

Mere Town Council - Clerks Report for meeting 6.9.21

AGENDA ITEM

7a) Request for re-assessment of speed limit along Shaftesbury Road with a view to amending the 40 mph intermediate limit to a 30 mph limit

This matter was raised at a Town Council meeting held in March 2020 by a local resident, Mr. Clowser. At that time the Town Council did not support the request but the Chairman did say that if it could be shown that the majority of residents would support the reduction in speed limit along Shaftesbury Road then the Town Council would consider the matter again in a year's time.

Mr. Clowser has confirmed that he has sent out the attached leaflet to all 27 properties that front Shaftesbury Road and he confirms that from those he has received 21 replies with 44 signatures. He has also received 4 replies with 8 signatures from The Bartletts and 1 reply with 3 signatures from Balmoor Close.

Mr. Clowser confirms that the residents of Shaftesbury Road are asking the Town Council to back their request for a lower speed limit and to pass this on to Wiltshire Council to investigate/progress. 'The residents would like to make it clear that they are not complaining about motorists breaking the speed limit. They feel that the 40mph speed limit is no longer suitable on what has become a residential road with a high usage by cyclists and horse riders'

Further guidance on this issue can be found here:

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20120606202850/http://assets.dft.gov.uk/publications/tal-1-04/tal-1-04.pdf>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/setting-local-speed-limits/setting-local-speed-limits>

7b) Traffic Survey Request Form for speed limit review on Castle Street

In accordance with Wiltshire Council's "Traffic Survey Request Process and Information" we have received a Traffic Survey Request Form from a Mere resident. The form is in connection with the issue of speeding and states: "The speed of traffic approaching and leaving Mere is frequently in excess of the 30 mph limit. If the limit was adhered to, the environment would be quieter, calmer and less threatening, as well as being less dangerous. I have talked to my neighbours and all of us have concerns.' The suggested location for the traffic survey is identified as the what3words link seemingly.curious.jars – this is the section of Castle Street that forms a junction with Castle Hill Lane – BA12 6JF

<https://what3words.com/seemingly.curious.jars> -

7c) Traffic Regulation Order Application (waiting restriction Lordsmead Lane [off Pettridge Lane]

As advised by Wiltshire Council, a resident has submitted a 'Waiting Restriction Request [WR1] form' requesting that we apply for a waiting restriction on the road opposite the 5-bar gate to Lordsmead Cottage. I am calling this lane 'Lordsmead Lane' although I don't think it has a name and is just off Pettridge Lane/Clements Lane leading to Lordsmead House. The what3words location is blanking.lecturers/trial

<https://what3words.com/blanking.lecturers.trial>

The resident says that vehicles are parking on the narrow lane adjacent to their drive which means that they do not have sufficient clearance to get in or out of their property. These vehicles are also often parking in front of the

pumping station gates and also nearer the junction which blocks off the slope to the footpath along Pettridge Lane making it blocked for mobility carriages and prams/pushchairs.

8b) Request to adopt a re-wilding policy and limit grass cutting at Kingsmere Open Space.

The Chairman has received the following email from a resident of Long Hill:

"I have been walking the field between the Long Hill housing estate and Castle Hill - officially known as Kingsmere Open Space - for almost 20 years. In the past few weeks it has been looking more beautiful than ever. Grasses and many varieties of wild flowers have been allowed to flourish while maintenance has been confined to cutting paths to provide easy access.

It appeared that Mere had at last signed up to the idea of re-wilding to help counter the general decline in wildlife. But no. Today (July 15) I was very disappointed to find the field once again being reduced to useless stubble by a tractor-driven grass cutter.

This open space is too steep to be used for activities that require short grass so I cannot understand why it keeps being cut so savagely. Could it be a response to the vocal Mere Mutters minority who want their open spaces to look tidy? Or perhaps the look of the field depends on the whims of the council's groundsmen.

When I was on the field some months ago I asked one of the groundsmen why he was chopping down the undergrowth (mainly nettles) in one of the copses planted by the council. He told me: "To stop people hiding there." I was flabbergasted.

I hope you will agree with me that Mere has a role to play in the nationwide drive to make space for nature. I urge the council to adopt a consistent re-wilding policy and wherever possible to keep off the grass.

PS: I would, of course, like this matter to be considered by the council. Over the years I have written to Lindsey Wood who has always be very courteous but invariably tells me that you can't please everyone. Perhaps this time the council will choose to please those of us who take a broader view."

Background (for the benefit of new councillors/public)

Our current grass cutting policy for Kingsmere Open Space has been in place since the land was transferred to the Town Council in 2001 (20 years ago). The policy is based on the fact that this land is an amenity open space, used for dog walking, access to Castle Hill & Long Hill and/or just sitting under the beach trees to enjoy the view. On this basis the grass is cut on a fairly regular basis. However, as the grass is on a fairly steep slope and cannot be used for any particular activity other than walking, sitting etc, we do not cut the grass as often as we cut the Recreation Ground, Sports Fields or Cemetery and indeed when the grounds staff are struggling to keep up with the grass cutting in these other areas we do just leave the grass to grow long in Kingsmere Open Space and cut access paths through the field as an interim measure. This practice, however, often leads to some complaints from people who say that the grass is too long and they cannot see to clean up their dog mess or they cannot walk through it without getting wet feet or that it just looks untidy.. As the area shares a boundary with residential properties, we also get complaints from the residents if we allow weeds and nettles to grow too near the fence/hedge line. The Town Council also needs access into the field via tractor to cut the hedges and periodically to carry out any necessary tree works on Long Hill. The Town Council's has previously adopted a very proactive role in conserving nature and wildlife and indeed went to great lengths to adopt a management plan for Castle Hill and Long Hill in line with the recommendations made by Natural England and Wiltshire Wildlife and this is still work in progress. We also planted an avenue of beech trees which will eventually take the place of the aged avenue of beech trees that are now showing signs of decay and we planted two copses of trees – one a nut copse and one a fruit copse – specifically for the benefit of wildlife.

