

Droitwich Spa Town Council

MINUTES of the meeting of Droitwich Spa Town Council Emergency Committee held in the Council Chamber, St. Richard's House, Victoria Square, Droitwich Spa on Monday 2 September 2019 at 5.45pm.

PRESENT: Councillor W T Moy (Mayor)
Councillor Mrs C Bowden
Councillor G R Brookes
Councillor G Duffy
Councillor A Humphries
Councillor A M Sinton

APOLOGIES for absence: None

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106 JAPANESE KNOTWEED – WESTWOOD LODGE ALLOTMENTS

Pursuant to minute 77 of the Community and Amenities Committee meeting held on 1 July 2019, the Town Clerk updated the Committee on the current position with regards to the JKW at Westwood Lodge Allotments and adjoining Wychavon owned, Westwood Public Open Space. He informed the Councillors that Wychavon District Council had completed their second survey of the area and emailed the report on 9 August 2019 including a request for £1400/£1900 to cover the Town Council allotments land proportion of the proposed treatment work. The Town Clerk had responded that this request would be considered by the Town Council in early September before reporting back and no further contact had been received to date.

Councillor GR Brookes made reference to a podcast recording from BBC Countryfile which had recently been broadcast. This programme extract emphasised the legal position, liabilities and management responsibilities associated with land holdings and containment of Japanese Knot Weed. Councillor Brookes and Councillor WT Moy explained that they had visited the allotments site on 28 August 2019 and made reference to the attached report and cross sectional diagram showing the JKW outbreaks, topography and boundary lines. The proximity of a stream on the WDC land was noted as a further risk factor towards possible wider contamination and potential monetary claims. In general discussion the consensus reached was that reasonable belief existed that the JKW outbreak originated from mature growth on the Wychavon land which had contaminated the Town Council allotments site. To this effect the Town Council admits no liability for this outbreak and any future associated contamination. The necessity to make a commitment to pay to enable the coordinated treatment approach towards full eradication was agreed. This outlook was considered to be in the public interest and conducive towards a suitable resolution for the issue.

RESOLVED To notify Wychavon District Council in writing as follows and to reaffirm the position with a letter prepared by the Town Council Solicitor's.

1. *An agreement to pay the £1400.00/£1900.00 towards the coordinated treatment detailed in the Management Plan you provided on 9th August 2019. Please invoice the Town Council to enable settlement.*
2. *A request is made for a schedule and confirmation of the treatment course including prior notification of arrangements & dates to access Town Council land.*
3. *The understanding that this payment is made in the public interest towards prompt and satisfactory full eradication of the Japanese Knotweed at Wychavon -Westwood Public Open Space and Town Council - Westwood Lodge allotments site in Droitwich Spa . The established growth on Westwood Public Open Space is believed to have contaminated the Town Council, Westwood Lodge allotments site.*
4. *The Town Council admit no responsibility for the contamination on the allotments land and consider Wychavon District Council responsible from their adjacent land (ie- Westwood Public Open Space). This covers the existing outbreak and any future ongoing contamination.*
5. *The Town Council is to instruct Solicitors to affirm this position including all points in writing to Wychavon District Council over the next few days.*

107 THE MUSEUM PROJECT – ST RICHARD’S HOUSE

The Town Clerk reported that consideration for commissioning a professional consultant is required to guide and support the project overall and to help advance the in course Heritage Lottery funding application being worked on by the Heritage Managers. To this effect Members were advised that a preliminary free consultation visit had been arranged with a suitable locally based Project Consultant (Mr Chris Bond of CDI) for Wednesday 4th September 2019. It is anticipated that an overview can be provided for him by the Heritage Managers and Town Council Officers for the proposed refurbishment. It is hoped that this will then be conducive towards production of an estimate, schedule of works and full proposal to be presented to Council at an early opportunity this autumn. It was also explained that the original design specifications dated January 2019 will need to be reviewed given the elapsed timescales and two further competitive quotations sourced to accord with standing orders in respect of tendering protocol. Professional input from an Architect will be required simultaneously. Previously sanctioned improvement works to the building fire detection system and wiring will need to be coordinated and factored into the wider improvement plans as the schedule evolves. From a business continuity and contingency perspective it is currently envisaged that subject to ratification of all aspects, the construction element of the project should take place during the first quarter of 2020. This timescale makes the May Flower 400 commemoration for June / July 2020 still in scope as the project goal.

In general discussion the library building options recently introduced by Wychavon District Council were acknowledged although the consensus reached was to maintain progress with the in house project to improve the Heritage Centre and Museum at St Richards House as originally resolved. It was also recognised that speculation on other longer term possibilities was becoming prohibitive to the original project vision and creating an undercurrent of anxiety, doubts and uncertainty amongst the conscientious Heritage Team comprising both staff and volunteers.

RESOLVED That the provisional arrangements for the commissioning of a Professional Consultant to support the project were noted, subject to further ratification with supporting proposals thereafter.

That the project continues without further interruption to focus on the improvements for the Heritage Centre & Museum at St Richards House.

