



CHIPPENHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Amenities, Culture and Leisure Committee held at the Town Hall on 08 September 2021 at 7pm.

Councillors present: Desna Allen
Declan Baseley
James Bradbury (Chairman)
Angie Litvak-Watson
David Poole
Liz Alstrom
Jenny Budgetell
Pete Cousins
Kathryn MacDermid
Matthew Short

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)
Jess Mantell (Democratic Services Officer)
Paul Harvey (Head of Leisure Services)
Maisie Simpson (Marketing Assistant)
Kieran Moore (Technician)

Public Present: There were 3 members of the public present

Also Present: Councillor Gemma Grimes

PUBLIC QUESTIONS There was 2 verbal questions and 1 written question from 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**.

15. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Robert Giles due to illness, Mary Norton due to illness and Nina Phillips no reason given.

16. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTION

Councillor David Poole was substituting for Councillor Nina Phillips.

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Liz Alstrom declared an interest in the Dogs On / Off Leads item as a dog owner who walks their dog in John Coles Park.

18. **MINUTES**

It was agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 02 June 2021 were a correct record, they were proposed by Councillor Declan Baseley and seconded by Councillor Matthew Short.

With all in favour

RESOLVED that

The minutes were approved as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

19. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- i) Although absent due to illness Councillor Robert Giles welcomed as a permanent member of the Amenities, Culture and Leisure committee.
- ii) Wednesday, the 15th of September sees the return of the online Climate Conversation series. These public events are organised by the Climate Emergency Advisory Group (CEAG), and this time there will be conversations on Solar PV, Water Conversation in the Home and sustainable transport. All councillors were encouraged to share the forthcoming social media links to residents.
- iii) This is the last meeting Kieran Moore would be assisting with the technology and live streaming. Kieran will be moving on to pastures new shortly, and the chairman on behalf of Chippenham Town Council thanked Kieran for all his hard work ensuring that we were able to stream our meetings from the Town Hall to the public, both during the COVID restrictions and following their relaxation.

It was proposed by the Chairman due to the public interest in the item that the Dogs On / Off Leads item was moved up the agenda to be taken first. With all Councillors in favour the item was moved up the agenda.

20. **DOGS ON / OFF LEADS**

The Head of Environmental Services presented the report to Councillors regarding Dogs On / Off Lead.

Councillor Desna Allen proposed that the rules concerning dogs on / off lead in John Coles Park following the public consultation should remain the same, with dogs always allowed off lead in the current designated areas, and the current signage should be reviewed to ensure that its clear.

This proposal was seconded by Councillor James Bradbury.

With all in favour.

RESOLVED that:

The rules concerning Dogs On / Off Lead should remain the same and the current signage should be reviewed.

21. **CAPITAL BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS**

The Director of Community Services presented the report to Councillors regarding the Capital Budget Considerations.

Councillor Matthew Short proposed an addition to the Capital budget 22/23 of £100K for the development of a Community Market Garden. This proposal was seconded by Councillor Angie Litvak Watson.

With 6 in favour, 2 against and 2 abstentions this proposal would be added to the Capital Budget 22/23 Consideration.

Councillor Jenny Budgell requested that her comments be recorded concerning the Development of a Community Market Garden. While not against the concept of a Market Garden she had concerns that Councillors up to that point had been asking for details and further information concerning the proposed costings on individual capital items on the proposed budget, but £100k was then added to the budget without any details being supplied to Councillors or work by Officers.

Councillor Matthew Short proposed that the additional £100k for development of a Market Garden be included in the capital budget for 23/24. This was seconded by Councillor Angie Litvak Watson.

All Councillors voted in favour of this proposal.

RESOLVED that:

- i) All must have items on the Capital Budget 22/23 and MTFP were approved by Councillors.
- ii) All should have items on the Capital Budget 22/23 and MTFP were approved by Councillors.
- iii) All could have items on the Capital Budget 22/23 and MTFP were approved by Councillors
- iv) An amount of £100k be included in the Capital Budget 23/24 for the development of a Community Market Garden

22. **FREE CAR PARKING ALLOWANCE**

The Director of Community Services presented the report to Councillors regarding the Free Car Parking Allowance.

With all in favour.

RESOLVED that:

The Free Car Parking Allowance allocation be used on the 11 and 18 December 2021

23. **ALLOTMENT RENT AND MANAGEMENT FEE FOR 22/23**

The Head of Environmental Services presented the report to Councillors regarding the Allotment Rent and Management Fee for 22/23.

With all in favour.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The Chippenham Garden & Allotment Society acting as agents for the Town Council serves notice of a rent review on all allotment holders before 29 September 2021. This rent increase will be effective from 29 September 2022.
- ii) The rent payable from 29 September 2022 be £7.75 per lug or £77.50 per full size plot (10 lugs) and £38.75 per half size plot (5 lugs).
- iv) The Management Fee payment to the Chippenham Garden & Allotment Society for 2020/21 be adjusted in line with any uplift the Council might apply, when it sets next year's budget later this year.

