

**MINUTES OF THE AMENITIES COMMITTEE
HELD AT MELKSHAM TOWN HALL
ON MONDAY 26 JANUARY 2009**

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

Also in attendance: Councillors Sarah Cardy, Mark Griffiths and Sheila Wilkinson

2009

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. a) Public Participation

There was no public participation.

b) Matters arising therefrom

Therefore no matters arising.

4. a) Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2008 had been circulated for information, however they had been approved at the Town Council meeting on 15 December 2008.

b) Matters arising therefrom

Litter/Dog Bins: It was asked if these have been purchased.

RESOLVED: The Town Clerk informed the meeting that a quote for the new bins had been received today and will be passed to the Finance Officer to check budget availability, and if all is in order they will be ordered this week.

5. Laurel in Churchyard

Following concerns which had been raised The Clerk had produced a report (**copy attached**) regarding the recent work on the laurel bush in St Michael's Churchyard. He felt that correct procedure had been followed although he acknowledged, in hindsight, that the Chairman of Amenities should have been made aware of the situation.

The Clerk explained that further works to the laurel bush have been suspended while this matter is discussed. He had also spoken to the Tree Officer at West Wiltshire District Council who was happy with the work undertaken so far.

Councillor Richard Wiltshire stated that after reading the report he still felt correct procedure had not been followed and asked if the impact on wildlife had been considered by the Conservation Officer. The Clerk informed Councillor Wiltshire that the Conservation Officer had raised no concerns with him regarding wildlife.

Mr Ian Cardy, Tree Warden for Melksham Town Council attended the meeting to support the comments raised in the Clerk's report and explained to the Town Council why there would be little impact on wildlife in this area, particularly birds and bats.

Ian Cardy then provided the Council with a history of the Town Council's responsibility for the closed churchyard in St Michael's Church and asked that the Town Council clarify with the new unitary authority what their responsibilities will be, as at present it is the District Council's responsibility for maintenance of headstones, paths, walls and other structures and the Town Council's responsibility for grass cutting and trees. He also suggested that an annual survey of trees is carried out in future.

It was noted whilst some residents were happy with the results, some were not and had raised concerns regarding their loss of privacy if more work to the remaining laurel hedge was carried out. This related to residents in Canons Square. It was felt that the work should continue but that residents affected in this area need to be informed of:

- Why the work had to take place
- What the benefits will be once it is complete
- That any further work undertaken will be of a sympathetic nature.

RESOLVED: It was agreed that the Clerk arrange a site visit with concerned residents, the Tree Warden and the Contractor.

It was also agreed to write to the new Unitary Authority seeking clarification of what their and the Town Council's responsibilities will be in future, regarding the closed churchyard.

Councillor Sarah Cardy arrived at 7.30pm.

6. Poplars in Bath Road Car Park.

At the Town Council meeting on 15 December 2008 it had been asked if an item could be placed on this agenda to consider the above trees being cut back at the bottom (where large shoots are appearing) to allow the Police unobstructed views of the teen shelter and the park in this area, whilst they are patrolling the area in their cars.

Ian Cardy, Tree Warden informed the meeting he had been to inspect the trees, but felt that until the trees are in full bloom he could not clarify what impact there will be on visibility from the nearby car park and asked that this item be deferred until later in the year.

During discussion of this item it was stated that the District Council had been undertaking maintenance works to trees in this area for the past couple of weeks.

RESOLVED: It was agreed to defer a decision on this item until

- Investigations had been made as to whether work on these trees has been done.
- If not to allow the Tree Warden to investigate what growth there has been during the summer and how this impacts on visibility and report back to this committee.

7. The late Mary Salisbury.

Councillor Richard Wiltshire declared an interest in this item as he was a relative of the late Mary Salisbury and abstained from voting.

At the Town Council meeting on 15 December 2008 it had been asked if investigations be made regarding the possibility of placing a fitting tribute to Mary Salisbury in the Town Hall for people to remember her by, as she was such a well known person in the town and so fondly remembered.

It was asked that this committee give consideration to a suitable memorial. After a short discussion it was:

RESOLVED: To place a commemorative plaque next to her picture on the stairwell leading to the main hall. Councillor Sarah Cardy agreed to liaise with the Town Clerk on appropriate wording.

8. Allotments

A letter had been received from Selwood Housing in response to the Town Council asking that consideration be given to providing allotments on a derelict garage site in Church Lane.

Unfortunately Selwood Housing felt this site would not be suitable for a variety of reasons, but would consider other sites on a case by case basis.

RESOLVED: It was agreed to note this letter and welcome the fact that consideration would be given to the provision of allotments on other areas of surplus land on a case by case basis.

9. Tree in Town Hall Car Park.

The Clerk reminded councillors that due to incorrect information being given to the tree surgeon the tree in the Town Hall Car Park had been decimated. At a previous meeting it had been asked if the Town Council's insurers could be contacted to see if a claim could be made for the costs of removal of the stump and replacement tree.

The insurers had replied stating that unfortunately from the description of events they did not believe that the costs of the removal of the tree stump and replacement of the tree was covered under the terms of the Town Council's insurance policy.

Ian Cardy, Tree Warden explained the Townswomen's Guild had contacted him to say they wished to plant a tree in the town to commemorate a special anniversary. He felt it would be a good opportunity to accept this offer and replace the tree in the Town Hall car park with a more suitable tree.

RESOLVED: It was agreed the Town Clerk would contact the insurers once more giving further information. If there is no positive response after 2 weeks to take up the offer of a donation to plant a tree in the car park with a commemorative plaque and to ask the Townswomen's Guild what type of tree they would like given the limitations of space. The Tree Warden recommended a Genko.

10. Payments for Approval.

RESOLVED: Payments were approved.