

# HUNGERFORD TOWN COUNCIL

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**MINUTES of the Recreation, Amenities and War Memorials Committee meeting held on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2020 at 7.00pm, remotely.**

**Present:** Cllrs Simpson, Winsor, Knight, Hawkins, Lewis, Gaines and Alford  
Also, Clerk and Admin Assistant and representative from Newbury Weekly News. District Councillor James Cole.

1. **Apologies for absence** – None
2. **Declarations of Interest** – None
3. **Agreement of minutes of meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2020 and update on actions:** Petunias were offered which Smarten Up Hungerford will find a home for. **Action:** Cllr Knight to update on electric work at Triangle Field. All other Actions were completed.  
*Cllr Winsor proposed the minutes as a true record, seconded by Cllr Hawkins, all in favour.*  
Cllr Knight entered.  
**Updated to-do list (circulated) Action:** Cllr Knight will check if remedial electric work has been done at Triangle Field and when the gas certificate and PAT testing is due. **Action:** Cllr Simpson will chase this. The narrow area outside the front of the St Lawrence's between the wall and the road needs volunteers to improve it. This is not urgent.  
Complaints have been received about the Tragedy Garden being unkempt. HTC has been unable to use volunteers during lockdown. **Action:** *Cllr Gaines proposed appointing a contractor to do a one-off improvement, weeding and pruning at a maximum cost of £500, seconded by Cllr Hawkins, all in favour.* The damaged wall at St Saviours may be repaired by the neighbour.  
**Maintenance list (circulated)** – The Clerk read through the list of work that has been completed. **Action:** The slabs at Croft Field should be moved straight away. Advertise them for collection.
4. **Play Parks** – Report on reopening of premises (refer to circulated report/risk assessment and actions) – It was questioned if we should be cleaning play parks periodically. The current Risk Assessment refers to covered shelters and tunnels in play parks being cleaned of which there are none. UV rays and weather are thought to limit the length of time the virus can remain on play equipment considerably.  
**Action:** *Cllr Gaines proposed finding out how often West Berks Council clean their play parks and include further reference to this in our risk assessment along with recommendations for the wearing of face masks in line with government guidance, seconded by Cllr Simpson, all in favour.*
5. **Croft Field Activity Centre**
  - a) **Reopening of premises and proposed fee increase (refer to circulated report/risk assessment and special hiring conditions)** – After discussion, *Cllr Winsor proposed the changes to the fee schedule, (providing the Clerk checks the figures show a 2% rise and adjusts accordingly) and a rate of discretion of 25%, seconded by Cllr Knight, all in favour.*
  - b) **Safety improvements for external electricity sockets** – *Cllr Simpson proposed a metal box with a combination lock is fitted around the socket in the gazebo, seconded by Cllr Hawkins, all in favour.*
  - c) **Receive Background report on internal renovation project (refer to private circulated report)** – The Clerk talked through the report submitted. Support was voiced for obtaining a plan from an

architect based on the brief to confirm to the Equality Act and particular support was voiced for installing a hoist. It was thought HTC should pay for any installation of soundproofing as part of the HTC project. Cllr Simpson suggested a roll out carpet. However, it was agreed the first steps would be to contact West Berkshire Council for financial help for these improvements. **Action:** *Cllrs Simpson proposed meeting with West Berks Council to discuss funding, and to form a working party, seconded by Cllr Gaines, all in favour.* Cllrs Knight and Simpson wish to join the working party and invite members of the community with an interest, such as the Town Band. Cllr Fyfe was suggested as a project manager.

Other ideas included purchase of the freehold, having two wet rooms, an open day to promote the facility, consultation with other users prior to change, approaching local companies to sponsor/showcase a new kitchen/bathroom, installing a climbing frame or other attractions in the grounds.

## 6. **Tree programme –**

- a) **Update from Plane tree site meeting** – A site meeting took place today. District Cllr James Cole also attended, and he advised an email from the Tree Officer confirms the discussion had. Permission has been given for the crown to be reduced by 30% and to see how the tree responds over the next 3-5 years. A greater reduction may be possible next time. It was noted it has grown considerably in 40 years. Two workers will be needed so the reduction made is even. **Action:** *Cllr Simpson proposed a quotation is sought and brought back to R&A in September, seconded by Cllr Hawkins, all in favour.*
- b) **Consider suggested actions (refer to circulated report and updated Tree Programme)** – Checks to the Bulpit War Memorial Avenue for deadwood are due and it was questioned when this will be done. The Clerk advised our tree surgeon is currently checking this and will provide advice and a quote for any works needed. **Action:** Feedback on this to next R&A. The Clerk talked through all the other work required which is shown as red in the Programme. *Cllr Winsor proposed carrying out all the work identified in the report at a cost of £2560, seconded by Cllr Simpson, all in favour.* **Action:** Instruct contractor.

