

**MINUTES OF THE AMENITIES COMMITTEE
HELD AT MELKSHAM TOWN HALL
ON MONDAY 23 MARCH 2009**

Present: Mr Jon Hubbard Mrs Terri Welch
Mr Vic Oakman Mr Simon White (Chairman)
Mr Chris Petty Mrs Pam Wiltshire
Mrs Louise Smith Mr Richard Wiltshire (ex officio)

Also in attendance: Councillor Sheila Wilkinson

2009

11. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Rod Eaton who was attending Melksham Without Parish Council's Annual Parish Meeting.

12. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

13. a) Public Participation

There was no public participation.

b) Matters arising therefrom

Therefore no matters arising.

14. a) Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of 26 January 2009 had been circulated with the agenda and the Clerk reminded councillors that the minutes were approved at the Town Council meeting on 23 February 2009.

b) Matters arising therefrom

Councillor Pam Wiltshire asked whether residents in Canon Square had been contacted regarding the remainder of works to the laurel in St Michael's Churchyard.

The Town Clerk informed the meeting that those residents in Canon's Square affected by the cutting back of the laurel bush had been contacted.

The matter of the large piles of chippings which had resulted as a consequence of the laurel cutting was also raised and the Town Clerk undertook to check this out with the Town Caretaker.

Councillor Terri Welch asked if the item regarding the Poplars in Bath Road car park could be kept in mind for a future agenda in the summer.

15. Town Street Signs

Councillor Geoffrey Carr had asked if an item could be placed on the agenda regarding the need for street signs in and around the town to be cleaned, painted or replaced. He felt that although this was a job for the District Council if the Town Council supported the idea this would add more weight to any complaint to the District Council regarding the state of some of the street signs.

A general discussion ensued when the following points were made

- This might be a job the Parish Lengthsmen could carry out, as they were due in the town shortly.
- Councillor Hubbard informed the meeting that until 1 April when the new unitary authority is formed no new street signs will be provided and those that are will need to have the new council crest on which will undoubtedly affect their early availability.
- Perhaps this could be added to the proposed regular inspection of the town by the Council's outside staff. However the Clerk explained that this is likely to be a time consuming job and he would be contacting councillors soon to highlight particular 'hotspots' in their wards to assist the Caretaking staff in this matter.
- It was noted the Avon Place Precinct Sign was in a poor state and was in need of a clean.
- That the car parking sign at the High Street/Church Street Junction adjacent to the Pound Shop needed attention, as currently it is obscured by the fingerpost signs.

RESOLVED: After discussion it was agreed the matter of how problems are reported/dealt with in the town needs further investigation. Therefore it was agreed to place this item on a future Amenities agenda following the formation of the new unitary authority.

In the interim it was agreed the Town Clerk would take action on the Avon Place sign and the car parking sign issues.

16. Prince of Wales Gardens

Councillor Simon White declared an interest in this item and did not vote. Therefore, Councillor Richard Wiltshire chaired this part of the meeting.

Councillor Simon White had provided a list of plants (**as attached**) that he felt would be suitable for this area and the estimated costs involved of both providing and planting which was £930. He explained the plants he was recommending were of a sensory nature by smell and touch.

The Finance Officer (Jean Harris) explained that there was only £241 in the budget for planting. However along with Councillor Sheila Wilkinson she was a former member of the old Melksham & District Gardens Society who still had funds available for a planting project in Melksham.

She explained that they would be prepared to take on this project with the help of a qualified gardener at a cost of £930. However after the first year they would need help towards the cost of maintenance also to be undertaken by a qualified gardener.

Jean explained that this would be a thank you to everyone who had supported the old Gardeners Society and asked if a plaque could be placed in the Prince of Wales Gardens once the work has been completed as a thank you.

Following discussion it was

RESOLVED: To accept the generous offer of providing and planting of the area and that the subject of ongoing maintenance be placed on a future agenda.

17. Tree in Town Hall Car Park

The Town Clerk had put this item on the agenda to update councillors on the latest situation. As requested at the last meeting he had made contact again with the Council's Insurers to reassure himself and the Council that a claim was unlikely to succeed.

He had done this and was satisfied that the insurance route was not going to prove beneficial. As a result he had ordered a replacement tree after consultation with the Tree Warden and accepted the offer of a donation to plant the tree from the Townswomen's Guild with a tree of their choice given the limitations of space in accordance with the Council's instructions. The tree was scheduled for collection the following day

Councillor Richard Wiltshire asked why a letter from the Chamber of Commerce dated after the Amenities meeting on 26 January had not been circulated to councillors. The letter stated that they had originally planted the tree.

The Clerk replied that he had made the insurers aware of the content of the letter and because it did not alter the insurance claim position he had thought it unnecessary to pass the information on to Councillors.

Discussion ensued in which it was felt that there is a concern that the tree ordered might not be substantial enough and could be prone to vandalism and that ideally a more substantial tree was needed.

RESOLVED: It was agreed the Town Council would put up to a maximum of £75 towards the money already donated by the Townswomens Guild to purchase a more substantial tree with a girth of approximately 3-4 inches and that the Clerk liaises with Councillor White on this issue.

Councillor Richard Wiltshire voted against this proposal and asked for his vote against to be recorded in the minutes.

Note: A proposal by Councillor Richard Wiltshire that the whole matter of replacing the tree be put on hold until more details regarding the Town Centre Improvement Scheme are available was not seconded.

18. Foresters Park Play Area

The Clerk sought permission to raise this matter as an urgent item. He explained that he had been contacted by a resident adjacent to the field asking for a higher fence to be erected between the field and her property due to problems being encountered by children playing close by.

The Town Caretaker had visited the resident and felt that no further action was warranted. However a further call for help had been received and the Town Clerk was now suggesting that two councillors might visit the site to provide a second opinion.

RESOLVED: That Councillors Oakman and White be asked to visit the site and report back.

19. Seat in Spa Road

Again the Town Clerk sought permission to raise an item which although was not strictly of an urgent nature he would like to obtain councillors' views on whether or not they wished to pursue a request he had received since the issue of the agenda.

This was that the seat in Spa Road opposite the entrance to the hospital could be moved further along Spa Road nearer to the bus stop, which had in fact been resited in recent years.

RESOLVED: It was agreed to contact local residents to see if they would be happy for the seat to be moved and if so that the seat is resited.

20. Payments for Approval

RESOLVED: With the exception of £40.99 (tree in Town Hall Car Park) for Hilliers Garden Centre payments were approved.