MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

**HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HALL, MARKET PLACE, NEWBURY**

**ON MONDAY 13 MARCH 2023 AT 7.30PM**

# PRESENT

Councillors: Jeff Beck; Martin Colston; Nigel Foot; Chris Foster; Jon Gage; Roger Hunneman; David Marsh; Sarah Slack (Chair); and Martha Vickers (Vice Chair).

**In Attendance**

David Ingram, Community Services Manager

Caroline Edmunds, Community Services Officer

## APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were none.

**Not in Attendance:** Cllr Olivia Lewis

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**

The Community Services Manager declared that Councillors Jeff Beck, David Marsh and Martha Vickers are also Members of West Berkshire Council, which is declared as a general interest on their behalf and a dispensation is in place to allow them to partake in discussions relating to West Berkshire Council business.

1. **APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES**

**PROPOSED:** Cllr Jeff Beck

**SECONDED:** Cllr Nigel Foot

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting of the Community Services Committee held on 12 December 2022 are approved and signed by the Chairperson.

1. **QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

**Question from Mrs Sally Beckett**

“I fully understand that current regulations within West Berks obviate the need for railings or fencing around the play area in Victoria Park. By writing to the Town Council, I am expressing a concern, based on observation, about the safety of young children within a play space in which people are clearly exercising dogs off the leash.

If there is no way of enforcing owners to control or keep their dogs on a leash surely the sensible solution is to protect the play area?

Dog ownership has increased and also changed greatly over the last few years and certainly within the time since the Town Council made its decision about enclosing the Victoria Park play area”.

**Chairperson’s response:**

Thank you for your comments. The Town Council do take them on board and share your concerns regarding the safety of children. The Town Council do follow strict criteria to ensure the safety of park users. We follow guidance in line with ROSPA, the UK specialist body in parks and recreation grounds.

To ensure the upmost safety to park users we also complete an independent annual inspection. At no point has a recommendation come forward that the Town Council should consider the provision of railing or fencing around the parks play area.

The 2023 independent annual inspection has been instructed, the Inspector will be asked to make specific comment on the question you have raised.

The Annual Report will be issued sometime in late April 2023, the outcome and any recommendation will be Reported to this Committee in July 2023, where the question will be reviewed.

**Question from Mr Simon Kirby**

"Councillors, I am concerned that you cut your hedges to the middle of March when the RSPB advise not to cut trees and hedges in the main bird nesting season from March through August."

**Chairperson’s Response:**

Thank you for your comments. I can confirm that the Town Council’s new Ground Maintenance contractor has had a backlog of works in particular cutting back overgrown hedges.

Almost all of the Council hedges were cut during January & February 2023, a few remained to be cut in early March 2023. All were cut by 8 March 2023. Now that the backlog has been managed, future hedge cutting operations are likely to be in a period December through February.

The four formal hedges will be cut as required on a periodic growth basis.

The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1971 clearly states the responsibility held by anyone who carried out works where wildlife is or may be present, this applies 365 day a year, not just in the arbitrary timescales stated above.

The Town Council Contractors and its Operatives are aware of the Legal requirements set out in the Act. The Town Council is not aware of any breaches.

**Supplementary question from Mr Kirby:**

“It would have been helpful if you had this item on the Agenda to discuss, there are issues and more to be said on this”.

**The Chairperson thanked Mr Kirby for his supplementary question.**

**Response from Community Services Manager:**

This Committee will refer this matter to the Green Spaces Working Group for additional discussion.

1. **MEMBERS’S QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS**

**Question from Cllr Martin Colston**

“The committee of the very successful GreenFest in Hampstead Norreys have decided they are no longer able to continue as hosts and organisers. They are, however, very keen that the concept of GreenFest should continue, and indeed there will be a GreenFest event in April this year in Lambourn.

I had an information gathering meeting with the outgoing committee late last year, and I think Newbury would make an excellent location for a future GreenFest event. It could be centred in Victoria Park and we could potentially hold talks and debates in the Town Hall. It occurred to me that if it were held on the same day as the NTC Family Fun Day it could be an even better occasion, and some of the organising, publicity and logistics could be shared.

