

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE WOODSTOCK TOWN COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE HELD AT 7:30 PM
ON TUESDAY 27th OCTOBER 2015
IN THE MAYOR'S PARLOUR,
WOODSTOCK TOWN HALL**

PRESENT:

Cllr P Jay	Cllr E Poskitt (Mayor)
Cllr Mrs E Jay	Cllr Mrs E Stokes
Cllr C Carritt (Deputy Mayor)	

Also in Attendance: Cllr B Yoxall and seven residents.

EC/25/15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Cllrs Mrs S Rasch and L Maybury.

EC/26/15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: None.

EC/27/15 APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Environment Committee held on 25th August 2015 were approved as a true record and were signed by the Chairman of the Environment Committee.

EC/28/15 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

- (i) Mrs Ulrika Parkinson addressed the Council about her continued concerns about the MUGA and her perceived lack of response from Woodstock Town Council.
- (ii) Mr John Hodges addressed the Environment Committee about issues relating to land adjoining his house in Brook Hill. The ownership of the land is unclear. Mr Hodges distributed photographs to illustrate his concerns.

EC/29/15 PLAY AREAS

The Environment received and considered a report from the Town Clerk. The report contained a recommendation from the Town Clerk.

RESOLVED that approval is given for a fence repair at the New Road Play Area providing that it is within budget.

EC/30/15 WATERMEADOWS

1. Ownership/responsibility of land adjacent to 48 Glyme Close: The Environment Committee received and considered a report from Cllr C Carritt about the ownership/responsibility of land adjacent to 48 Glyme Close. The weeds in the ditch are the main problem. Discussion followed during which it was noted that it would be inconsistent and might set a precedent if WTC undertook work on land that it did not own. Some Cllrs therefore suggested that Mr Hodges might like to contact OCC about the flooded gully as this is a highways problem and WODC to deal with the ditch. Other Cllrs considered

that the dispute about ownership had dragged on for years, could not be resolved without disproportionate legal costs and that therefore the threat of unmarked and unprotected standing water to health and safety should be directly addressed by the relevant public bodies sharing the cost.

Recommendation that WTC writes to all those concerned (OCC, WODC, Thames Water and the Glyme Close resident) setting out the facts and dangers and calling an early meeting to consider appropriate action on the area between the carriageway and the ditch, and the weeds in the ditch, sharing the cost, while side stepping the unanswerable question about ownership. The Environment Agency will be sent a copy of letter.

2. Report from the Town Clerk: The Environment Committee received and considered a report from the Town Council. The following matters were discussed:

(i) Dog Mess Bin: The recommendation of the Town Clerk for a dog mess bin by the Glyme Close entrance in the water meadows was received and considered.

RESOLVED (3votes for and 2 against) that a dog mess bin will be purchased and installed at the Water Meadows by the Glyme Close entrance.

The decision about a second bin near the top of the steps at Brook Hill was deferred until 2016/17.

(ii) Bridge repair and replacement chicken wire: The bridge that connects fields 5 and 6 and is used by the cows is in need of resurfacing.

RESOLVED that a contractor is asked to replace the surface of this bridge at a cost of £889 plus VAT.

The chicken wire that is installed at various parts of the water meadows is showing signs of wear and tear and so needs to be replaced.

RESOLVED that the Green Gym will be asked if they can remove the existing chicken wire and replace it with new on a like for like basis. If this is not possible a contractor will be asked to undertake this work as per their estimate.

(iii) Latest fish rescue: It was noted that the Environment Agency (EA) had recently rescued 5,000 small fish that had become trapped at the water meadows. They have apologised for inadvertently churning up part of the bank when doing so. This is the second fish rescue recently and another is planned. The EA has suggested that the fish are gathering at the water meadows as they migrate from the Blenheim Lake in an attempt to avoid predators. The EA plan to relocate the remaining shoals of fish to donor waters, subject to a sample number of fish being tested beforehand to confirm that they are healthy.

RESOLVED that the Town Clerk will arrange a meeting between WTC and representatives from the Environment Agency, Blenheim Estate and the Wychwood project to confirm:

1. Where the fish are coming from.
2. Whether anything can be done to deter the fish from gathering at the water meadows, whilst keeping them safe from predators
3. If the fish can't be diverted and are definitely coming off Blenheim Estate land, whether Blenheim Estate staff can help by routinely checking the situation and flagging up large shoals to the EA and WTC, rather than it being left to volunteers, the public and WTC contractors to do so.

(iv) Legal liability for the mill stream: The paperwork compiled by WTC that relates to the legal liability for the mill stream had been sent to a barrister recommended by Henmans Freeth for consideration. The barrister has provided an indication of the time required and costs relating to his providing WTC with a legal opinion.

RESOLVED that this item will be deferred until the budget meeting on 24th November 2015.

(v) Taking the cows off the Water Meadow: It was noted that the four Dexter cattle had been removed from the water meadows for the winter. The farmer hopes to supply additional cattle and bring these to the water meadows earlier in 2016, subject to the prevailing weather conditions.

