

20th May 2024

Minutes of the proceedings of the **AMENITIES COMMITTEE** meeting held on this day in the **COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HALL, WOKINGHAM** from 7:30 pm to 9:25pm.

PRESENT

Cllrs: R Bishop-Firth, S Cornish, M Fumagalli, C Jamthe, T Lack (Chairman), M Malvern (Vice Chair), and N Nagella

IN ATTENDANCE

Amenities Officer (AO) – Fiona Sleaford
Grounds and Bloom Officer (GBO) – Marianna Pentek
Town Clerk (TC) – Katy Hughes

Note: Some items on the agenda were taken out of their sequential order, but for the purposes of the minutes have been recorded in original agenda order.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies were received from Cllr A Medhurst

MEMBERS' INTERESTS (Agenda Item 2)

None

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL OR PUBLIC (Agenda Item 3)

None

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 4)

Cllr T Lack highlighted the key aspects of the March committee meeting.

It was proposed by Cllr M Malvern and seconded by Cllr S Cornish, and it was

**RESOLVED
30852**

that the minutes of the Amenities Committee meeting held on 12th March 2024 (pages 16926 to 16928) be received as a true and correct record, and they be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

COMMITTEE BUDGET (Agenda Item 5)

Members receive a report of the committee budgets for the 2024-25 financial year. The Town Clerk gave a verbal explanation of the budget figures for the various Amenities Committee cost centres.

WOSEHILL BENCH CONSULTATION (Agenda Item 6)

Members received and considered a report from the Town Clerk summarising feedback received on a neighbourhood consultation carried out in April 2024 regarding a proposal for a new bench off Meadow Road.

During discussion, members noted that whilst some responses to the consultation had been positive, the majority had not. There were a number of concerns raised by residents in their consultation responses, regarding anti-social behaviour, littering and noise disturbance experienced from seating previously located nearby. This seating was subsequently removed.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the committee would not progress this bench request any further.

CHAIRMAN'S INITIALS _____



GRAFFITI UPDATE (Agenda Item 7)

Members received a report on graffiti removal carried out in April in the town area. Members expressed thanks to Cllr Andy Croy for undertaking this clearance work. The Town Clerk noted that Cllr Croy had undertaken further graffiti clearance work during May, however, details have not yet been circulated to members.

Cllr T Lack expressed thanks to Cllr Croy and other volunteers who carry out cleaning and clearance work to improve the appearance of the town.

VIKING FIELD COMMUNITY ORCHARD (Agenda item 8)

The GBO reported on the background to the Viking Field Community Orchard project, including details of an event and consultation carried out in Viking Field in May 2023.

Members noted that the overwhelming response to the consultation had been positive, and reviewed a summary of concerns raised during the consultation:

Concern raised:	Committee response:
Inaccessible due to fencing or orchard	Native hedging (a combination of 8 different UK native hedges provided by the Forestry Commission) will be used to create a protective barrier around the orchard area. There will be gated access provided within the fencing once it is established
Area bequeathed for dog walking	The area proposed for the orchard is not part of the walked path area so it is not anticipated that there will be any significant amenity loss for dog walkers
Disturbance by youth during evening / night	There are no proposals for seating or lighting so it is not anticipated that the provision of an orchard will create any additional likelihood of antisocial behaviour
Disturbance caused by other users	The orchard is located in public open space, and it is not anticipated that visitors to the orchard will generate any more noise than other users of the public open space
Noise issue if there is an outdoor class held in the orchard	Whilst we have local schools interested, it is expected that this would only be occasional visits, so it is not anticipated that this represents a significant noise disturbance
General noise disturbance of volunteers maintaining the orchard	The orchard is located in public open space, and it is not anticipated that volunteers maintaining the orchard will generate any more noise than other users of the public open space
Nut tree / bush concerns due to allergens	Any nut trees or bushes will be clearly marked
Altering the current view / scene from neighbours' houses	There is no automatic right to retain a view or outlook from a property
Safety issue due to lack of fencing	Native hedging (as detailed above) will be used to create a protective barrier 3 – 4 feet in height around the orchard area. This will allow visibility but protect the trees from dogs, deer etc whilst they establish.

