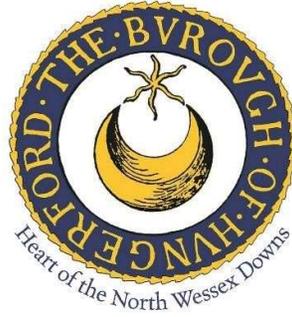


HUNGERFORD TOWN COUNCIL

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DRAFT MINUTES of the **Recreation, Amenities and War Memorials Committee** meeting held on Monday 17th March 2025 at 7.00pm, in the Library, Hungerford

Present: Cllrs H Simpson, C Winsor, K Knight, D Alford, A Fyfe, J Keates, S Coulthurst & D Reeves

In attendance: Deputy Town Clerk (DTC), George Ham (Church Warden), Nia Day (President of Hungerford Allotment Holders Association (HAHA) and Clint White, Treasurer of HAHA

Cllr Simpson opened the meeting at 7pm, welcoming all Councillors and guest presenters

The minutes of the meeting are recorded in order they were discussed at committee meeting.

RA2025013 Apologies for absence – Cllr Montgomery

RA2025014 Declarations of Interest - None

RA2025023 Review outcome of GPR survey of St Lawrence’s Churchyard following the collapsed grave and consider any actions

Cllr Simpson welcomed George Ham (Church Warden) to the meeting and it was confirmed that a further survey of the left-hand side of the graveyard would be completed within the next 2 weeks following some confusion over the interpretation of boundaries.

Cllr Simpson invited Cllr Fyfe to give a presentation summarising the recent survey at St Lawrence’s Graveyard.

Cllr Fyfe confirmed that there are a number of potential voids identified and their depths vary from 30mm to 1340mm. 3 graves have been identified (including the collapsed grave) as a potential concern with depths of 1100 recorded.

A number of other voids have been identified as a potential concern (highlighted in green on the original survey map) with loose material that could cause potential issues in the future.

Some depressions were also identified, some of which were noted underneath the footpath and it was not clear if the measurements stated were at the start of the void or represented the full length of the void. If it was the start of the void, then the depth of the void could be much deeper than initially believed which has the potential to cause further issues. In the top left of the graveyard, a grave has been identified as a possible issue and it was discussed that whilst it is a closed churchyard, some ashes had been buried there after the closure date and whilst this was not something normally allowed, the Diocese had agreed that some ashes could be buried but only at surface level i.e. only the top layer of grass being removed and no further digging was permitted.

Cllrs suggested a comparison of the Church Map and the map from the survey be made. Cllrs requested HTC Office contact Dr Pihlens to request a copy of the Church Map. St Lawrences graveyard has been closed for 120 years and further investigations are needed to identify the full extent of the issues in order to prevent future incidents occurring. Cllrs confirmed HTC had not been told to close the church / graveyard and at the time, appropriate action was taken to secure the collapsed grave and then repairs were promptly carried out.

Cllr Fyfe confirmed that photographic evidence of the grave position and owners' details was required and requested HTC Office to contact Dr Pihlens to see what records were held and Cllr Coulthurst and Mr Ham confirmed they would work together to review church records. Mr Ham confirmed that a number of graves had previously been moved, so an update would be beneficial to both parties.

Action:

- HTC Office to ask Dr Pihlens what records he has of the church graveyard and for those records to be forwarded to HTC.
- Cllr Coulthurst and Mr Ham to review church records and HTC

Cllr Fyfe agreed to send DTC a copy of the presentation once the second survey has been completed.

Cllr Simpson thanked Mr Ham for attending the meeting and for Cllr Fyfe for his presentation. Mr Ham left the meeting.

Proposed: Cllr Simpson

Seconded: Cllr Coulthurst

Resolution: St Lawrences Church to see what records they hold and HTC Office to contact Dr Pihlens to see what information he has. Both parties to bring information back to next R&A meeting.

RA2025015 Agreement of minutes of meeting held on 20th January 2025 and update on actions

Bulpit Park:

Maintenance man has removed some of the graffiti but was unable remove all. Further action is required and is in progress.

Ramsbury Park – Site visit held with WBC.

Agreed by Cllrs that to take the whole area would be too big an undertaking and confirmed HTC would like to potential look at the play park only but this would be based on WBC bringing the park into good order before any handover. Agreed a community orchard would not be viable without a budget in the offering. It was discussed that should HTC take over responsibility of the park, it would improve the standards of the playpark but due to financial implications, this could mean that HTC might be unable to take responsibility for something else on the devolution list.