## 7. **Installation of drinking water tap at Hungerford Football Club** – Cllr Lewis is working with our maintenance man to get a price to put a water meter in and to dig and connect. This will be put on hold until the current problems with the leak have been resolved. The Football Club has received a large bill due to a leak, but the water company has not been able to provide any plans of the pipework. The leak is in Bulpit Playground and the Football Club has requested permission to dig down to find the source. It was agreed this should not be done until they are sure they are digging in the right place to locate and fix it and providing ground is reinstated. Permission is required by the landowners. **Action:** Clerk to advise Football Club.

## 8. **Triangle Field**

- a) **Consider change to current management committee structure. (Receive report from Cllr Simpson)** – Defer as the RFC rent shown is incorrect. This should have risen by RPI but has remained static over the last two years. Also it needs to be checked if rates would be payable and the VAT situation is unknown. **Action:** Bring back to next meeting.
- b) **Consider quotation for maintenance of grounds** – Quotes are being obtained and if there is a more economical option the report can be altered to reflect this.
- c) **Update on plans to reopen Triangle Field** - Deferred
- d) **Consider quotes to improve security of entrance** - Deferred

## 9. **Bridge St War Memorial Gardens**

- a) **Update on quotes received to renovate gardens** – Only one quote was received in time to use for the member's bid application. Two conifers could be removed to improve the view to the stream and suitable types of plants have been recommended for re-planting. A raised bed is being considered. It is planned to do the work ahead of Remembrance Sunday. **Action:** Clerk to continue to seek quotes for comparison. Suggestions of contractors were given.
- b) **Update on Member's bid application – (This item was taken after item 6a)** District Cllr James Cole advised we should hear by the end of next week latest. He then left the meeting.

## 10. **CCTV – Consider installation of extra cameras at HTC premises (Cllr Lewis)** – **Action:** Cllr Lewis will forward his report to the Clerk who will approach our current CCTV contractors as it may be better to have a camera viewable in the office. We would require access to broadband at the CCTV locations.

11. **St Saviour's – Outcome of safety test to memorial stones** – Four headstones were identified as a concern. Two old headstones have been laid flat and one is being secured by our contractor. A letter has gone to the grave owner of the newest headstone requesting repairs. **Action:** Outcome of St Lawrence test to be added to next agenda.
12. **Health & Safety – Including any other concerns relating to Covid19** –An extra R&A will be held on 3<sup>rd</sup> August, on the same evening as E&P, to further discuss the Triangle Field management. This will then be ratified at an Extra Full Council on 4<sup>th</sup> August. A return to work plan for staff will be discussed at a part 2 at that meeting. **Action:** Clerk to email new set of meeting dates.

Meeting closed at 9.30pm

## REPORTS

### **Public Report**

**Report to:** R&A 21/07/2020

**Agenda Item No 4:** Reopening of Play Parks

**Background** Following government advice the play parks were permitted to reopen from 4<sup>th</sup> July, following closure due to Covid19. Guidance was taken from our H&S Consultants, insurers and BALC to ensure we opened safely and in line with the guidance.

**Objective** To keep parks open to public, providing it is safe to do so.

**Reference to Action Plan** Improve health and safety for residents and visitors. Promotion of facilities to encourage and maximize potential use.

#### **Current actions and recommendation**

Maintenance man will continue to check that signage remains in place and will review use of parks. Any safety concerns will be reported, and further risk assessments carried out if required. The parks will be shut if a risk assessment deems it necessary.

**Available budget (£s) including cost centre** – Salaries, Cost centre 4009

**Health & Safety and Legal implications** See attached risk assessment and list of actions completed

#### **Recommendation(s)**

As above.

**Signed:** Town Clerk 15/7/2020

### **Public Report**

**Report to:** R&A 21/7/2020

**Agenda Item No 5:** Croft Field Activity Centre – Reopening of Premises

**Background:** Following government advice the Croft Field Centre was permitted to reopen from 4<sup>th</sup> July, following closure due to Covid19. Guidance was taken from our H&S Consultants, insurers and BALC to ensure we opened safely and in line with the guidance. An approach to West Berks Council has been made to request a reduction or rent-free period. This is being considered.

