

Notes of a meeting of the Environment and Open Spaces Committee held in the Council Chamber, 28 Fore Street, Wellington on 25th February 2020 at 6.00 p.m.

Present: Councillors J Lloyd, M Lithgow, V Stock-Williams and M McGuffie

Also present: Tom and Eunice Borg Public Path Liaison Officers (PPLO)
Martine Thurtle, Footpath Volunteer (FV)
7 Members of the Public (representatives of Transition Town Wellington). and 2 members of WAG (Wellington Action Group for Dogs).

1. Election of Acting Chairman for the Meeting

Councillor Lloyd was proposed and elected as acting Chairman for the meeting.

2. Apologies

Councillors S Pringle-Kosikowsky and C Booth
Jackie Marsh, Footpath Volunteer
Helen Phillips – Somerset West and Taunton Localities Engagement Lead

3. Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

4. Footpath Report

A report on the work of the Footpath Volunteer team had been circulated with the agenda. Tom noted that the County Council's year end was February and that all of Wellington's footpaths had been checked at least once this year; also that the current Footpaths Officer Sam Jackson had now been in post for a year. When visiting Sam had observed that several of the Wellington footpaths were very muddy so some of the worst ones would be top-dressed. Contractors had tidied up the overhanging growth at Dark Lane, and a problematic elder tree would be cut back later in the year.

Tom praised the Community Payback team for the excellent clearance they had completed at Gay Close. It was hoped they could carry on with monthly work this year. Tom also suggested a chemical weed treatment might be beneficial on the dog-leg section of the path between Cades Farm and Gay Close.

Tom introduced a community-led initiative called *Walkers are Welcome*, which helps promote a town as a venue for walkers. Wellington would be eligible to apply but there would be costs involved in set up then an annual subscription.

Councillors thanked the Footpath Volunteer team for their excellent work. This was always very much appreciated.

5. Public Speaking Time

Standing Orders were suspended to allow members of the public to speak. Phil Cookson spoke about the current Local Plan 2040 consultation being run by Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT). The deadline for feedback was 13th March. Phil would be sharing his comments on carbon-neutral development via the Clerk and would be speaking at the next full council meeting. Transition Town (TT) would be pleased to work in partnership with the Council on 'green matters' and planning, which was Phil's background. TT were awaiting feedback on their

Democracy Pioneers grant application. They were also working with Somerset County Council (SCC) to identify street areas in Wellington which were free of cables and pipes to enable possible planting of street trees.

Standing Orders were re-instated.

Councillor Lloyd proposed, and Councillors **RESOLVED** that agenda item no 9. (dog issues) be brought forward as members of WAG had attended to provide input into the debate.

6. Dogs

There had been 2 recent complaints to Council staff about dog-fouling as well as many posts on local Social Media. WAG members Lyn and Addy were continuing with daily patrols, including clearing other people's dog waste themselves. The lack of deterrent meant that some owners were not taking responsibility to 'pick up' after their dogs.

Helen Phillips (SWT) had advised by email that there was the potential for 30 mins additional patrol time in Wellington by the SWT Dog Warden (currently 30 mins per week). However, this would need to be paid for, and the patrol would be during the day rather than in the evening when owners not picking up was more of a problem. It was queried whether dogs were banned from the Recreation ground, however there was little support for bans as this penalised responsible dog owners.

The Clerk advised that a campaign to promote awareness could be considered later in the year when the office had a full staff team. This could involve press releases, posters, or addressing dog owners directly. Cllr McGuffie had circulated a range of information on dog/waste issues prior to the meeting. With limited powers of enforcement regarding dog fouling, all agreed that a community effort would be needed to try and tackle this problem. Dog fouling had also been a high-priority issue for the public in the feedback gathered during the SWT/police survey of Wellington's open spaces last year. Results were being processed to inform future SWT/community actions.

Lyn referred to an initiative in Dudley where fines and publicity had helped to reduce the issue of fouling. The WAG members would notify any dog-waste hotspots to the Town Clerk.

There was a request for an additional dog-waste bin to be situated at the new footpath between the Heritage Mills estate and Crosslands. This would be passed to SWT in the first instance.

Councillors thanked WAG for their marvellous commitment and excellent work around the town on all matters dog-related.

7. Terms of Reference (TOR) and Strategy

Councillor McGuffie had proposed that the EOS Committee should have a formal Terms of Reference. He would give this more thought between this and the next meeting. The Clerk would provide a copy of a current TOR to ensure consistent formatting. Following successful recruitment, work could also commence on a policy statement setting out the Council's overarching strategy, on environmental (eg trees,

carbon-reduction measures and other matters. It was noted that the EOS Committee's had a far more pro-active presence than previously.

8. Benches

A request had been received from a resident for the Town Council to take over a memorial bench at Chelston, which honoured workers at the former Co-op depot at Chelston who had passed on. The bench was in need of a little maintenance and actual ownership was unclear.

RECOMMENDED to take over the custodianship and care of this memorial bench.

The Clerk was instructed to order the four new benches previously agreed for the town prior to the end of the financial year.

9. Street Lighting at Clifford Terrace

A resident had requested additional street-lighting to the footpath at Clifford Terrace. It was hoped this could be low-level and using 'white-light' to minimise costs, energy useage and impact on insects. A low-level light would potentially be vulnerable to vandalism.

The Clerk would investigate costs and report back to a later meeting.

10. Tonedale Play Area

Councillor Booth had requested consideration of a hard path in place of the current grass path, on account of it being perpetually boggy. In the interim the Community Warden had inspected and would consider top-dressing with bark chippings or similar.

Before consideration of alternative pathing the Clerk was requested to seek advice from Sam Jackson the SCC Footpath Officer as to his recommendations for improving this path, and the one at the allotments.

11. Plots of Land

Councillor McGuffie sought clarification as to plots of land where there was an identified interest for the Town Council to pursue acquisition or purchase. This was confirmed as currently being pepper-potted small strips at the basins. Following this up remained on the Clerk's to-do list but could not be progressed at the current time. It was proposed that a future action would be to contact SWT and SCC to see if there were any land areas they would like to pass over to the Town Council for ownership or management.

12. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting was set for Tuesday 2nd June at 6pm in the Council Chamber.

The meeting ended at 7.45 p.m.