

Thame Town Council

Meeting Report: Open Spaces Working Group

Date: 4 October 2023

Present:

Cllr Paul Cowell (Chair)
Cllr Linda Emery
Cllr Helena Fickling
Cllr Helena Richards
Mandy Sturdy (Town Clerk)
Andrea Oughton (Operations Manager)

1. Apologies:

Cllrs Nigel Champken-Woods, Adrian Dite and Catherine Jones.

2. Meeting – 23 March 2023

Report of the meeting held on 23 March 2023 was noted with no amendment.
The draft minutes of the Open Spaces Sub Committee meeting held on 25 May 2023 were noted.

3. Elms Park

Presentation by Shelley Ghazi & Hannah and Anna of Edge Urban Design.
Shelley is a local resident, interested in community development and a Town Planner.
Interested in leisure aimed particularly at girls. Reference 'Make Space for Girls' report.

- Could carry out survey of young people to see what clubs and activities they are members of to find out what percentage take part in physical activity and for how long. Parks provide opportunities for young people to engage in physical activity free of charge.
- **Project Scope – Phase 1 Redevelopment of the play area:**
Edge Urban Design (EUD) offered to put together an overarching brief for the tender. EUD can engage in survey work with young people re design. Include specific equipment for girls (data available).
Age range for play equipment 0–11 years.
Decide on equipment, what is a definite no and yes i.e. no trampolines, include swings for adults so they can sit with their children whilst they use swings.
Scope to be quite loose.
Safety and maintenance considerations to be included.
Equipment - some should face each other so young people can socialise.
Need vision for what we want for the park – used by all cradle to grave. Need to draw up plan of park. Find original plan when park bequeathed to the town.
Comms around promotion of the park.
Phase 2
Do we still include a MUGA? If yes, just one court? Consider landscaping so no cage required, question for the future.
Active Oxford - design improvements for MUGA.
Pétanque Court – contact group for proposal and fundraising.
Toilets – cheap, functional but nice (include ongoing maintenance / running costs)
Vending space, CCTV?
Funding
Grants, National Lottery, s106, SODC Capital Grant, Active Lives, Health & Wellbeing (Shelley has links).

MS
AO

3. Elms Park (cont'd)

Timeline

Aiming to complete play park refurbishment by 8 March 2024.

04/10/2023	OSWG	Agree go ahead scope/tender for replacement play area. For ages 0-11.
Oct 2023	MS/AO	Meet again with Urban and Shelley.
Oct 2023	OSSC	Agree tender pack
31/10/2023	CLR	Provide update to CLR on the Project.
01/11/2023		Invitation to Tender out and publish on Contract Finder. To be ready will need to have an agreed scope and tender evaluation process.
12/12/2023	OSSC	Open tenders, expect presentation of tenders (agree date)
13/12/2023	OSSC	Award Tender
Jan 2024	FC	Give Update to Full Council
Jan – March	Contractor	Build period
08/03/2024		Opening
31/03/2024		Easter School holidays start Thursday 28 March 2024
05/05/2024		MITP

4. Park Yoga

Park Yoga is a charity that provides free community yoga sessions around the UK. Elms Park or Southern Road Recreation Ground are good locations (although there is no parking at Elms Park). Sessions run from May to September. Mandy to suggest to local yoga group that they apply to Town Council for grant.

MS

5. Southern Road Play Area – Broken piece of play equipment

The Rocker Gyro Spiral (sweeping seesaw) piece of equipment is broken. Discussion on whether it should be replaced in light of the playground being moved as part of the Community Youth Hub project. Not all equipment will transfer across). Quote for replacement piece of equipment - £4k excludes installation and surface patch replacement.

Andrea to explore options for replacement play equipment, to include how easy the equipment is to remove and install in the new play area. Options to be brought to a future meeting.

AO

6. Water Refill Station Project

Helena Richardson and Andrea met with a representative from Culligan, a leading supplier of water refill stations in the UK. Information and photographs circulated to Working Group.