108 MAYFLOWER 400 ANNIVERSARY 2020- EVENTS

The Town Clerk reported that a successful meeting and overview of the Town Centre had taken place with Mrs Caroline Davis, Director of OPUS Consultancy on 15 August 2019. Members were reminded that Mrs Davis and her Company had good credentials and had originally been introduced by Councillor AM Sinton for the initial Chateau Impney event option. Following the previously notified decision to change the dynamics to a free access community event based in the Town Centre, Mrs Davis had transferred the focus accordingly. Following the feasibility visit in August an event budget forecast and full proposal had been produced. These documents were explained and copies circulated to members.

The Town Clerk further explained that the official Mayflower 400 National Commemoration begins on 21 November 2019 for one year. Participating Towns and Parishes are requested to mark the start of the period with a suitable Illuminative Event in addition to the main Commemoration scheduled for July 2020. Given the unique legacy connection for Droitwich Spa being the birthplace of Edwards Winslow, one of the leading Pilgrim Fathers this has special significance. To this effect the Town Clerk explained and circulated proposals and costings produced recently in collaboration with the Festive Lighting Company – current contractual provider of the Town Council Christmas Lights. The proposals detailed a bespoke Mayflower 400 Image and laser projections to illuminate St Richards House to commence with a dedicated switch on Ceremony on 21 November 2019. To provide a separate identity and support the Annual Christmas Lights Switch On event scheduled for 23 November 2019, enhanced lighting options and a change of location to Victoria Square were proposed. The Town Clerk explained that the costing was compatible with being absorbed within the remaining 4 years of the 5 year Seasonal Lighting contract through Festive Lighting.

RESOLVED That budget forecast, costings and proposals for the Mayflower. 400 Event scheduled for 4 July 2020 and produced by Mrs Caroline Davis of OPUS be accepted with agreement in principle to proceed on all aspects.

That the Festive Lighting proposals and costings for the bespoke Mayflower 400 motif and projection images for St Richards House beginning with the Illuminative Event on 21 November 2019 be accepted as an additional component of the remaining 4 year contract.

That the enhanced Christmas Lighting proposals and costings (Festive Lighting) for the Victoria Square area with effect from the Christmas Lights Switch On Event on 23 November 2019 be

accepted as an additional component of the remaining 4 year contract.

109 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING GROUP

The Town Clerk explained a scenario that had regrettably arisen again on Tuesday 27 August 2019 whereby the Neighbourhood Plan Group using the Community Hall had considerably over ran the allotted reservation. The implication is that the Caretaker was unable to close the premises and necessitated a return visit and further reminders to resolve. This was noted in general discussion to be very disappointing given that the hall was provided free of charge for the Group as an exception and this situation had once again arisen. Similar problems had been encountered in the past and recent steps had been taken with Mr Peter Hawkins to formalise booking arrangements and prevent these issues. Members agreed that the over running was an abuse of the privilege granted for reservations without charge and presented a cost implication for the Town Council.

RESOLVED That Councillor A Humphries contact Mr Mike Lambden from the Neighbourhood Plan Group to explain the position, including that for the future any reservations running over the allotted time would be charged the full tariff rate for the entirety , including the additional time incurred.

110. MUNICIPAL PLANTING CONTRACT

The Town Clerk explained that following the appointment of Countrywide as the Municipal Planting contractor approximately one year ago there had been a series of disappointing incidents which necessitated intervention and referral to the Company Management. These predominantly related to behavioural and conduct issues attributed with the Company Operative undertaking the contractual work. Regrettably many issues have been repeated despite assurances and overall work standards and longevity of the planting is also giving cause for concern. There is an emerging doubt that the contract is not representing true value for money. A potential alternative provider with a local operation has been identified and a tentative meeting scheduled for 5 September 2019 for Officers to gauge interest, competitiveness and scope before reporting back. The existing contract is not binding in terms of severance and a suitable opportunity may arise at the switch over from summer to winter planting anticipated in October 2019 to consider an alternative provider – subject to the usual checks, parameters and full agreement through Council.

RESOLVED That the concerns regarding the current Municipal Planting Contractor be noted and the suggested preliminary consideration steps for possible suitable alternatives be investigated by Town Council Officers for further consideration.

111. REPORT OF UNAUTHORISED TREE FELLING & GROUND CLEARANCE
AT COPCUT PARK

The Town Clerk updated that a local resident had complained to the Town Council Office on Thursday 29 August 2019 that contractors had cleared an extensive area of woodland including the felling of healthy mature oak trees to ground within the Copcut Park. Further contact was received on Friday 30 August 2019 and arrangements made to meet with the resident later that day and inspect the claims. The inspection confirmed a large area of land cleared to ground including evidence of felled timber adjacent to a nearby residential property. The member of the public advised that he had confronted those persons carrying out the work on 29 August and their response had been that they were working on the instruction of the adjacent property owner. The Town Council have not been approached about any such works, the extent of which appear to fall within the DSTC owned park land boundary. Neither do the works form part of the Town Council regular maintenance regime or any recommendations arising from the latest Arboreal Survey undertaken in September 2018.

To this effect a letter was sent to the adjacent property owner later on 29 August 2019 requesting their cooperation to help clarify the position. Advice was also sought from the Police given the extent of felling and clearance work undertaken without prior notification to the Town Council,

RESOLVED That the verbal report be noted and the related concerns are acknowledged. Agreement that the steps outlined should continue in order to fully interpret what has happened and those responsible.

The meeting ended at 7.30 pm.

Chairman of Council -----
23 September 2019



