

OLNEY TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of Olney Town Council held via MS Teams Monday 6th July 2020 at 7.00pm

Present: Jeremy Rawlings, Deirdre Bethune, Stephen Clark, Paul Collins, Desmond Eley, Joanne Eley, Peter Geary, Graham Harrison, Malcolm Messenger, Dr Sally Pezaro, Colin Rodden, Chris Tennant.

In attendance: Andrea Vincent (Town Clerk), Sarah Kennedy (Deputy Town Clerk)

Cllr Rawlings notified everybody that the meeting was being recorded to assist with the production of accurate minutes.

Public Forum:

1. A member of the retail community in Olney wrote in about the proposed seating in the Market Place. The retailer understood that the proposal has been voted against and expressed thanks from the majority of small retailers that were either completely against the idea or had too many concerns about lack of parking, litter, anti-social behaviour etc. It was felt by the retailer that the proposed scheme was more of a deterrent to shoppers than a benefit.

The retailer thanked the Town Council for listening to the concerns surrounding this matter and requested if the council wishes to support the businesses that any future contact is made directly by the council and not a 3rd party.

The retailer added that the lock down has added pressure to the retailers, and they are worried about their ability to survive. If there are additional help or finances are available, the retailers would like to work with the Council to come up with plans and ideas.

A personal thanks was expressed to Town Councillors and members of the community who have been dealing with the problems at the Bathing and Recreational areas. Particularly those that helped clean up.
2. A resident of Timpson's Row wrote in about the issues affecting the Recreational Grounds in Olney over the past few weeks. The resident shared specific concerns about parking in Timpson's Row and said that up to 50 additional cars have been parked in Timpson's Row during the hot weather spells. Most of which has caused obstructions to residents, properties, pedestrians and other vehicles. Parking restrictions need to be enforced i.e. only parking allowed in public car parks, clamping, fines. The resident wished for these options to be explored.

The resident highlighted that the gate between the Rec and Timpson's Row is what is luring the visitors to park at Timpson's Row. He pointed out that more signage is needed. As another deterrent the resident said that the access gate between Timpson's Row and The Recreational Grounds be closed (at least during the hot season).

Anti-social behaviour has been encountered and residents of Timpson's Row are aware that this type of behaviour needs to be reported to the police which they have

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been doing. There are fears that the more word spreads the more people that will visit the Rec.

The resident then thanked the Town Council for keeping Olney Town and the Recreational Grounds in wonderful condition.

3. Cllr Bethune read out a statement on behalf of a member of the public who had sent an email to Town Clerk on July 2nd. Town Clerk pointed out that she had not received the email.

The resident expressed concerns over the toilets in Olney remaining closed despite government providing advice that they can now open and issuing guidelines in how to do this. The resident highlighted some of the negative issues surrounding the toilets remaining closed for example anti-social behaviour with people urinating and defecating on or around our recreational ground, alleyways, residential/shop/commercial premises, health issues for children/animals, visitors/tourists and people with health issues being put off coming to Olney knowing that there are no public facilities currently open.

The resident then asked the Town Council to open the appreciated and much needed facilities with reassurance to the public that they will be regularly cleaned. The resident pointed out that the government has recently congratulated those towns who have now opened their public toilets again they have urged any towns who are keeping these facilities closed to open them straight away.

1. Apologies for absence

Cllr Whitworth – health reasons

2. Declarations of interests on items on the agenda

NB During the meeting if it becomes apparent that you have an interest in an item being discussed this must be declared immediately.

None stated.

3. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 8th June 2020

Cllr D Eley – Public Participation wording needs amending as it was agreed that Cllr Rawlings and Town Clerk, Andrea Vincent had been given the responsibility to decide on matters without reference to full Council or the Recs & Services Committee due to the lack of time and the need for swift decisions.

Cllr Rodden – Item 8 questioned the wording and asked for clarification on this point. Cllr D Eley expanded on this explaining that a working group had been formed (pre-covid) consisting of Cllr Bethune, Cllr Harrison and Cllr D Eley whose task was to focus on the public toilets and what we were going to do with them e.g. remodel, refurbish, extend or close, and just keep disabled facility open. Discussion concluded with Cllr D Eley stating the issue cannot be addressed at the moment and won't be progressed until we know where we are with Covid.

Resolved: June OTC minutes to be amended to the above statement for clarification.

4. To receive the Town Clerks report

The Town Clerks report raised several questions:

IT

Cllr Rawlings suggested that OTC do not consider BT for web connection. This discussion will be taken offline between Town Clerk and Cllr Rawlings and continued as who best to consider as a supplier.