Proposed project to install water refill stations on Town Council owned land / play areas. Machines could be sponsored. Comms around project to encourage businesses / groups to install their own refill stations. Provides opportunity for people to refill bottles, reduces plastic, promotes water rather than fizzy drinks.

The Working Group agreed that a proposal is presented to Open Spaces Sub Committee for a wall mounted water refill station to be installed on the outside wall of the Town Hall (facing the High Street). Easy connection to water and drainage from Town Hall. **AO**

Cost: LK4405 (blue) water refill station, delivery and installation £2,620.00. Annual Maintenance Contract £175.00 (includes legionella testing, servicing, replacement filters). Possible sponsorship opportunity for local companies to cover annual maintenance costs. Installation subject to listed building and conservation area planning consent, aim to install by January 2024.

7. Cuttle Brook Conservation Volunteers (CBCV) – Annual Grant

Andrea reported CBCVs were, like other organisations, finding the current economic climate challenging. Their equipment and maintenance costs are increasing each year and there are a number of projects they would like to do over the next 12 months. Andrea suggested to CBCV that the Budget Working Group consider an increase in the annual grant from £1,500 to £2,000 in the forthcoming budget setting process for 2024/ 25.

The working group asked when the grant was last increased? This will be useful information for the Budget Working Group. **AO**

8. Wildflower Areas

A couple of concerned residents contacted the Council about the risk of long grass in the wilding areas catching fire. When contacted during the very hot, dry summer in 2022, the fire officer was not overly bothered. OSWG agreed it was a risk but not enough to stop the wilding project. It was suggested that perhaps an additional cut in July takes place in areas very close to residential property, although this is possibly too early as the seeds will not have had time to dry and drop to the ground.

The suggestion of planting pollinators in two of the four beds at the memorial gardens was discussed. Photos were shared of a similar planting scheme in Amersham town centre. Agreed to take forward. Could also include beds just inside the gates of Elms Park. **AO
BR**

9. Rycote Meadow Public Access – Project Update

Andrea reported the project was moving forward. A site meeting had taken place to mark out the proposed path. The path will run from the field gate on Oxford Road and follow the Cuttle Brook (10m from the bank as per Environment Agency instructions) to the northwest end of the site to join with a footpath on the Oxford Road Estate. The path will be Coxwell self-binding gravel, 1.5m wide with a post and wire fence on each side. A scrape is being considered in consultation with River Thames Conservation Trust to further increase biodiversity and attract different species of animals / birds.

Estimated cost of the project is £57k. £26k of s106 funding available. The Trust for Oxfordshire Environment (TOE) has been approached. They suggested because of the important nature of the project the group submit an Expression of Interest form as a preliminary to a formal application to apply for up to £20k (normal ceiling is £15k).

10. Green Flag Award

The Green Flag Award is the benchmark international standard for publicly accessible parks and green spaces in the United Kingdom and around the world.

The scheme recognises and rewards well-managed parks and green spaces, ensuring the spaces meet the needs of the local community. Award winning parks / spaces have shown to bring about improvements to health and education, reduce crime and improve general cleanliness of an area.

The working group agreed that whilst this was a standard to aim for, it was not a priority.

11. Any Other Business

A new bench (part of the public art project) installed on North Street near the Cattle Market was originally planned to be sited on a path adjacent to The Moats but following the views of a few local residents worried about anti-social behaviour it was installed on North Street. Subsequently others have said how nice it would be to have a bench near The Moats. Do the Council need a policy to ensure we are not making decisions based on the minority view? **MS**

If it is possible to put the bench where it was originally planned at The Moats it should be relocated. Need to check location of bench related to historical aspect of The Moats. There are plans to install a bench on North Street to replace the original metal bench which was rusting.

A bench missing from the Phoenix Trail was discussed. Coincidentally a bench had been dumped in a hedge in Hamilton Road. It may be the same bench. If it is still there the Maintenance Team will take it back to the Phoenix Trail. **AO**

8. Date of Next Meeting

The Open Spaces Sub Committee will meet on Monday 23 October 2023, 1.30pm in the Upper Chamber. **AO**