



CHIPPENHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Improving the quality of town life

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Minutes of a meeting of the Amenities, Culture and Leisure Committee held at the Neeld on 02 June 2021 at 7pm.

Councillors present: Desna Allen
Jenny Budgell
Matthew Short
Angie Litvak-Watson
James Bradbury
Robert Giles
Liz Alstrom
Kathryn MacDermid
Nina Phillips
Pete Cousins
Declan Baseley

Officers present: Mark Smith (Chief Executive)
Matt Kirby (Director of Community Services)
Lynsey Nichols (Head of Communications and Customer Services)
Michael Weeks (Democratic and Civic Officer)
Will Tidmarsh (Head of Environmental Services)
Jake Bailey (Arboricultural Officer)
Julie Hook (Head of Venues)
Kieran Moore (Technician)

Also Present: Councillor Nic Puntis
Councillor Andy Phillips

Public Present: There were 4 members of the public present

PUBLIC QUESTIONS There was 3 verbal questions and 1 written questions from a members of the public, which is appended to these minutes at **APPENDIX A**, the response post meeting are appended to these minutes at **APPENDIX B**.

Mayor of Chippenham, Councillor John Scragg in the Chair

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mary Norton

2. **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTION**

Councillor Robert Giles was substituting for Councillor Mary Norton.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

4. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

Councillor James Bradbury was nominated as Chairman by Councillor Matthew Short and was seconded by Councillor Declan Baseley and with no other nominations it was

RESOLVED that

Councillor James Bradbury be elected Chairman of the Amenities, Culture and Leisure Committee for the municipal year 2021/22.

Councillor James Bradbury in the Chair

5. **ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

Councillor Declan Baseley was nominated as Vice-Chairman by Councillor Pete Cousins and was seconded by Councillor Nina Phillips and with no other nominations it was

RESOLVED that

Councillor Declan Baseley be elected Vice Chairman of the Amenities, Culture and Leisure Committee for the municipal year 2021/22.

6. **MINUTES**

Councillor Nina Phillips highlighted an error regarding her surname under minute 68. It was recorded as Nina Powell, not Nina Phillips.

RESOLVED that

The minutes were to be amended and would be signed by the Chairman at a later date.

7. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

8. **TREE PLANTING POLICY**

The Arboricultural Officer presented the report to Councillors regarding the Tree Planting Policy.

With all in favour.

RESOLVED that:

The Tree Planting Policy be adopted.

9. **DOGS ON LEADS**

The Head of Environmental Services presented the report to Councillors regarding the Dogs on Leads consultation.

Councillors highlighted two additions to the survey.

The need to include early morning and early evening consultation periods in John Coles Park, this was due to dog walkers not walking their dogs at the hottest time of the summer and suitable question regarding how safe people felt in the park.

With all in favour.

RESOLVED that:

- i) Councillors agreed to the content of the survey proposed and it was delegated to Officers to include a suitable question regarding park safety.
- ii) Councillors agreed to the proposed methodology of the survey and delegated to Officers to ensure the survey in John Coles Park included suitable early morning and early evening consultation slots.

10. **AUDIENCE AGENCY SURVEYS**

The Head of Venues presented the report to Councillors regarding the Audience Agency Surveys.

Councillors raised concerns regarding the overall cost of the survey and the timing, with venues only preparing to reopen following the COVID19 pandemic.

Councillor Desna Allen proposed an amendment to the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Pete Cousins.

With all in favour

RESOLVED that:

The Audience Agency Survey proposal would be reviewed in 12 months.

11. **CHRISTMAS 2021 - COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES**

The Director of Community Services presented the report to Councillors on behalf of the Head of Community Development regarding the Christmas 2021 Community Activities.

RESOLVED that:

Councillors noted the report

12. **URGENT ACTION FORMS**

Councillors noted two Urgent Action Forms regarding decisions made under delegated authority by the Chief Executive in accordance with Standing Orders

RESOLVED that:

- i) Councillors noted the Urgent Action Form regarding the approval to proceed with the purchase of the new Vertidrainer at Stanley park.
- ii) Councillors noted the Urgent Action Form regarding the approval to proceed with the purchase of new a Utility Tractor

13. **ITEMS FOR COMMUNICATION**

The Youth Council should be asked to look at the Tree Planting Policy and be encouraged to take part in any appropriate planting.

