

There was some discussion as to who should run the appeal campaign. It was agreed that the Town Council should take the lead in liaison with the Swimming Club. Mr Law volunteered Wotton Scouts to undertake a fundraising event. It was hoped that the Gazette would assist with publicity for this.

Councillors Law, Carter, John Cordwell offered to join the Working Party on this.

Councillor P C Smith would arrange a visit to a similar pool at Chipping Norton which had been suggested as a good model as a community run facility and would liaise with members about dates.

It was noted that the final decision on whether to hand back the pool would be made at the Stroud District Council Meeting on 10th June.

Mr Alan George left the meeting.

T.3573 GRANTS & DONATIONS

No applications had been received.

T.3574 CAR PARKING

In accordance with Standing Order 41A, this item had been placed on the agenda following receipt of a special resolution signed by Councillors A W Wilkinson, Mrs J E Walshe, C J Galbraith, Mrs C V Galbraith, R L Carter, G R J York and Mrs Helen Edgar. Members were asked to give further consideration to the concept of acquiring the former Stokes Bakery site for mixed public parking and housing, in the light of additional information and plans.

Mr Wilkinson reminded members that this was possibly the last site within the town centre where much needed additional parking could be provided. He had taken further advice on the potential for the site and circulated a rough plan which showed that 4 properties for sale and 51 spaces could be incorporated. He now requested that the Council should consider commissioning a feasibility study from Quattro Design for the possible layout and uses of the site, at a cost of £1500 plus VAT. It was possible that a scheme could be undertaken at a lower cost than previously thought and that some of the costs of the scheme could be offset by some housing development, possibly by a Housing Association, incorporated into the scheme or by charging for leasing some of the parking spaces.

Members noted that any developments on the site would need to be provided with parking so as not to diminish the benefits of the scheme, as would the cottage adjacent to the entrance. It was also noted that there would be legal costs and other costs not included in the present estimates, including possible costs relating to land contamination.

Grave concerns were expressed by some members about the burden proposed to undertake such a scheme. It was pointed out that fifteen years previously the Town Council had provided the Civic Centre and car park with an additional 45 spaces with minimal support from Stroud District Council. Since then, planning permissions for so called "car free development" in the town centre had been permitted by Stroud District Council which had eaten away at this provision since in reality most residents required cars and then needed somewhere to park them. It was possible that this scenario could be repeated so that this expense could be imposed on the ratepayers only for the benefit to disappear in a similar fashion over the next few years. In addition no mention had been made of running costs, including rates, maintenance and lighting costs. No presumption should be made at this stage that this scheme would be undertaken.

It was argued that the people of Wotton-under-Edge should not always pick up the bill for such provision.

Reference was also made to the difficulty of consulting townspeople about the scheme.

It was agreed that an extensive consultation would be required if such a scheme was to proceed, including notifying every household and possibly undertaking a parish poll. Members noted this but it was suggested that if this possibility was not at least explored further, an opportunity could be missed which would benefit the whole town. It was noted that traders in the town were worried that the imminent opening of the new Sainsburys store in Dursley would hit trade here.

A query was raised as to the position about the sale of the site and it was noted that the site was on the market but not being actively marketed at present.

With regard to the change of use which would be required, an outline application could be made which would show whether this would get planning permission.

In view of the potential benefit to the trading community, members asked whether any contributions to the cost would be forthcoming.

Proposed by R L Carter to commission Quattro Design Ltd to undertake a feasibility study for the site at a cost of £1500, this to be funded from the Contingency sum or from reserves as required. Seconded by Mrs J E Walshe. Passed by 9 votes with 1 against and 1 abstention.

T.3575 MATTERS ARISING

A. Knapp Road Allotments. A letter was received from the Knapp Road Allotment Holders Association. This referred to the Restrictive Covenant on the land which prohibited the erection of any buildings and requested two copies of the deeds for the land. The advice from A E Smith Solicitors in connection with the covenant at Knapp Road was that the Council should decide whether to allow whoever was advising the allotment holders to represent the Council's interests. If this was the advisers to the allotment holders then they would need to see the deeds as would the Land Tribunal. Meanwhile it was for the Council to decide whether they wished for an application to be made in their name and if so, to decide who should represent them.

Mr Carter expressed opposition to this proposal on principle, as he considered that the original owner had placed this covenant on the land for a purpose and the reasons for this were being ignored. He feared this could reflect badly on the good faith in which the Town Council had acquired the land in the full knowledge of this covenant and that future potential donors of land might be deterred by this apparent readiness to set the covenant aside.

Mrs Galbraith, as Chairman of the Allotments Committee suggested that the Allotment holders would be very disappointed if this was not pursued and suggested that the adviser to the Allotment holders should be allowed to contact the Town Council's solicitor to discuss this matter.

The issue of costs in this connection arose and it was suggested that the Allotment holders should be asked whether they would be prepared to bear these costs.

It was noted that many allotment sites did allow sheds and that the Allotment Holders Association were determined to pursue this, especially as they had been advised that such covenants could easily be set aside.

Other members felt that the Town Council was being old fashioned and unfair to the allotment holders.

The Clerk noted that this covenant was not imposed by the Town Council but that the land had been acquired and all allotments let ever since in the full knowledge of it. The Clerk advised that the Town Council needed to bear in mind that considerable legal expenses could be incurred because of the large number of properties potentially benefiting from the covenant and to decide whether it was prepared to meet these expenses which would fall on all ratepayers for the benefit of a small number of allotment holders at Knapp Road only.