Cllr Messenger – asked why the Amazon quote for IT equipment for the office is no longer available to which Cllr Rawlings replied that Amazon offers are time limited and payment upfront was not an option for Olney Town Council due to the costings exceeding the credit limit on the credit card.

Staffing

Cllr Rodden – Asked for clarification around the Cleaning Contract and which toilets/buildings it included. Town Clerk said that the contract is for all the toilets and for a regular deep clean of The Olney Centre with the Caretaker role carrying out ad-hoc cleaning responsibilities.

Cllr D Eley – highlighted the need to start generating income at The Olney Centre and asked what the current situation is with The Covid Group occupying Room 1 and 2. Cllr

Rawlings will talk to The Covid Group to see what plans are as The Olney Centre rooms will soon be required.

5. To discuss the anti-social use of the Rec

At this point it was deemed appropriate to bring forward Item 12 'To receive reports from Chairs of Committees and attendees of external meetings.

Cllr D Eley read out the report to Full Council.

Cllr Bethune asked for clarification around temporary barriers being put in place. **Cllr D Eley** explained that the barriers would be put in situ alongside the play area, around the MUGA to channel visitors in the right direction and to try to prevent walking on the sports fields.

Cllr Rodden asked how decisions are currently being made at Olney Town Council for example the alcohol prohibited signs that have recently been put into place or the fence that **Cllr D Eley** suggests needs to be put up at The Rec.

Cllr D Eley mentioned the alcohol prohibited signs on the Market Place were up some time ago and have been (unknowingly) removed. They need to be replaced. **Cllr D Eley** pointed out that the temporary fencing will not need to be funded by Olney Town Council as this is something we already have in storage.

Cllr Rawlings pointed out that these are decisions that need to be made quickly due to the current situation down at the Rec on hot days. **Cllr D Eley** repeated that the decision as to how to tackle these problems have been left with Olney Town Council to decide upon and manage, and that should be the focus of this discussion.

Cllr Geary presented 3 options:

- 1) Continue as we have been doing and clear up after visitors in the best way that we can as an expense to Olney Town Council plus open toilets at the Rec in the hope that they will be used.
- 2) Try to dissuade people at all costs – put a barrier across the car park on East Street to close it, which will impact on sports people needing to find available spaces and overflow parking in surrounding streets.
- 3) Charge for East Street car park.

Cllr Geary also raised concerns about the amount of alcohol that is consumed at the Rec and doubted whether each car of visitors would have a designated driver to safely drive home. Police breathalysing visitors would be helpful.

Cllr J Eley discussed that closing the car park would be at the detriment to various clubs using the Rec for various sporting clubs e.g. bowls, tennis, cricket, as they would have nowhere to park and would often be carrying heavy equipment.

Cllr Clark brought up again the issue of additional cars parking at Timpson's Row, Kitchener's Court and Clifton Court and whether the access via the Charity field can be closed. Cllr Rawlings mentioned that the access is a permissive right of way, which the Alms Houses maybe able to help with.

Resolved: To look at charging for the carpark in the peak season only with an aim implement this scheme next year (2021). In the meantime, to continue as we are currently doing. A working group was set up consisting of **Cllr Rawlings, Cllr D Eley** and **Cllr Rodden** to investigate carpark charging schemes.

Olney Town Council to also consider recommendations received in a letter from Olney Resident Mr D Cole.

As a member of the Alms Houses Committee **Cllr Rawlings** will look into the access from Timpson's Row being closed and report back.

6. To receive a report from the Mayor on Opening up The High Street

At June's full Council meeting it was resolved that Town Clerk and Cllr Rawlings would decide on the proposal to open the Market Place for use of seating for cafes/restaurants etc. Town Clerk sent a letter of communication to all the businesses around the Market Place and beyond although received no response in favour or against from any retailers. Police were also consulted and were concerned that this type of set up could attract anti-social behaviour once pubs reopen.

Cllr Rawlings has personally thanked Phillip Geach for his hard work in trying to implement this scheme.

Resolved: The Council will not go ahead with this project at this time due to a variety of concerns.

7. To review quotes for Winter 20/21 bedding plants

Town Clerk explained that St Neots Town Council, who have provided Olney Town Council with bedding plants for several years are no longer growing these. Therefore, we need to look elsewhere for bedding plants Winter/Autumn 20/21.

Resolved: Cllr Clark proposed the motion. Cllr J Eley seconded the motion and it was agreed that Alban Hill will be asked to supply the plants.