Schools should also be contacted about the tree planting policy and sent information concerning the Christmas lantern making.

14. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next Amenities, Culture and Leisure Committee meeting will take place on Wednesday 28 July 2021.

The meeting closed at 8.03pm.

These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

Signed on behalf of the Town Council as a true record of the meeting.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX A

Public Comments and Questions

At the invitation of the Chairman residents made the following comments and questions:

Verbal questions:

1. For many years Chippenham has just been known as a commuter town, 10 minutes from Bath, 15 minutes from Swindon and an hour from London. The town centre is said just to be charity and coffee shops by many. 67% of people have to commute out of Chippenham for work while we have many business sites and premises empty. A survey said quality of life was 877 in Chippenham out of 1,372 places while Trowbridge came 118. Where would you put your business? .

The truth is so different to this but for some reason in the past Chippenham Town Council has not been proud of our town and heritage. Visit Wiltshire is supposed to be one of the sites for doing this. Look at the information for Salisbury, Calne and Swindon with their own tabs advertising everything they have to offer, then look for Chippenham - a museum hidden in the general part. Looking under the other towns you can see listings of shops, walks, history, restaurants, cafes and everything else they have to offer. Visit Wiltshire has been doing a great job of advertising as we come out of lockdown and the other towns have benefitted from this while Chippenham has not.

As I have mentioned at previous meetings I am happy to get involved and work with Visit Wiltshire or the Council to get our town the recognition it deserves.

Monkton Park - The website says you are improving it, nothing about how great it already is, the play areas, angling club, sailing club, foot/crazy/golf and tenth hole cafe, the kingfishers, herons, birds of prey, bats, small birds and butterflies. Families and friends playing ball games and picnics on the grass or many benches and tables.

Chippenham to Calne off road cycle path through scenic countryside, safe for families.

Walk along the canal to Lacock and then back through the fields behind Rowden.

A walk of the Civic Society Blue Plaque buildings, who would of thought the facade of Iceland was a notable coaching Inn, reminds us of how Chippenham was once a major stop on the route from London. The next time you pass by the central window of this modern store, spare a thought for Oliver Cromwell who in 1649 passed beneath its arched lintel, probably on horseback, seeking diner and refuge for the night at the White Hart Inn. Many others to see too including the offices used by Isambard Kingdom Brunel during the construction of the Great Western Railway.

A circular walk through Monkton Park, along the cycle path, past Harden's Farm (keep an eye out for owls, birds of prey, rabbits, pheasants and much more) through the fields, Baydon Meadow and St Mary's Street, spot the house from the opening credits of The Antiques Road Show, stop off at St Andrew's Church, then walk through the High Street looking up at the architecture, stop for lunch and explore the range of shops on offer.

Arts and Craft fairs King Alfred Hall

Folk Festival

Borough lands Westmead Nature Trail.

The Museum's monthly walks

John Coles Park, Leisure Centre, Neeld Hall events, Bowles club, Stanley Park, Birds Marsh, Vincents Wood and the Reel Cinema.

How about tweeting next week about coming into Chippenham for shoes - Clarks, Shoezone, Pavers, SportsDirect, New Look and Pep & Co, plenty of choice and everybody needs shoes. Need a birthday card - Card Factory, WHSmith, Wilko, Poundland and sections of other shops, Home and gift shops - Bay Tree, Paprika, Hand of Glory Antiques and Robert Dyas, Jewellers - F Hinds and David Christopher, Opticians - Specsavers, Haines and Smiths and more, Gardening - Robert Dyas, Poundland and Wilko, Supermarkets - Waitrose, Iceland and Tesco, Chemist at Boots for prescriptions and advice, Book shops - Waterstones, WH Smiths or why not try the Library for free books to borrow, Toymaster & Thorntons, Sports Direct, New Look, Refashion, The Works, Accessorize, Body Shop, Superdrug, Savers, Banks, Solicitors, Estate Agents, phone shops, funeral directors, florists, sweet shop, street market stalls, The Causeway - Edward and Alan Flooring. A lot of the shops cover many categories, I was surprised branded water filters from Robert Dyas when on offer are cheaper than Amazon or the supermarkets etc. Then plenty of places for lunch

I have been in contact with One Chippenham hoping to get the below on their website but unfortunately as they only have a part time admin assistant with many other tasks this hasn't been possible yet. I have volunteered to help add them, it is so much more than the only coffee and charity shops.