3. Report from Cllr Mrs E Jay: The Environment Committee received and considered a report from Cllr Mrs E Jay. The following matters were discussed:

(i) Update on the possible contracting out of the management of the Water Meadows or offers of external help: Following an offer from a local contractor to manage the water meadows on behalf of WTC Cllr Mrs E Jay has approached various other organisations to try and obtain potential contractors who could submit two additional quotes. One organisation who would have been well qualified to undertake this work has declined the invitation to quote. The other organisations approached to date have lacked some of the necessary skills and experience required to manage this site.

ACTION: *The Town Clerk will contact other local clerks who are members of the Oxfordshire branch of the Society of Local Council Clerks to ask whether any of them can suggest suitable contractors.*

(ii) Light Tree work at the Water Meadows: It was noted that a local contractor will undertake regular coppicing at the water meadows between now and the beginning of February 2016 at the rate that had previously been considered and approved by the Environment Committee.

(iii) Heavy Tree work at the Water Meadows: Cllr Mrs Jay met with four contractors who are qualified to undertake the heavy tree work that is

required at the water meadows. They had been asked to submit their quotes in time for consideration at this meeting but none had done so.

ACTIONS:

1. *Cllr Mrs E Jay will provide the Town Clerk with the contact details of the four contractors.*
2. *The Town Clerk will contact these companies to progress the submission of the quotes.*
3. *The Town Clerk and Cllr E Jay will meet and prioritise the tree work and make a recommendation to the Council.*
4. *This matter will be an agenda item for consideration by Town Council when it next meets on Tuesday 10th November.*

Recommendation that the full Council accepts the quote recommended by Cllr Mrs E Jay and the Town Clerk at this meeting, and that the selected contractor is instructed to undertake this work as soon as possible after the Town Council meeting.

(iv) Dealing with weeds in 2016: Ideally meadows 4, 5 and 6 should be topped in the spring but there is insufficient budget to enable this to be done. It was noted that the cows had made a good impact on these meadows in 2015 and it is hoped that an increased number of cattle on the water meadows for a longer time period in 2016 could make a significant difference.

ACTION: *The Town Clerk will ask a contact recommended by the Wychwood project whether he can help with the topping M's 6.5. 4 and 3 free of charge.*

(v) Any other matters: Cllr Mrs E Jay updated the Environment Committee about the water meadows budget and her recommendations for items that should be considered at the 2016/17 budget meeting at the end of November.

EC/31/15

OTHER TREE WORK

- (i) Cllr Mrs E Jay said that a local resident involved in the Green Gym had kindly agreed to undertake the tree work requested by a resident who lives in Budds Close.
- (ii) It was noted that there is £500 available in the budget for emergency tree work on the OWL if it is required before the end of the year.

ACTION: *The Mayor will ask the volunteer warden who looks after the original OWL nature reserve whether he might be prepared to look after the new OWL extension as well.*

EC/32/15

LAND MATTERS

The Environment Committee received and considered a report from the Town Mayor about the following land matters:

- (i) Willoughby Way Hedges
RESOLVED that a letter will be sent to Mr James Newton, the Chairman of the Football Club, requesting that the club cut the hedge on the Willoughby Way side, especially around the street lights.

ACTION: *The Town Clerk will write to the Football Club.*

- (ii) Wall beside A40 parallel to Oxford Road Slip Road

RESOLVED that OCC will be asked to assess the wall and, if it is dangerous, to contact the relevant residents and to arrange for the repairs.

ACTION: *The Town Clerk will write to OCC.*

- (iii) Grass Triangle in Meadow Walk.

RESOLVED that WODC will be sent a map showing the location of the triangle and a letter reminding the district council that they should be mowing this area.

ACTION: *The Town Clerk will write to WODC.*

EC/33/15 **WOODSTOCK FAIR:** The Environment Committee received and considered an email from WODC and information about the Fun Fairs access obligations. WODC has asked WTC whether it would agree to send a joint response to a resident who had written to the District Council expressing concerns about access for emergency vehicles whilst the fair was in Woodstock this year. The Town Clerk had previously circulated a copy of the contract which the fair operator signs up to which stipulates what the access requirements should be.

RESOLVED that WODC:

- (i) Will be notified that WTC agrees to the proposed joint letter to the resident.
- (ii) Should take note of the terms of the licence with the fair and should enforce the contract with the fair operator accordingly.

EC/34/15 **SIGNAGE FOR THE COMMUNITY CENTRE AND OWL NATURE RESERVE**
The Environment Committee received and considered a report from Cllr C Carritt about the costs of standard signage to the OWL Reserve and Community Centre. The report contained three options for signage.

It was noted that a £5k budget had been submitted to the 2016/17 budget for signage. The EC noted that it favoured option 2 in Cllr Carritt's report which was for signage for the Community Centre, Recreation Ground, Play Area and Youth Club at an approximate cost of £1,000.

RESOLVED that this item will be deferred until the budget meeting on 24th November 2015.

The meeting finished at 9.15 pm. It was noted that the next meeting will be on **Monday 14th December 2015.**

Signed.....

Date:.....