

Report of the meeting of the Open Spaces Committee
held on 6 May 2021 at 7.30pm
in the Severnside Suite, Thornbury Leisure Centre

Present: Cllr Clive Parkinson (Chair)
Cllr Guy Rawlinson (Vice Chair)
Cllr Chris Davies
Cllr Angela Symonds

Mr Mike Elcock – St Mary’s Churchyard
Mrs Judith Hurford – Tree Warden
Wendy Sydenham (Deputy Clerk)

(Cllr Jayne Stansfield – absent)

1. TO RECEIVE ANY APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Bob Griffin – indisposed
Cllr Helen Harrison – out of Thornbury
Cllr James Murray – work commitment
Cllr Pam Shipp – indisposed
Cllr Martin Trueman – other commitment

2. TO RECEIVE ANY MEMBERS’ DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Guy Rawlinson declared an interest in matters relating to St Mary’s Churchyard as a member of the Holy Mowers.

3. TO RECEIVE ANY REPRESENTATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the public present.

4. TO APPROVE THE REPORT OF THE OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 06.05.21 AND TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON ANY OPERATIONAL ISSUES OR MATTERS ARISING FROM THE REPORT NOT CONSIDERED ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

Cllr Guy Rawlinson proposed that the report of the meeting be approved. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Chris Davies and unanimously agreed.

The Deputy Clerk reported that the phone box that had been considered for adoption was already actually adopted by a charity based in north Bristol. It was agreed that the Deputy Clerk should write to the charity concerned to let them know that a Thornbury organisation was interested in the phone box.

5. TO NOTE ANY DECISIONS MADE OUT OF MEETING

The Chair confirmed that he had approved out of meeting expenditure for the use of an external contractor for grave digging at a cost of £700 and also approved annual works to pitches at the Mundy Playing Field (weed/feed/fertilise/overseed) totalling £1640. These out of meeting authorisations were noted by the Committee.

6. TO RECEIVE A GENERAL REPORT ON ST MARYS CLOSED CHURCHYARD

Mike Elcock updated the Committee on issues relating to St Mary's closed churchyard. No Mow May had been successful. Mowing had started again. Discussions were ongoing regarding the siting of new bees hives, although the best time for this would be the Spring. There may also be another person interested in keeping a hive in the churchyard. The Chair thanked Mr Elcock for the update.

7. TO RECEIVE A GENERAL REPORT ON TREE PLANTING FROM THE TREE WARDEN

Judith Hurford, the Tree Warden, updated the Committee on issues relating to tree planting. Planting had finished for the season and the focus was now on maintaining trees. She would be providing SGC with an updated database of trees planted and they may provide help with maintaining them. She confirmed that she would provide information on the proportion of trees that she had planted that were on SGC land and on Town Council land. With regard to Ash die back, SGC would be providing details of trees that were removed so that a replacement could be planted. Cllr Guy Rawlinson expressed concern regarding SGC's Ash die back policy. The Chair thanked Mrs Hurford for her update.

15. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON A MEETING WITH THE SGC COMMONS AND BIODIVERSITY CO-ORDINATOR AND DISCUSS THE WAY FORWARD REGARDING A LOCAL NATURE ACTION PLAN FOR THORNBURY (AGENDA ITEM TAKEN OUT OF ORDER)

Cllr Guy Rawlinson briefly outlined a recent meeting regarding Local Nature Action Plans and volunteered to take the lead in setting up a working group to look at how to establish a LNAP for Thornbury. The Chair proposed that the Committee agree in principle that Council should work towards developing a LNAP for Thornbury, that Cllr Guy Rawlinson lead it and that it would report to this Committee until the Climate Change group was established. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Chris Davies and unanimously agreed. Judith Hurford expressed an interest in being part of this group.

8. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE WORKING GROUP LOOKING AT TREE PLANTING ON COUNCIL LAND

The Chair updated the Committee on a recent working group site visit to Oakleaze Green to discuss possible tree/hedge planting to act as a natural barrier to vehicle access. It was agreed to plant a hedge along the Elmdale Crescent side of the Green, to include a lockable gate for Council staff to use and some narrower walkthrough areas to allow easy access to the green on foot. Judith Hurford confirmed that the largest pack available under the Woodland Trust Frees Trees Scheme would be suitable – the length of the hedge needed was 65m and the largest pack contained enough whips to cover 85-

100m. Some suitable fencing would be needed in order to protect the hedge as it grows (chestnut packing/wicker fencing at least 3 feet tall). Quotes would need to be sought for that and for the lockable gate, and this additional spend would need to be recommended for approval to the Finance and Policy Committee. Judith Hurford confirmed that one of two volunteer groups were likely to be able to do the planting under their own insurance and risk assessments. It was also agreed that residents neighbouring the green should be contacted to inform them of the plan and ask for any comments.

9. TO CONSIDER A REQUEST TO COVER THE COST OF ANNUAL INSPECTIONS OF PROPOSED FOOTBALL GOAL POSTS ON ONE COUNCIL'S OPEN SPACES

It was noted that the wording on this agenda item should read “on one of South Gloucestershire Council’s open spaces”.

The Deputy Clerk reported that one of the local police officers was organising the installation of a set of goal posts onto Streamleaze Green. Previously the Committee had noted this but requested that local residents be consulted before installation. The Committee had also agreed that Town Council staff would carry out regular visual inspections of the posts, at the same time as their visual inspections of the Streamleaze Green play area.