Proposal from WBC re Ramsbury Park:

- WBC will start the devolution process to pass the play area to HTC with capital sum of approx. 15k towards replacement equipment. Long lease and HTC thereafter responsible for all future maintenance. The open space to remain with WBC.
- The fence in the corner – WBC to look at repairing it given that the cattle are next door. They have stated they would have removed sections back to the most complete section but the cattle are definitely a consideration.
- Over the summer WBC will look at the old hedge line which is deteriorating.
- WBC to remove chip up/take away the cut branches from the community work to clear the path
- WBC request no further maintenance from residents of trees due to potential damage to long term health of the trees. WBC do not believe, other than a periodic shadow, they will have any negative impact on the community

War Memorial Avenue - Site meeting held and the following agreed:

- Cracks not imminently dangerous and appear on 4/5 of the pillars and are not due to the gate.
- Gates – if they need to be removed, Cllrs will look at this when the work is required or some basic work can be carried out e.g. rust eating paint, then painted over with black paint. Final full repairs can then be carried out when brick work is done
- It's the belief that the construction of the actual pillars that is reacting and causing the cracks to appear.
- It is not considered to be in an area that could cause damage or injury to people
- Action will be required in 3-5 years and plan now for required budget (*report since received highlights repair work to be carried out within 18 months*)

Section F, St Saviour's Cemetery

- Removal of non-regulation memorial artefacts, borders and pebbles to be removed. Once completed, photo's to be taken and letter sent to remaining deed holder detailing the removal of the border and pebbles will need to be removed.
- No further communication relating to previous FOI request
- Further signage for Section F, Lawn Cemetery to be investigated by DTC/TC and taken to F/C for decision
- HTC to update regulations to ensure deed holders inform us of changes in contact details to ensure all future communications are received

St Johns Ambulance Site: DTC had taken a photo and resent it to their agent requesting urgent repairs be carried out. Action: DTC to follow this up due to no action taken by landowner.

Leisure Centre:

Meeting held. Contract details were forwarded by Cllr Reeves to Cllr Simpson and Cllr Coulthurst and a meeting with the Head of the Advisory committee agreed for 26th March 2025.

Bench Policy

As agreed, next bench required will be a made of composite (if agreed by applicant), recycled material and if successful, the Bench Policy will be altered to reflect the change to style of bench used by HTC. DTC has received an enquiry for a bench and information sent. Further investigation into the benefits of composition benches re traditional benches will be circulated to R&A.

Proposed: Cllr Simpson

Seconded: Cllr Reeves

Resolution: It was agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 20th January 2025 were a true representation

RA2025022 Update from Hungerford Allotment Association (HAHA)

Cllr Simpson welcomed Nia Day & Clint White from HAHA and invited them to present.

Clint White confirmed that the financials were in a healthy position in the bank and a budget has been agreed for maintenance and repairs.

Bank Balance - £14,721

Deposits - £2,746

Planned Spending - £2,687

Community Reserves £4,429

Management Reserves £4,859

HAHA have invested on maintenance to ensure it for purpose. It has been helpful to HAHA to defer to HTC There are 22 Plots in Fairfield's, and 100% are let.

Marsh Lane has 119 plots of which 96% are let (114). There are 17 new members and the SEND school are planning to take a plot. One request had been put on hold as they are not registered with a Hungerford address (canal boat owner). It was agreed that this will have to be declined in line with regulations. Haha have a new website and are investigating CRM system to help manage membership, GDPR record keeping and other vital elements of their business. A question was raised about the newest 'gift' allotment and a query about viability and safety of the wall and the associated costs of repair. It was agreed that more information is needed and this is in progress. The lady gifting the land wants to help support and further quotes for repairs are being obtained.

Nia Day confirmed that she is looking into the Marsh Lane Community Assets with Cllr Hudson regarding September's consultation and referendum in anticipation of the Annual Town Meeting, which she is attending.

Cllr Simpson thanked Nia Day & Clint White for their presentation, and noted that vast improvements had been made to the association. There were big changes being introduced and an increase in community interaction noted especially with the SEND school having an allotment.

Nia Day & Clint White left the meeting at 7.51pm.

RA2025016 Update on Maintenance List (See report for full details) and actions taken

Cllrs noted that a lot of work has been completed but raised concerns that some items have been on the list since October 2024. Cllrs realise that the Maintenance Man has had to take outstanding holiday which has limited his time. It was agreed that if he does not have time:

- HTC to use maintenance budget to fund a contractor
- If there are any H&S concerns, these jobs must be done or the item(s) removed until work can be carried out – concerns over injury to people and HTC liability e.g. wobbly benches to be identified and removed with immediate effect if remedial work cannot be completed
- Croft Field Centre – barrier needs repairing as it is a potential H&S risk. As an interim the maintenance man to put reflective self-adhesive tape around it to make sure people can see the barrier
- Noticeboards – ensure that we ask owners to repair or remove noticeboards if they are damaged etc. If they would like us to repair them – we need to charge for maintenance man's time etc and invoice them
 - DTC to ask Town Clerk to confirm current process for repairing Noticeboards

RA2025017 Receive update on ROSPA (See report for full details on update)

Cllr Simpson confirmed that Cllrs had seen the report so did not go through it in the meeting. Cllrs raised the following point:

The side gate at Bulpit Lane is bent with trip points underneath. This was identified by Cllrs as a H&S concern and should be elevated to Red on Maintenance list

RA2025018 Consider quote for Triangle Field work

Cllrs considered the quote from the contractor too expensive with no breakdown amount of guttering listed. Cllrs agreed a further 2 quotes would be required and HTC Office to action this.

