MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

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

**ON MONDAY 13 DECEMBER 2021 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).

**Absent:** Cllr Olivia Lewis

**In Attendance**

David Ingram, Community Services Manager

Caroline Edmunds, Community Services Officer

## APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were none

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**

The Community Services Manager declared that Councillors David Marsh, Jeff Beck 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 Nigel Foot

**SECONDED:** Cllr Martin Colston

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting of the Community Services Committee held on 20th September 2021, be approved, and signed by the Chairperson with the amendment that Cllr Jeff Beck was marked as present but he did not attend the meeting.

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

**Question Received from Jayne French-Drayton, tenant at Wash Common Allotments:**

“Please may I ask the following on behalf of tenants on Wash Common Allotments? In view of the fact that many allotment tenants garden organically and of the adverse side effects of glyphosate weed killer, will Newbury Town Council consider banning it from being used in all areas under their administration, including all allotments? Are you aware that we have been interviewing tenants on site (in relationship to forming Friends of Wash Common Allotments)?

A recurring concern is the use of herbicides and pesticides. The ability for some chemicals to remain in the soil or to spread further than where it was initially intended for are being realised. Some people get immediate health issues from unintentionally inhaling the spray or indeed, vapour from the spray.

Have you seen these links including one about local authorities who have already banned weed killers? This background information is both useful and alarming, and recommended research.

 <https://people.csail.mit.edu/seneff/SamselSeneffGlyphosateIV.pdf>

 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3945755/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/may/13/monsanto-cancer-trial-bayer-roundup-couple>

<https://www.pan-uk.org/pesticide-free-towns-success-stories/>

**Supplementary question:**

“If you decide not to ban the use of herbicides eg, Roundup, please can you add to the allotment rules that tenants should avoid using chemicals when there is a breeze and to check whether neighbouring tenants who are on site do not suffer sensitivities/ adverse health issues in relationship to pesticides? Not only is glyphosate linked to food intolerance, birth defects, breathing difficulties and brain tumours but its so annoying when other tenants plants, some distance away, get damaged. Bees and other insects suffer with use of glyphosate. (Please see this article: https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/new-study-shows-roundup-killsbees) Marion Fenn, Steward Wash Common Allotments Jayne French Drayton, Friends of Wash Common Allotment

**Response from the Chairperson:**

“Before I give a response, can I draw Members attention to item 7.5 on the Agenda for this evening and this will cover the question asked”.

**Question Received from David Fenn at Wash Common Allotments:**

“Will you please take into consideration the following as to whether any change is necessary to the margins of the Wash Common Allotment site and the nature area?

Appendix 3 10b will consider a request regarding Wash Common Allotment. The NAS comments value nature areas. The WC site has many benefits including species of protected wildlife.

Regarding the margins of the site Allotment rule 2r states there must be a gap of a minimum of one metre from the boundary. The eastern end has a ditch. A gap is needed for maintenance and retrieving footballs which come over from Falkland School. The gap would be eroded if a change is made”.

**Response from the Chairperson:**

“Thank you for your question.  The operational matters for the Allotment site are delegated to the Councils Officers acting in the best interest of all parties.

The matters you have raised will be passed to the Officers for consideration”

**Question Received from David Fenn at Wash Common Allotments**

“Have committee members visited Wash Common Allotment site and seen for themselves the reasons why the eastern perimeter would be impractical for cultivation?

A recent tenant has highlighted the lack of light to their plot (more evident in the summer when leaves are on the large oak trees ). I was present when the rep from NAS commented about not having plots too earth trees.

Please can you not allow destruction of this bank, which incidentally, had the spoil from the recreation ground ditch put on in and was not supposed to be disturbed on the instruction of English Heritage - now called Historic England Trust?

**Response from the Chairperson:**

“Thank you for your question.  The operational matters for the management & use of the Allotment site are delegated to the Councils Officers acting in the best interest of all parties.

The matters you have raised will be passed to the Officers for consideration”.

**Question Received from Marion Fenn at Wash Common Allotments**

“Regarding bonfires on allotments could rules please state to adhere Public Protection Partnership guide?  If tenants are allowed to have a bonfire after six or dusk would it be wise to suggest they do so in an incinerator? It does not need the wording, ‘On agreed allotment site bonfire days (to be notified by the site steward”. How would a steward be able to predict te correct condions for a bonfire?

**Response from the Chairperson**

“Thank you for your question. Members will discuss the issues around Bonfires on Allotment sites in Item 7 below which should answer the question posed”.

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

There were none.

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

6.1 The minutes of the Meetings of the GSWG of 2.9.21, 21.11.21 and draft minutes of 9.12.21 were noted.

1. **COMMUNITY SERVICES MANAGERS REPORT**

Members noted the report presented by the Community Services Manager about the progress made by the Community Services Team on various Newbury Town projects.

7.1  **PROPOSED:** Cllr Martin Colston

**SECONDED:** Cllr Martha Vickers

**RESOLVED:** To approve the recommendation of the Green Spaces Working Group to forego the Britain in Bloom competition in 2022 and enter in 2023 and going forward.

Cllr Jeff Beck voted against the resolution

7.2 **PROPOSED:** Cllr Jon Gage

 **SECONDED:** Cllr Jeff Beck

 **RESOLVED:** To approve that the GSWG to organise a reformed Newbury in Bloom competition to be held during 2022 and make budget provision to do this.

