had taken place with permission of the Chairman.

Two events had also been requested since the preparation of the report – a fishing competition at Ladygrove Lakes on 26th August 2016, and a charity fishing match on 28th August 2016.

Councillor Mr B Shaw arrived (8pm)

RESOLVED to approve all applications for events.

59. CHRISTMAS LIGHTS TENDER

The Committee considered the report of the Outdoor Services Manager following a previous decision to modernise the Christmas lights display within the town.

The report was presented to the Committee with a number of clarifications. The cost of Company A's rental option was £13,229 per year. The cost of a cherry-picker would be approximately £450 per day and required 2-3 days for setting up and taking down.

Company B's costs would be £14,912 per year.

Company C had two options, but the second option – involving larger motifs – was not possible due to being advised by engineers that they would be too heavy.

Councillor Dr A Nash expressed concern over vandalism and expressed keenness that the lights be insured.

It was proposed that the Council should approach businesses along The Broadway for contributions towards the lights and that a poster be made available to donors that showed their support.

RESOLVED:

- a. to accept the quote from Company C – Blachere Illumination, option 1;
- b. that officers should check if the Council's existing insurance covers Christmas lights;
- c. that officers design a poster and approach shops along The Broadway to seek donations towards Christmas lights.

60. WEED KILLING TENDER

The Committee considered the report of the Outdoor Services Manager following the Committee's previous decision to consider whether to take responsibility for weed control along Didcot's roads and paths as part of the Britain in Bloom initiative.

The Outdoor Services Manager advised that the relevant budget already had some costs ear-marked such as hanging baskets and flower beds. As such just one application of weed killer could be accommodated to remain within the budget.

Discussion took place around whether Oxfordshire County Council, as the authority responsible for weeds, would take action. Councillor Dr A Nash mentioned hearing about a path clearance by some locals to enable better access for a disabled user.

Further discussion took place over the effectiveness, opportunity cost and alternative ways of achieving the same outcome. Doubts were expressed particularly by Councillor Mr B Service, who shared his fears of raising expectations amongst the public if the Town Council took on this service. It would make removing the service difficult in the event that it proved ineffective, and his own experience was of short-term respite from weeds using weed killer.

It was proposed that one application be made as a trial of effectiveness. The motion was lost, with one vote in favour, one abstention and four votes against.

The Committee consider options for a community weed-pick.

RESOLVED that:

- a. the Chairman should write a letter to Oxfordshire County Council asking what action is planned concerning weed control on paths and roads;
- b. Officers should look into options for community weed-picks, particularly around groups to invite and methods to incentivise them.

61. EDMONDS PARK PAVILLION

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk and the Outdoor Services Manager that provided an update on the previous decision to replace Edmonds Park Pavilion and the storage block. In addition, the Committee was asked to consider funding ongoing fees.

Councillor Mr B Service updated the committee on the wider importance to have better ideas of costs and design in order to facilitate discussions with South Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council in the context of other developments in the town.

The Committee noted the architect's sketches.

RESOLVED to recommend to Council that funding be released for further architectural drawings and the payment of legal and other professional fees.

62. TOIL REPORT

Ms B Andrews presented the report, giving updated figures.

Councillor Mr B Service expressed thanks and stated that the issue was being managed very well.

The report was noted.

The meeting ended at 21:00

Signed _____ Chairman

Date: _____