8. To approve the purchase of a mower for the Cemetery

Resolved: Approved

9. To receive a report from the Chair of Recs and Services on the OTC use of diesel

Cllr D Eley reported in the June Council meeting that the consumption of red diesel has dramatically fallen since June 2019. We need to install a gauge/pump/filter system to take an exact measurement every time diesel is used.

Resolved: To investigate installing a gauge/pump/filter system with a manual recording system in conjunction.

10. To agree to form a working group to negotiate and progress the allotment agreement with the Allotment Association.

Cllr D Eley informed all that the Recs & Services Committee have been discussing the formation of a Service Agreement with the Allotment Association and to move forward in partnership from October 2020 once agreed.

Cllr D Eley wants to formalise a working group to put together the proposed agreement to the Recs & Services Committee which will then go to full Council for approval.

Resolved: Working Group formalised consisting of **Cllr D Eley, Cllr Collins** and **Cllr Harrison**.

11. To review the schedule of payments

Cllr Collins queried the Rates charged by MKC for the Olney Centre. Town Clerk pointed out that the Rates are inclusive of both the Library and The Olney Centre.

Cllr Rodden – asked for clarification around HR costs ‘Crispin Rhodes’ Andrea stated that this particular cost related to the ‘project’ work and in particular around one member of staff, which is charged at an hourly rate.

Cllr Rodden also asked if we were IR35 compliant to which Town Clerk and **Cllr Collins** said we were.

Cllr Harrison asked about the Cawley Bins collections and costs. It was explained that the cost is based on the tonnage not the quantity of bin bags.

Town Clerk added that Milton Keynes Council have agreed to pick up any excess bins at the Rec entrance when required due to the ongoing problems with littering.

Resolved: Approved

12. To receive reports form Chairs of Committees and attendees of external meetings

Cllr Collins provided a report and explained that due to the unprecedented situation with Covid19 the income will be reduced. The year ending March 2021 with a budgeted income of £415,000 of which £216,000 was covered by the precept. Now we will not receive that income. The main area of concern now is based around the reduced income from Markets’ and room hire at The Olney Centre.

Unlike commercial and other not for profit organisations Olney Town Council have not been granted any business rate relief and neither has OTC been eligible for the retail, hospitality and leisure grant. Nor have Parish Councils received any local level payment

from central government. Town Clerk pointed out that NALC are now writing to government to pursue some kind of compensation.

Expenditure is running at £30,000 below the same level as last year.

Cllr Collins suggested contacting regular hirers of the Olney Centre to find out if they are planning on returning.

Associated costs arising with the problems at the Recreation Grounds.

An enhanced toilet cleaning regime will be costly when the toilets reopen again.

By October we should have a much clearer idea of how things are shaping up.

Cllr D Eley & Cllr Clark suggested marketing The Olney Centre for use of weddings to generate income.

Cllr Bethune asked why the toilets at the Recreation Grounds haven't been restored after vandalism. Town Clerk pointed out that due to the costs of replacing items and having to renew a contract with our current suppliers we have had to get 2 other quotes from other suppliers which we are in the process of doing.

Resolved: Cllr Rawlings to discuss future plans of the Covid19 Group who are currently using Room 1 & 2.

Cllr Tennant provided an update on Progress on Neighbourhood Plan sites

Site A (Lavendon Road site) construction of 50 houses. Work has started.

Site B (Warrington Road) outlined planning permission been granted but work has not commenced.

Site C (Osier Road) wasn't allocated for housing but has come forward in any event and construction of 66 houses is underway.

Site D & E (Land off Asprey's and Yardley Road) work has begun on site very large-scale archaeological strip of various elements of the site. This commenced in May.

The Reserve matters application for 250 houses on this site is in and live and there have been various supporting drawings and documents and submitted. Cllr Tennant has responded and made objections on behalf of Olney Town Council.

Site R Retail - (Sainsbury & Argos Store) is complete and open and operational. Planning application on Angle properties and McCarthy and Stone was taken to appeal. OTC made

representations jointly with MKC. The appeal was allowed by the planning inspector on the independent assessment on the marketing for the lack of interest in larger scale retail on that site and the perceived need for additional retirement living properties.

Site S – Stilebrook Road permission granted for new industrial buildings. These are now complete.

Neighbourhood Plan – **Cllr Tennant** is currently reviewing with a view to assessing the existing policies in the plan on delivery on sites (above) and compliance with the adopted plan MK and also the relevant national planning documents and guidance.

The one issue to ONP is that there are no referendums on new or revised NPs until May 2021. So, a window for refreshing the NP and to pick up the various developments that have come forward.

Resolved: Cllr Tennant to update Section 106 monies details and distribute to Cllrs for reference.