7.3 **PROPOSED:** Cllr Martin Colston

 **SECONDED:** Cllr Nigel Foot

**RESOLVED:** To approve the amendment to the Allotment Rules as follows:

**Current rule:** Keep the plot clean, free from weeds, in a good state of fertility and well cultivated with at least 70% of the land cultivated for the growing of fruit, flowers and vegetables and no more than 20% allowed for sheds, poultry, or other landscaping.

**Agreed Amendment:** Cultivate in a way that does not cause a nuisance to other tenants, including:

a. Keeping paths free from hazards and ensuring that they are trimmed and kept neat.

b. The removal of long grass or detritus that could harbor slugs and snails.

c. Control pernicious weeds, these include weeds spreading via extension roots, or by generating new plants from growing tips in contact with the soil.

7.4 **PROPOSED:** Cllr David Marsh

 **SECONDED:** Cllr Roger Hunneman

**RESOLVED:** To approve the amendment to the Allotment Rules as follows:

**Agreed Amendment:** Not start any bonfires before 6 pm or dusk (whichever is earlier) and on agreed Allotment site Bonfire days (to be notified by the site Steward), not leave bonfires unattended and be aware of wind direction to avoid smoke being blown towards local properties

Be aware of the Public Protection Partnership guide (as amended) on smoke & bonfires:

<https://publicprotectionpartnership.org.uk/environmental-health/neighbourhood-concerns/smoke-and-bonfires/>

7.5 **PROPOSED:** Cllr Martin Colston

 **SECONDED:** Cllr David Marsh

**RESOLVED:** To approve the amendment to the Allotment Rules as follows:

**Agreed Amendment:** Only to use approved pesticides & chemical where alternative methods have failed in isolated locations for specific pest or disease eradication purposes in compliance with the H&S Executive guidance & code of practice <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pesticides/user-areas/garden-home.htm> for plant protection products, as amended.

Please read the product label carefully!

7.6 **PROPOSED:** Cllr Jon Gage

 **SECONDED:** Cllr Chris Foster

**RESOLVED:** To agree to the installation of a bench in Barn Crescent Lockdown Wood subject to the locations being acceptable to the neighbouring residents in a position away from the residential gardens.

To respond to the 3 local residents who raised an objection to the bench to let them know that once the bench has been installed, it will be reviewed in 6 months and encourage these residents to report any issues to the Council.

7.7 **PROPOSED:** Cllr Jon Gage

 **SECONDED:** Cllr Jeff Beck

**RESOLVED:** That with regards to the Grounds Maintenance Contract, Officers should concentrate on the outcome that would allow the Council

1. To Tender the works externally to achieve better control, quality & best value for the Council
2. To look at an option that allow key elements (horticulture) to be directly managed with the rest being contracted out as above.

The options should be worked up, costed and presented to Committee for debate at the earliest opportunity.

7.8 **PROPOSED:** Cllr Martin Colston

 **SECONDED:** Cllr Martha Vickers

**RESOLVED:** That Officers continue the discussions with Dinton Adventure Golf for Victoria Park and bring forward a finished proposal for approval at the next Committee meeting.

## WASH COMMON INVESTMENT CONSULTATION PROPOSAL UPDATE

The Consultation update and the returns made by the Public were noted.

##  BUDGET

9.1 **PROPOSED:** Cllr Martin Colston

 **SECONDED:** Cllr Nigel Foot

**RESOLVED:** To recommend the Budget proposal as set out in Appendix 5.1 & 5a to the Policy & Resources Committee.

9.2 **PROPOSED:** Cllr Martin Colston

 **SECONDED:** Cllr Roger Hunneman

**RESOLVED:** to approve the increase in costs to some of the public for services offered by Newbury Town Council as follows:

**Shaw Cemetery** – An increase in the charges for Shaw Cemetery by 3.1% rounded to the nearest pound.

**Allotment Charges –** An increase for 2023/24 for Newbury Parish Residents from **38p** per sq. metre to **45p** per sq. metre (equivalent to £11.25 per pole or 25 sq. metres).

**Market Charges –** An increase in the charge for a 3m x 3m pitch from **£12.70 to £15.00 per** day for traders who pay monthly in advance and the standard daily rate will increase from £ **£19.05 to £22.00 per** day for a 3m x 3m pitch. Larger stalls will be charged thereafter at the linear metre rate. Market cost (management & electricity) are rising, this increase is necessary to balance that rise.

**Football Charges –** An increase from **£67.30 to** £**70.00** (Excl. VAT @ 20%) for senior pitches and continue with no charge for junior under 18’s pitches. The Council is aware that the cost of organised football in significantly increasing (insurances, fees, etc) is there for looking at a balance between increasing the cost & making use unaffordable.

**Tennis Court Charges –** To retain the Annual Family Membership at the 2021/2022 level of **£45/12 months.** Play and play will increase from £3.50 to **£3.70** / half hour, floodlight use will increase from £1.60 to **£1.75** / half hour. The Council wished to encourage more Family Membership to increase usage of this facility

1. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE 2021/22**

10.1 The Forward Work programme was noted, subject to amendment following the outcome of the Council’s new Strategy being adopted.

1. **NEW COMMUNITY CAFÉ FACILITY – VICTORIA PARK**

The Committee thanked David Ingram for his continued hard work to date on this project.

A verbal update was received from the Community Services Manager.

**THERE BEING NO OTHER BUSINESS, THE CHAIRPERSON THANKED ALL THOSE IN ATTENDANCE AND DECLARED THE MEETING CLOSED AT 9:40pm**

**CHAIRPERSON**