13. **ITEMS FOR COMMUNICATION**

Councillors requested that the decision regarding Dogs On / Off Lead in John Coles Park be communicated to residents.

14. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next Amenities, Culture and Leisure Committee meeting will take place on Wednesday 10 November 2021.

The meeting closed at 8.02pm.

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:

Written question:

1. Further to my various requests this year asking for Chippenham to get it's own tab on VisitWiltshire and offering to help we have gone the whole summer of staycations without having this asset for businesses. I keep being told it is being done, I even contacted VisitWiltshire and they have told me it is being done, when will this happen?

Verbal questions:

2. Good evening and thank you for another chance to talk about the Dogs in John Coles Park matter.

As campaigned for by the dog user community in John Coles Park, we have now had the results of a public survey on this matter. Having looked at the published results in detail I do not intend to repeat the numbers, rather to point out some of the aspects of them.

Firstly, the results show a large majority (63%) in favour of keeping the current rules or letting dogs off the leads in all parts of the park. This is three times the result for dogs on leads in all areas (21%). Smaller percentages chose to ban dogs entirely (8%) or implement season or timed rules (7%).

Secondly, 60% of park users feel safe in relation to dogs in the park. Looking at the written comments in the paper returns, there was some confusion with the wording of this question. Confusingly, 45% of those stating they were concerned about safety in relation to dogs voted for the rules to remain the same. Also 23% of those leaving a comment were concerned about Dogs or Children's safety because of the open exits to the Malmesbury road.

Any regular park user recognises that there are many safety issues in the park other than dogs, including antisocial and threatening behaviour, drug and alcohol abuse and the use of fast e-scooters. It is rare that any of these result in a significant issue.

Thirdly, it is worth pointing out there is some evidence of tampering and multiple returns on both survey methods, Also the results have not been weighted by Chippenham residency or frequency of visit to the park.

This matter has been on the Agenda for the ACL committee for nearly a year, and as you know, the Dogs in John Coles Park group, now some 300 strong on facebook believes there is nothing broken that requires fixing.

We trust that this matter can now be decided based on a public, if potentially slightly flawed, consultation and the ACL Committee can focus on more significant matters.

Thank you for your attention

3. Firstly, I would like to thank Mr Saul for his time and effort in providing his analytical views on the survey results which hopefully provide a clearer picture. After having many conversations with various park users as we walk around the park, we would like to highlight some of the issues raised and possible outcomes of the survey.

Comments made on the paper version suggest that further clearer and larger signage at the boundaries of the on/off lead zones will reduce confusion as to where dogs can be allowed off leads.

They also point to the hazard of the open gates on to the Malmesbury Road for both children and dogs alike.

We have seen other councils publish signs that summarise responsible dog ownership in open areas such as parks and beaches and think that the town council dog policy would be an excellent starting point if Chippenham Town Council decided this was a useful idea.

We would also suggest the council put in place a recording system for any significant incidents on council owned public areas so that any future discussions on any topics can be more evidence based.

I would now like to read a recent post to the Dogs in JCP Facebook page from Dr Henry Tegner, who is the originator of the "Friends of John Coles Park" group.

"As I have said before, I am not and never will be a dog owner. But I do love to see dogs running freely on the 'dogs off lead' area. Their joy is palpable and infectious. When we are out walking, as we usually do twice a day, my wife and I will sit on a bench and enjoy watching them. The great majority of owners are clearly responsible and considerate. We also like to see the children enjoying themselves on bikes and scooters - but I reckon that for elderly folk like ourselves they present more of a hazard than do the dogs! But I would never dream of denying them their fun. There is so much that is happy in JCP and children and dogs are possibly the greatest contributors to that. And old folks smiling and saying 'hello' too!"

Finally, we appreciate the efforts of everyone who has contributed to all sides of this debate and note that the results show many park users would like the status quo to remain. The campaign has also highlighted several different issues and has brought the need for good behaviours and respect for all park users to the fore.

Thank you

Not part of the meeting

APPENDIX B

Written responses to public question asked at Amenities, Culture and Leisure on 08 September 2021.

Question 1

Thankyou for your written public question that was presented to the Amenities, Culture and Leisure Committee on Wednesday 8 September 2021.

Chippenham Town Council has purchased an additional tab on the Visit Wiltshire homepage which will link to a new page on the Council's website which will offer information for visitors to the town. This new page is currently being designed and we hope it will be completed and published in the next few weeks.

It is not in the Council's remit to offer marketing support to specific local businesses, however we can help to promote the town as a place to visit.

Questions 2 & 3

Thank you for your public question that you presented to the Amenities, Culture and Leisure Committee on Wednesday 8 September 2021.

At the meeting Councillors resolved to keep the rules regarding Dogs On / Off Leads in John Coles Park the same and for the current signage to be reviewed.