**Objective** - To ensure reopening of the premises is financially viable whilst adhering to the additional safety measures required. In some cases, the cost of cleaning may exceed the cost of hire.

**Reference to Action Plan** Promotion of facilities to encourage and maximise potential use

#### **Options (including quotations)**

1. Increase our fees by cpi 0.7%
2. Increase our fees by 2% to help with extra cleaning costs and a reduction in bookings
3. Consider increases to various parts of the fee schedule or a minimum hire charge
4. Only hire to users when it is viable
5. Other suggestions

**Available budget (£s) including cost centre** – Income target £6000 Cost centre 1120

**Health & Safety and Legal implications** – See attached Risk Assessment and Special Hiring Conditions. These specify the extra work carried out to reopen the premises including extra cleaning (COVID19 cleaning is significantly more expensive). The premises can be quarantined for 72 hours but this limits the hire of the facility.

**Other information** – The premises is likely to lose significant income soon if it closes for the planned internal renovations.

**Recommendation(s)**

The best option based on the above information.

**Signed:** Town Clerk 15/7/2020

**Public Report to:** R&A 21<sup>st</sup> July 2020

**Agenda Item No 6:** Tree programme – Consider suggested actions

**Background** The tree programme has been updated and should be referred to alongside this report.

**Reference to Action Plan Aim** – Ensure public open spaces are well maintained (Medium to High Priority)

**Objective** Make safe trees that HTC is responsible for, particularly where adjacent to the roadside, in public open spaces and where damage is being caused to third party property.

Agree the following works which have been identified as the most urgent.

**Options (including quotations)**

**St Lawrence's –**

- Remove deadwood from very large Sycamore on the path between the clapper gate and the church. Ivy was cut a couple of years ago which has now revealed some deadwood within the canopy. This is an awkward job.
- Remove snapped branch from one of the Poplars around the back of the church. The cost for the above is £425
- Trimming back yews are previously advised by arboriculturist to take place in Sept. The cost quoted was £1200 (3 days work at £400 a day)

**St Saviour's –**

- Reduce the height of 2 yew trees by the entrance to reduce the weight of branches at the top which are flopping sideways and keep them more compact thereafter. They could be wired in if required afterwards. Remove Ivy from one of the Yew Trees.
- Remove and poison self-seeded Sycamore growing up through the Laurel hedge further up past the Yews.
- Cut back to the boundary an overhanging branch from a neighbouring Ash tree at the south of the churchyard. The cost for the above is £425

**Skate Park -**

- Small sycamores which are self-seeding at the skatepark need cutting out and poisoning with SBK stump killer. Some are growing in-between the fences and will cause damage if not removed. Cost-£85

**Marsh Lane Allotments -**

- Remove smaller Ash in the allotment hedge line roadside as one is showing signs of die back. (Check first it is our responsibility).
- Consider reducing back a willow branch which overhangs one of the plots. Estimated a day's work for the above £425

**Ash die-back**

Our tree surgeon has pointed out predictions are that we may well lose 95% of the Ash trees in the country at an estimated cost £15 billion. Notably there are many Ash trees at St Saviours, some large mature and some smaller self-seeded ones along the roadside. There is a large Ash at the Croft Field and at Fairfield allotments. There are some large Ash trees with some overhanging branches on the canal boundary at Marsh lane allotments and I am checking to see if these are the responsibility of Canal & River Trust.

- Assess how many Ash trees come under HTC's responsibility, keep a close eye on their condition and consider potential budget implications of having to remove affected trees. Consider plan for their

replacement. I have spoken with Town and Manor. They are felling their trees as they see evidence of the disease and are replacing the felled trees with species native to the area such as disease resistant Elm. I have requested any official guidance from West Berks Council.

**Available budget (£s) including cost centre** £10,300 in Ear-marked reserves

**Health & Safety and Legal implications** Liable for third party property damage and injury to members of public

**Consultation:**

Permission required from Tree officer at West Berks for work within a conservation area other than work to remove dead wood

**Other information**

Any removal of deadwood should be carried out whilst trees are in leaf.

**Recommendation(s)**

Best options from the above.

**Signed:** Town Clerk 20/7/2020