Attitudes to maintenance, grass cutting, hedgerows, verges are wide and varied. Last year a lot of people posted 'likes' on Mere Mutters thanking our grounds staff for getting rid of the weeds on Kingsmere Open Space and there

were no responses in the negative. However, re-wilding is becoming more popular and some local authorities are carrying out consultation exercises on plans to re-wild amenity land areas. When the Chairman and I discussed this resident's email, we recognised the fact that views would be varied and may be changing, the fact that we have a different membership make-up since our previous policy was agreed and the fact that some of our residents and indeed this residents views have changed over the years. Indeed, since first starting this report I have been informed that Wiltshire Council are running a number of Wildflower trials and want to work with communities to explore further opportunities and developing a consultation process on wildflower meadow habitats.

Incidentally, our own grounds staff have put forward an area for suggested re-wilding and that is the triangular piece of land at the bottom of the old cemetery in Angel Lane (where we planted the Oak Tree). They have suggested that this could be planted with wild meadow flower seeds and have footpaths mown through to allow access to the memorial trees.

8c) Tower Clock – Quotation to fit new drive motor & capacitor and refit the strike auto winding motor

As you will be aware, the striker on the Town Clock has stopped striking. When called out to re-set the time recently, we asked our clock company to look at the striker too and they have sent in the following report: 'Further to our engineer's site visit following a reported fault we are pleased to provide the following information & suitable quotation. Our engineer found that the fuse board master switch had tripped, so he reset it, the time side auto wind unit rewound the weight, but the strike didn't. Several tests were carried out on the strike auto wind unit, but he was unable to get it to work so it was removed back to our workshop, where it has now been examined. The problem is with the drive motor & capacitor, which are both faulty and need to be replaced, the unit would also benefit from being dismantled & cleaned. We are pleased to provide you with a quotation for this work. (I have been given a quotation which is between £1000 and £3000 and is therefore subject to Clause 11h) of our Financial Regulations – although this is a specialist contractor with previous knowledge of our Town Clock).

9 c) – Mere Bowls Club – Request for £200 grant funding to help support SWW Area Board Grant Application

I have received the following email which is self explanatory: 'This email is to inform the Town Council that Mere Bowls Club is in the process of putting together a grant application to be submitted to the South West Wiltshire area Board under their Health & Wellbeing banner, for consideration at their 18th September meeting. Based on the prices and quotes received we will be seeking £2,114.32 in total for all the tasks and purchases that we have identified. The Bowls Club would be offering £320 as its' contribution as well as expending over £500 in labour costs by its' members. Lindsey, the town clerk, has helped us with the application form and we would request that the Town Council grant us £200 towards this project'.

9 d) Changing Places Fund

The Changing Places Fund will invest up to £30 million over three financial years from 2021/22 to increase the number of Changing Places toilets in existing buildings in England that are accessible to the public.

Changing Places toilets help people with severe disabilities to take part in everyday activities with the same dignity as everyone else and feature:

- a changing table big enough for adults
- hoists

- enough room for the person and their carer to move around
- a non-slip floor
- paper sheets to cover the bench
- a large rubbish bin

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is inviting local authorities in England to complete an Expression of Interest form by 26 September 2021 to receive capital funding.

Local authorities are encouraged to work with parish and town councils to identify the potential to install new Changing Places toilets in their area.

[Click here to view the prospectus.](#)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changing-places-toilets-programme-prospectus>

9 e) Community Ownership Fund

The government is providing £150 million over four years to support community groups across the United Kingdom to take ownership of assets and amenities at risk of closure.

Voluntary and community groups can bid for match funding to acquire important assets and run them for the benefit of the local community. Unfortunately, town, parish, and community councils will not be eligible to apply. However, they are encouraged to play an active role in supporting their local community groups to apply.

The Fund will run until 2024/25 and there will be at least 8 bidding rounds in total. **[Click here to view the prospectus which contains details for round 1.](#)**

[The application for can be found here.](#)

<https://consult.communities.gov.uk/digital-delivery/171e5ad0/>

9 i) Suggestions for expenditure of S.106 funding

Following the Chairman's request for suggestions in Mere Matters & Mere Mutters – these are the suggestions we have received:

- Play equipment at Mere Recreation Ground for toddlers
 - Grass cutting machine or machinery that picks up grass cuttings for Mere Cemetery
 - Boules and Petanque court that is open to the public
 - Suggestion that the council (or S106 committee members) seek the widest possible external expert advice in the course of their search for ways of spending what will eventually total £265K.
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