Will the Community Services committee please add a discussion on the possibility of hosting GreenFest in the future, possibly in 2024, on the forward work programme for later this year; and invite the original GreenFest committee to participate in the discussion?

**Response from the Chairperson**

The Committee will ask both Officers & the Climate Emergency Working Group to engage with the current GreenFest organisers to see how the Town Council can be of assistance going forward.

**Question from Cllr Martin Colston**

“I have recently received an email from Paul Walter, a former NTC Member. In it he informed me that when Peter Greenhalgh was Mayor, he planted Samaritans 40-year anniversary roses in the Peace Gardens on the Wharf. A plaque was unveiled next to the lovely Samaritans roses commemorating 40 years of the Samaritans and also the life of my son Toby Walter (because my wife was a Samaritan when he died in 1993). These roses no longer survive, and the plaque holder has rotten away.

Paul has requested that NTC plant some new roses in a public space, like Victoria Park, located such that the plaque in memory of his son can be mounted close by.

Please can the Community Services committee commit to agree a suitable location with Paul, and then to plant some new roses there and mount the plaque?”

**Response from the Chairperson**

The Committee will ask Officers to investigate the potential for an additional bed in Victoria Park, discuss the options with the Town Councils landlords, provide a budget cost for creating a new bed and ongoing maintenance.

Officers will also be asked to explore funding options to limit any impact of the Civic Parish precept changes for creating & managing this facility.

1. **CHAIR’S SUMMARY**

The achievements of the decisions for this Committee were noted. This includes the creation of the Climate Emergency Working Group organising Workshops and offering Climate Emergency Grants.

1. **GREEN SPACES WORKING GROUP – NEWBURY IN BLOOM**

**7.1** The minutes of the GSWG meetings of 12 January 2023, 9 February 2023 and 9 March 2023 were noted.

**7.2**

**PROPOSED:** Cllr Jon Gage

**SECONDED:** Cllr Nigel Foot

**RESOLVED:** To approve the Green Spaces Working Group Works/Consultation matrix as set out in Appendix 3.2 of this meeting.

1. **MARKET WORKING GROUP**

The minutes of the Market Working Group of 19 January 2023 were noted.

1. **COMMUNITY SERVICES MANAGER’S REPORT**

**9.1**

The progress made by the Community Services Team on various Newbury Town projects was noted.

There was discussion regarding The Wharf toilets refurbishment and how this fitted in with the Newbury Master Plan. It was requested by the Committee that the Community Services Manager will seek information regarding the Master Plan Steering Group (a West Berkshire Council led group) from the Chief Executive Officer.

**9.2**

**PROPOSED:** Cllr Martin Colston

**SECONDED:** Cllr Chris Foster

**RESOLVED:** To approve Market rent matrix as set out in Appendix 5.

1. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE 2022/23**

The Forwards Works Programme for 2022/23 was noted.

As noted in these minutes, it was agreed to add:

* Annual ROSPA report findings with regards to the Victoria Park play area.
* Outcome of discussions with GreenFest organisers

**The Chairperson, Cllr Sarah Slack expressed thanks to the Committee Members and Community Services Manager and the Committee Officers for their support and contribution over the last 4 years.**

1. **PART 2 – EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC (WITH EXCEPTION OF MARTIN KAVANAGH)**

**PROPOSED:** Cllr John Gage

**SECONDED:** Cllr Martin Colston

## RESOLVED: That under Section 1, Paragraph 2 of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business (agenda items 18 and 19) because publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

1. **BANDSTAND TENDER**

**PROPOSED:** Cllr Jeff Beck

**SECONDED:** Cllr Martin Colston

## RESOLVED: To accept the Consultant’s recommendation for Tender Report subject to Policy & Resources Committee approval for the release of an additional £30,000.

1. **CAFÉ PROJECT**

**PROPOSED:** Cllr Jeff Beck

**SECONDED:** Cllr Martin Colston

**RESOLVED**: To investigate options including value engineering and alternative sources of funding for this project for July 2023 Community Services Committee consideration.

**THERE BEING NO OTHER BUSINESS, THE CHAIRPERSON THANKED ALL THOSE IN ATTENDANCE AND DECLARED THE MEETING CLOSED AT 21:15**

**CHAIRPERSON**