Action: HTC Office to obtain 2 additional quotes

Proposed: Cllr Simpson

Seconded: Cllr Winsor

Resolution: HTC Office to arrange another 2 quotes and bring back to R&A for agreement

RA2025019 Agree re-wording of St Saviours Cemetery Reservations Regulations Schedule

Cllrs discussed the reservation schedule for the Garden of Remembrance. The proposal was for a plot to be reserved, a reservation fee paid, and admin fee would be charged every 5 years and then at the point of Interment, all other Terms & Conditions apply. However, Cllrs felt the current system works well. It was agreed that HTC Office should re-word the schedule to reflect Cllrs thoughts.

Proposed: Cllr Simpson

Seconded: Cllr Winser

Resolution: HTC Office to re-word the schedule and email to R&A to review and agree

RA2025020 Discuss VJ Day Commemorative Bench from RBL

Cllrs discussed the request from Royal British Legion for a bench to be placed at Bridge Street War Memorial. Cllr Keates has spoken with RBL and whilst the initial request had come through for a hardwood bench, he has informed them that we would like the next bench to be a composite bench (which would involve less maintenance). Cllrs discussed that an existing bench could be moved from Bridge Street War Memorial to another location to accommodate the proposed new bench.

RA2025021 Propose quotes for replacement Zip Wire at Bulpit Lane Playpark in Spring (see report)

DTC confirmed the cost of the 2 quotes and outlined the differences offered. Cllrs agreed that heavy duty chain would be more appropriate and ensure longevity. Cllr Winser confirmed that there was money held under Bulpit Play Park budget that could potentially be used.

Proposed: Cllr Simpson

Seconded: Cllr Keates

Resolution: HTC Office to obtain 2 quotes and return to R&A for a decision

RA2025024 Leisure Centre Liaison Update, Cllr Reeves (see summary below from Cllr Reeves presentation):

Cllr Reeves gave an update on the Leisure Centre meeting on 17th March 2025 which he attended with Cllr Winser and West Berkshire District Council (WBC) and Everyone Active (EA) on Monday 6th January.

In summary they were told “in the current 10-year contract with EA no fiscal commitment has been made for Hungerford, other than the new modular studio”. Following Cllrs Reeves and Winser ongoing communications and pressure; the following improvements and investment has been achieved:

- Brand new flooring and a tile clean has taken place in the Male and Female Gym-side Changing Rooms.
- New Body pump equipment has arrived
- New bench in the Men’s gym-side changing rooms.
- New mats for classes have been purchased and are in situ.
- There has been a marginal increase in marketing the facility.
- There has been a very marginal improvement in the cleanliness of the centre.

The new modular studio has opened, albeit 9 weeks later than expected. The studio is smaller than anticipated and currently it appears no additional classes or availability has been achieved. Adversely, it may be the case that the existing classes from the original studio, have simply been moved into the new studio, thus reducing occupancy and availability. Several classes now have waiting list, this was not the case before. Further investigation is needed before judgement reached. Should this be the case, then Cllr Reeves will pursue the matter.

There is a Joint Advisory Committee arranged for Wednesday 26th March, which Cllrs Winser and Reeves will attend.

Whereby, on behalf of HTC and the residents we will raise the ongoing concerns regarding the management of the centre. Seeking further investment in Marketing, Cleaning Standards and Investment projects.

RA2025025 Update on Hungerford's Got Talent, Cllr Winser

Cllr Winser expressed her pleasure at how well the event went. The school and children were very invested in this and the excitement was wonderful. The children performed fantastically and there were a number of entries that brought tears to people's eyes. The event was held on Thursday and there 8 entries. Cllrs Armstrong and Winser had been working with the school council and Lucy Smith, Headteacher, who had been incredible promoting it. Cllrs were so impressed that a couple of the acts have been invited, with their parents, to attend full Council meeting and the Mayor's annual Reception.

Cllr Winser thanked other the Judges: Cllr Simpson, Cllr Armstrong, Nick Lumley (professional actor) and Jim Johnson, professional musician for their support. Cllr Winser stated that certificates, medals, chocolates were given to all children and a star trophy was issued and a book voucher from Nick was presented. Cllr Winser thanked HTC Office for their help with the certificates.

Simon Hobden, The Advertiser, took photo's and Cllr Winser expressed interest in seeing the published pictures and article.

Cllr Simpson thanked Cllr Winser and Cllr Armstrong for their help and support in steering this to such a successful outcome.

Meeting ended 8.36pm