2. Congratulations to all councillors on your election.

Thank you for the chance to speak on the matter of dogs on leads in John Coles park. It is a pleasure to do so in person rather than via the computer screen.

I am a member of a group of dog walkers who prize the ability for our dogs to exercise in the top area of the fabulous John Coles Park (JCP), rain or shine, morning or evening, winter or summer.

You will see an agenda item on the ACL meeting this Wednesday on this matter. This issue has been on the agenda for the ACL committee since last September, so is worthy of a quick recap from our point of view.

We were surprised when, in September, the council passed a motion compelling all dog walkers to keep their dogs on leads with no consultation of park users, based on a small number of public complaints that have never been substantiated.

The council was surprised when a petition of some 900 names was raised to object, asking for a public, transparent, evidence based, consultation on the matter.

We were pleased when the council postponed the motion and proposed an online and face to face consultation, and, following input from the public and councillors, have improved the original questionnaire to include questions on whether the respondent is a Chippenham resident and how often they visit the park.

In comparison to the covid reconstruction challenges faced by Chippenham we believe that this is a minor issue, but material to us. We still believe that there is nothing broken that needs fixing.

We look forward to the results of the questionnaire being published and resulting evidence-based discussions on any proposed changes being undertaken in a transparent manner.

3. I have looked at the questionnaire and feel that it is far too confusing with too many options. I have a proposal for the questionnaire options as follows:-

- 1) Dogs on lead at all times in John Coles park
- 2) leave as it is (dogs on lead at all times in lower park)
- 3) Dogs on lead in all areas between May 1st and September 30th between 10.00 and 17.00

I believe dog owners are not looking for dogs to be off lead across all areas of the park and I don't think dogs should be excluded from the park completely. This gives 3 clear options.

Written Public Question:

4. Congratulations on becoming Chippenham Town Councillors and thank you for the opportunity to present on the proposed survey regarding JCP dogs on/off lead.

As most of you are new to the ACL Committee I would firstly like to update on why I am presenting on this issue. A huge number of park users, mainly dog walkers but not solely, were completely shocked that about 6 months ago a decision was taken unilaterally by the CTC to change the rules on walking dogs in the park without any public consultation or notice or any quantifiable evidence that there was ever a real issue that needed addressing and resolving. This upset many people for varying reasons that have previously been highlighted to CTC and also resulted in us instigating a petition with over 900 local signatures to get the decision reconsidered, which the CTC gracefully did pending further proper investigations.

This led to the decision to look at a survey to consider all park users, not just dog walkers, which we gladly welcomed as we are fully aware dog walkers are not the only users of the park and wish to make the park welcoming to all users.

The first suggested survey however we did not feel was fit for purpose and you are now being asked to consider a revision. This unfortunately still does not appear to be the best survey that could be presented and still has questions that appear to duplicate themselves or have never been asked for and are confusing especially for infrequent park users.

I would therefore ask that you carefully consider whether this survey is fit for purpose and will give reasonable, fair and transparent responses that are fully quantifiable and allow the CTC to make good decisions based on correct evidence.

With the many issues that the CTC have to look at and consider at these most difficult of times we wonder if this is an issue that actually needs fixing and that the status quo may actually be the best way forward.

I would also like to add that it was very pleasing that the Gazette & Herald reported last week that JCP has been voted the 4th most Dog Friendly Place in Wiltshire on TripAdvisor and it would be a great shame to lose this wonderful reputation by bringing in restrictions that don't appear to be required.

Many thanks for your time and your considerations.

Not part of the meeting

APPENDIX B

Written responses to public question asked at Amenities, Culture and Leisure on 02 June 2021.

Question 1

Thank you for your public question that you presented to the Amenities Culture and Leisure Committee on Wednesday 2 June 2021. Town Council Officers are currently engaged with Visit Wiltshire and Visit West, and your offer of assistance on this matter has been noted.

Questions 2,3 & 4

Thank you for your public question that you presented to the Amenities, Culture and Leisure Committee on Wednesday 2 June 2021. At the meeting Councillors resolved to undertake a Dogs on Leads Public Consultation, the results of which will be presented to Councillors at a future meeting of the committee.