The police officer has noted that an annual inspection would need to be carried out by an external contractor and has asked whether Thornbury Town Council would be willing to cover the cost of this at approximately £150 per year. The Committee agreed that as the posts would be on South Gloucestershire Council land, they should be approached to cover the cost. If they were unwilling to cover it, Town Council would do so instead.

(Mike Elcock and Judith Hurford left the meeting at this point.)

10. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE REDEVELOPMENT OF CHANTRY ROAD PLAY AREA INCLUDING PLANS FOR CONSULTATION WITH LOCAL RESIDENTS

The Deputy Clerk confirmed that the tender was out for the Chantry Road Play Area with a deadline of 5 July 2021. Interviews would take place the following week with the aim of awarding the contract on 16 July 2021. A consultation process would take place during the second half of July/first half of August and the final design would be agreed in mid August. Works would hopefully start in the second week of September and be complete by mid October. The consultation would include an online process, and a face to face event, COVID restrictions permitting. Neighbouring residents would also be contacted with details of the works and the consultation.

11. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE ACTIONS FROM THE ROSPA INSPECTION OF COUNCIL'S PLAY AREAS IN APRIL 2021

A schedule of the remedial actions identified during the recent RoSPA inspection had been circulated and was noted. The Deputy Clerk confirmed that the high risk actions had already been completed and progress would begin on addressing the medium risk actions as soon as staffing levels allowed.

12. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON A MEETING WITH THORNBURY TENNIS CLUB AND CONSIDER ISSUES RAISED

The Chair reported on a recent meeting with the Tennis Club at which they outlined proposals for changes to the courts including the courts owned by Council. These proposals were discussed and it was agreed that as this involved a significant change to the Council's courts, it should be considered by full Council at its next meeting. It was further agreed that the Tennis Club be invited to give a presentation at this meeting, but that they should be informed that this would be done in public session.

13. TO CONSIDER A REQUEST TO SET UP A BOOKING SYSTEM FOR THE PUBLIC TENNIS COURTS

A request to introduce a booking system for Council's public tennis courts had been received and was noted. It was agreed that the Committee would explore options for this. The Committee also noted comments made in the request regarding the Council courts that are currently used by the Tennis Club.

14. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON A MEETING REGARDING PLANNING FOR A NEW SKATEPARK

The Chair reported on a recent meeting with a representative from Krunch and a skatepark user. The meeting had been productive and included discussion of costs and the footprint of a new skatepark (which should be no bigger than the area currently licensed by the Council combined with the area currently licensed by Krunch). The representative from Krunch will be providing information on other Councils that had gone through a similar process.

This issue was discussed by Committee and it was agreed to recommend to full Council that it agrees in principle to work towards a phase two skatepark to be owned and maintained by Thornbury Town Council, working with users and other interested parties, and in due course commit the necessary funds and resources. This should be noted in relation to budget setting for 2022/2023 as Council would need to allocate a realistic sum to the project. It was further agreed that a working group should be set up in due course to manage this project and report back to the Open Spaces Committee. It was noted that there was currently insufficient staff capacity to adequately cover this project and this would need to be addressed.

16. TO CONSIDER A REQUEST TO PLACE A MEMORIAL ON GREEN SPACE NEAR ROCK STREET CAR PARK

A request had been received from the Thornbury British Legion to place a monument on the green space between Rock Street car park and the Churchill apartments. This request was discussed and it was agreed that the Thornbury British Legion should be asked to investigate the implications of having a second war memorial in the town. It was also noted that there may be safety concerns related to gatherings around that areas.

17. TO CONSIDER COUNCIL'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE OPEN SPACES SOCIETY "GRANT A GREEN CAMPAIGN"

Information on this scheme had been circulated and was discussed. It was agreed that any changes of this kind to any of Council's green spaces should be discussed by full Council, but that in the meantime the Chair would discuss this out of meeting with Cllr Maggie Tyrrell, the Chair of the Planning and Town Development, in order to better understand the implications of such a change. The Chair confirmed that he would bring this issue back to a future meeting.

18. TO RESOLVE UNDER THE PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960 THAT THE PUBLIC AND PRESS BE EXCLUDED DURING CONSIDERATION OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS OF BUSINESS AS PUBLICITY WOULD BE PREJUDICIAL TO THE PUBLIC INTEREST BECAUSE OF THE NATURE OF THE BUSINESS TO BE TRANSACTED

Resolved.

19. TO CONSIDER QUOTES FOR NEW FOOTBALL AND RUGBY POSTS

The Deputy Clerk presented quotes for replacement football posts for pitch two at the Mundy Playing Fields. The Committee agreed to recommend proceeding with the lowest quote of £1277.81.

The Deputy Clerk presented quotes for replacement rugby posts. The Committee asked the Deputy Clerk to confirm how the previous posts has been funded. If it was not possible to establish this, the Committee agreed to recommend proceeding with the lowest quote for aluminium posts of £3226.40.

It was noted that this expenditure was not covered by the agreed budget and would therefore need to be referred to the Finance and Policy Committee with the recommendation that it be covered by reserves.

20. TO CONSIDER QUOTES FOR REPLACEMENT CEMETERY GATES

The Deputy Clerk confirmed that quotes were still being sought and this item would therefore be carried forward to the next meeting.