

Thame Town Council

Meeting Report: Open Spaces Working Group

Date: 14 June 2021

Present:

Cllr Nigel Champken-Woods
Cllr Adrian Dite (Chair)
Cllr Linda Emery (Deputy Chair)
Cllr Catherine Jones
Cassie Pinnells (Acting Town Clerk)
Andrea Oughton (Asset Manager)

1. **Apologies:** Cllr Helena Fickling

Action

It was agreed the 'Core Members' listed on Terms of Reference for the group should be amended to reflect that the Chairman of CLR is by default the Chairman of Open Spaces Working Group.

AO

2. **Meeting - 25 August 2020**

The notes of the meeting held on 25 August 2020 were noted.

3. **Hire of TTC owned Public Open Space**

Several requests received from people wanting to hire public open space owned by the Town Council main for different types of exercise class for varying in size from 1:1s up to 30 people.

Permission has been given to two community groups to use part of Southern Road Recreation Ground one on a Sunday morning and one on a Wednesday afternoon free of charge.

It was agreed to consider applications from voluntary and community groups, provided the necessary forms are completed and proof of public liability insurance and risk assessment are provided. However, applications from commercial organisations will not be considered.

4. **Friends of Elms Park**

The request from Friends of Elms Park for Thame Concert Band to provide 'pop up' concerts in Elms Park during the summer was noted. It was hoped to provide at least one concert this year and two in 2022.

All required event hire forms to be completed, proof of insurance, risk assessment, etc., provided. Friends of Elms Park are applying for a Licence from SODC to hold a street collection at the event and possibly to sell tickets for a concert later in 2021.

5. Roots Nursery, SRRG

Cassie and Andrea met with manager of Roots Nursery to discuss their request to formalise use of outdoor space behind the Guide HQ in Southern Road.

The area becomes very muddy and almost unusable during winter months. The nursery have been asked to investigate how the problem may be overcome and obtain quotations for the Town Council to consider. Any surface will need to be easily maintained and the area returned to its original condition should the nursery no longer hire the Guide HQ.

It was explained that it was highly unlikely the Town Council would support a permanent change of use to allow the erection of permanent fencing and sole use to the nursery.

If no other action is taken the OSWG proposed that a licence is drawn up to allow the nursery to use the area, on a temporary basis, during opening hours and be charged a peppercorn rent. Similar to the agreement already in place related to the shed next to Guide HQ erected by the Nursery and used for storage.

CP/AO

6. Elms Park

Consultation and proposed plans for Elms Park were now over five years old. It was thought the original plans over complicated and a simpler approach was needed.

Agreed the next meeting to be dedicated to review of refurbishment of Elms Park. OSWG conscious that if start to plan need to follow through and get refurbishment completed. Latest s106 Agreement related to development on the Elms to be circulated to members ahead of the next meeting.

AO

7. Dog Bins

Thame Wombles have been monitoring certain dog waste bins over past couple of months.

Larger bin by Windmill Road continues to fill up and blue waste bag tied to the side is also used. The bin at the Rugby Club is at three quarter capacity, despite this, bags continue to be thrown into the copse opposite the club and dropped along the track alongside the allotments. Approx. 100 have been picked up over the past five weeks.

Ideal to have another bin located at the north-eastern end where the normal path and that detour. May be possible to get some responsible dog owners to do a 'Love Thame' crowd fund request to fund a Thame Wombles bin with a weekly collection by private individual / womble. Majority of dog waste bins seem to cope with weekly collections.

OSWG comment: Wombles need permission from land owner before installing a bin. In the longer-term regular emptying must be sustainable by the volunteers. The Town Council budgets £9k per annum covering the weekly cost emptying of 26 dog bins it is responsible for. The working group commended Thame Wombles for their work to keep the town tidy and where possible, TTC will provide support.

8. Church Meadow

A resident in Bell Close has written requesting permission to install a gate on their boundary with Church Meadow. Other residents on Bell Close have installed gates. The Cricket Club's position is boundary fences and gates are the responsibility of the resident and the gate can only be used to access Church Meadow to undertake maintenance work to the boundary fence. Cassie checked position with TTC solicitor and will action.

CP

It was noted some residents whose fence forms a boundary with Elms Park or Cuttle Brook also have access gates.

9. Thame Green Living

Andrea provided an update on the following projects:

Opening up Rycote Meadow to public access

- Plans progressing well – project to be phased over three years
- Mike Furness preparing outline spec for path (will run alongside Cuttle Brook) for indicative costings. S106 funding available for footpath.
- Proposed 1.5m path with wire fencing between path and the meadow to include some 'lay by' areas and passing places to enable people, buggies, wheelchairs, mobility scooters and dogs to use the path without prejudicing the meadow.
- Andrea & Charles Boundy to meet with Bloor rep to discuss joining the path installed by Bloor from the Oxford Road development to the new path in the meadow.
- Good relationship with Cuttle Brook Volunteers – aim for meadow to become part of Cuttle Brook Nature Reserve.
- Initial inspection by Wild Oxfordshire and River Thame Conservation Trust show there is a real risk that valuable plants and wildlife could be permanently lost if the whole meadow is opened up.

Queen's Green Canopy to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee

- Creation of small grove at QEC designed to both celebrate the Jubilee and provide an opportunity to commemorate loved ones, possibly victims of Covid.
- Concept design circulated to OSWG.
- TGL to present plan to CLR in July for approval

Greening / Wilding Project to increase biodiversity

- Grass is growing!
- Some calls from residents asking why grass not being cut – all resolved, two have volunteered to help monitor area nearby.
- Signage explaining the project put up around the by-pass. Agreed more signs needed in other areas.
- Proposal to purchase / lease a 'cut and collect' mower going to CLR for approval in July.
- Howland Road recessed verge – Lucy Electric involved – volunteers from workforce to monitor and help look after area including area on Howland Road Industrial Estate.

10. AOB

Nigel reported Friends of Elms Park talking to Sealed Knot Society re a Mini Muster in Thame, weekend of 18 & 19 June 2022. Battle re-enactment will take place in Elms Park with a 'living village' in Southern Road Recreation Ground.

11. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 6 July 2021, 10am in the Upper Chamber, Thame Town Hall.