CHAIRMAN'S INITIALS _____



	There will be gated access provided within the fencing once it is established
Fruit trees might be toxic to dogs	The quantity of fruit produced should not be sufficient to be toxic to dogs
Removal of existing trees in the orchard area	The GBO explained the reason why some trees in the area may be removed to allow the orchard to establish itself

During discussion, members noted:

- The orchard should support an increase the biodiversity of the area and monitoring and measuring of this will be carried out before and after the planting.
- It is anticipated that maintenance of the orchard will be carried out in-house by the grounds team and by volunteers, supported where needed by contractors funded with Bloom budget.

Following extensive discussion, it was proposed by Cllr N Nagella and seconded by Cllr R Bishop-Firth and members

**RESOLVED
30853**

to approve the planting of a community orchard, to include nut trees and bushes (clearly marked) and, as necessary, the removal of existing trees within the designated area to allow the orchard to establish.

WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) FUNDING REQUEST (AGENDA ITEM 9)

The Town Clerk gave a verbal explanation of CIL funds and the town council's CIL reserves and spoke about the request received from Wokingham Borough Council, to consider the funding of resurfacing work in a Wokingham Borough Council managed play park in the town area, located off Latimer Road.

The Town Clerk noted that in order to meet the council's Financial Regulations for spending a sum of this size, additional quotes for the work had been requested from the officer at Wokingham Borough Council.

The Town Clerk noted that as this was a CIL funding request, the committee was being asked to consider and make a recommendation to the Finance and Personnel Committee.

Following discussion, it was agreed that a recommendation in principle, to fund 50% of the cost of the resurfacing work from the town council's CIL reserves would be made to the Finance and Personnel Committee.

MONITORING REPORT (Agenda Item 10)

The Town Clerk reported that item 175 (Meadow Road bench) would be removed following the earlier discussions at this meeting. The Town Clerk noted that Viking Field Orchard and Market Place lighting will remain on the report to allow the committee to receive further updates.

AMENITIES COMMITTEE INFORMATION (Agenda Item 11)

Members noted the following:

CHAIRMAN'S INITIALS _____



- Councillors are asked to bring spending ideas for the 2025-26 budget to the July committee meeting.
- The replacement bench has been installed outside the town hall following a vehicle incident in 2023. The bench differs slightly from the original benches installed following the Market Place refurbishment, as that design is no longer available.
- Park Yoga sessions have been running for three weeks now in Howard Palmer Gardens on Sunday mornings and are proving very popular.
- Bee trail posts have been installed around the wildflower areas in Elms Field.
- The public right of way over the Tan House Lane bridge remains closed due to a delay in the delivery of the steps, as a result of the manufacturer going into administration. The Town Clerk will keep the committee updated as further information is received.
- A children's funfair will be held in Elms Field over the weekend of 30th August / 1st September 2024.
- An E-Vehicle event is planned for Elms Field on Saturday 21st September. This will be the town council working in conjunction with the My Journey team at Wokingham Borough Council.
- Grass repairs have been carried out at Elms Field as a result of vehicles damaging the turf during the May Fayre event.
- The committee meeting in July will move from 9th to 2nd July to accommodate a change in date for the July Full Council meeting.
- An Olympic themed sculpture created by Optalis is planned for Market Place over August and early September.
- Evendons Primary School held a colour run fundraising event in Viking Field on Sunday 19th May.

MATTERS TO PUBLICISE VIA SOCIAL MEDIA FROM THIS EVENING'S MEETING (Agenda Item 12)

The Town Clerk noted the request to publicise the following items:

- Elms Field Bee Trail
- Elms Field Funfair
- Park Yoga
- Viking Field Community Orchard
- Market Place sculpture

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC (Agenda item 13)

It was proposed by Cllr T Lack, seconded by Cllr M Malvern and it was

**RESOLVED
30854**

that in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted i.e. commercial, financial and personnel, it was advisable in the public interest that the press and public be temporarily excluded and instructed to withdraw.

A vote was taken, and it was unanimous.

ALLOTMENTS (Agenda item 14)

The Town Clerk gave a verbal report on the proposal for the recruitment of a new Allotment Officer, following the announcement of the planned retirement of the current officer.

CHAIRMAN'S INITIALS _____



Meeting closed at 9:25pm.

CHAIRMAN

CHAIRMAN'S INITIALS _____

