

Thame Town Council

Meeting Report: Open Spaces Working Group

Date: 10 June 2024

Present:

Cllr Paul Cowell (Chair)
Cllr Adrian Dite
Cllr Linda Emery
Cllr Catherine Jones
Cllr Helena Fickling
Mandy Sturdy (Town Clerk)
Andrea Oughton (Operations Manager)
Shelley Ghazi
Anna Howell

Apologies:

Cllr Nigel Champken-Woods

Introduction to Shelley Ghazi & Anna Howell

Shelley is a town planner and has a background in community development. She also has experience in fundraising and a broader interest in helping with improvements to Elms Park. Anna is an urban designer working for a design company based in Thame. Shelley and Anna are offering their skills and time on a voluntary basis.

The concept plan for the park doesn't need to be a detailed plan, there is a need to understand the constraints, who are the stakeholders and funding opportunities. Once these are identified Shelley and Anna can draw together a concept plan for the park. Consultations so far have highlighted good ideas but there is a need to re-establish what the vision is.

Requirement for a clear vision and strategy owned by a group of people that take ownership and oversight of the project. (Any funding applications will require a vision and strategy). Once approved, the strategy could be applied to other council owned parks within Thame.

Requirements:

- Commitment to repositioning the MUGA and provide pathways to link to the new development.

Priorities:

- Path around the park.

Discussion:

- Broad vision – if everything you wanted was achieved, what would the park look like?
- Provide positive impact on people – health, mental health, wellbeing.
- Provide a safe place.
- Positive impact on place – biodiversity, a role around climate (shade) is the park connecting the town.
- Positive visual impact.
- Positive educational impact.

- 10 things to do in a park to attract people in e.g. benches to sit, exercise, meet friends, play, picnic, planting, community herb garden (existing planting beds at the entrance could be used), sensory garden, toilets, drinking water fountain, pétanque.
- Bylaws (Elms Park and Southern Road Recreation Ground) – look at what can be kept or reworded i.e. Dogs must be kept on a lead vs Dogs must be kept under control.

Principles around decision making (constraints):

- Sustainability
- Music in the Park
- John Hampden school sports day.

The working group agreed that Shelley and Anna draft a strategy for the park to bring back to a future meeting to discuss. Once agreed the draft strategy will be put forward to the Environment & Assets Committee for approval.

Review Terms of Reference

The Committee Services & Processes Officer has worked hard on reworking the committee cycle and is now looking at the Terms of Reference of the various Working Groups. Things may evolve and in future project teams, with responsibility for a particular project are established and once the project is delivered the team is disbanded.

Focus for the OSWG is to develop a Strategy for Elms Park.

Funding

As part of the strategy, the Elms Park Project will need oversight of project funding.

Generally, TTC need to build funding reserves for maintenance of play areas, public open spaces, council owned vehicles and equipment.

Date of Next Meeting

To be arranged once strategy and concept plan for Elms Park has been drafted.