

**Minutes of the Recreation & Amenities Committee meeting held on
Thursday 30th January 2014 in
the Committee Room, Clayport Street, Alnwick at 7.30pm.**

Present: Cllrs S Patience (Chairman), S Allcroft, P Broom, C Goodfellow, D Farrar, P Holt, M Harrington, S Mavin, R Roberts, A Symmonds.

In attendance: W Batey, Chief Officer & Town Clerk, J Pibworth, Administration Assistant.

RA 13/34. Apologies: None

RA 13/35. Declaration of Interests

Councillor Patience and Farrar declared a pecuniary interest in the agenda item about the Cycle Track, Councillor Roberts declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item. Councillor Allcroft declared a pecuniary interest in the agenda item on planting in relation to Alnwick in Bloom and Councillor Farrar declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item.

RA 13/36. 2013/14 Budget Update

The Clerk circulated a copy of the 2013/14 budget as at 22nd January 2014. This showed expenditure of £10,339 on events, £2,632 on projects and £24,443 on services and assets. Income was currently £3,510 from allotment rents. The sections were discussed. Overall a slight underspend on the year was likely although most of the underspend was earmarked, for example on the Ratten Row water supply renewal.

RESOLVED: The budget be noted.

RA 13/37. Update on Green Batt Gardens

The Clerk circulated possible wording for the proposed sign to the entrance of the gardens. After discussion the wording on the proposed sign was agreed as 'Green Batt Public Gardens, Everyone Welcome' subject to Northumberland Estates approval. It was also agreed to look to include some graphics to improve the visual appearance of the sign.

RESOLVED: To proceed with the installation of the proposed sign for the Gardens.

RA13/38. Planting/Hanging Basket Proposals and Issues

The clerk explained that Alnwick in Bloom had requested that the watering of the hanging baskets in the town be paid for this year by the Town Council and that this cost be deducted from their grant. The Council grant to Alnwick In Bloom was £2575. The exact cost of the watering will not be known until the number of baskets purchased is known, but this will be £18 per basket plus VAT. Councillors were supportive of this request. Councillor Farrar informed the committee that Elizabeth Jones from Alnwick in Bloom had a contact that was willing to look at the floral clock mechanism for free and give costs for the possible refurbishment. This was discussed, including the background to the decision to remove the pointers some two years ago and it was decided that there was nothing to be lost by investigating costs.

RESOLVED: To pay for the cost of watering the Alnwick in Bloom hanging baskets in the town in 2014, and deduct a corresponding amount from the Alnwick In Bloom grant; and to obtain costs for the refurbishment of the floral clock mechanism.

RA 13/39. Allotments

The Clerk explained the 2014 rent collection had gone well with the majority of rents now paid and the new allotment agreement had been issued and were being returned. A total of

13 people were on allotment waiting lists, with 10 of these being on the St James's list. In 2013, 20 new allotments had been let. At St Georges, all allotments were now ready for lettings once the final fencing works had been completed. At Ratten Row considerable works had been undertaken to clear the top triangle and it was felt that there was space for 8 new full allotments. Consideration would now be given to agreeing the water supply provision and fencing for this area.

RESOLVED: To receive the update .

RA 13/40. New Website

Janet Pibworth updated the committee on the website progress and explained that some 50 pages of content were now available and the site was almost ready to go live. She explained that each Councillor would have a new email address that would have an Alnwick-tc.gov.uk format and that emails would be forwarded to Councillors existing private email addresses. It was hoped that the site would be live during the week commencing 3rd February.

RESOLVED: To receive the update

RA13/41. Public Conveniences

Councillors were informed that there was still no decision on a possible capital programme improvement scheme from NCC for the Alnwick public conveniences. The clerk reminded the committee that next year's budget included £3,000 for toilet improvements. It was agreed that whilst the progression of the county proposal was the preferred option, if this was not possible, the Town Council needed to be ready with a fallback position. Some councillors felt the council should look to take the toilets over whilst others urged caution and suggested the most important issue was getting the County council to do their job properly. It was agreed that the Town Council should start preparatory work on a scheme and also needed to also establish what was proposed for the rest of the building (including the Northumberland Hall.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee be given delegated powers to progress planning the refurbishment scheme for the Market Street Toilets, if this proves necessary.

RA 13/42. Map cases and Information maps

The Clerk gave an update on the improvements proposed to the map cases, as discussed with the Town Team. It was suggested that a new map would be printed on a Duralite surface which would be mounted at the front of the map case, if this proved difficult to do, the perspex windows would be replaced. He also outlined that a project was being discussed to reprint the Visitor Guide leaflet and that the Council had previously committed up to £800 for this and this money was still in the budgets.

RESOLVED: To receive the update.

RA 13/43. Maintenance of Parks in Alnwick

This agenda item had been referred from the full Council and arose because of concerns about the standards of maintenance in the Alnwick parks compared to Morpeth. Councillors first discussed Swansfield Park and the maintenance done by the County Council. It was pointed out that there was an endowment that they were able to fund their costs from and it may be possible to agree a higher standard of planting/maintenance but this might mean that the endowment is used much quicker. Some Councillors felt that if a Parks Association was formed a better park could be created and some suggested the need for a bigger park. In the first instance it was agreed to discuss the current works specification with the county council. Councillors also discussed the Column Field and were updated on the proposals from Alnwick in Bloom to improve the views from the Tenantry Column. It was explained

that some rowan trees were to be pruned and this may then give a good location for a new seat or seats around the bottom of the Column. It was agreed to look at a Town Council Memorial seat scheme. I was also agreed to find out more about the County Council's strategic parks.

RESOLVED: To discuss the maintenance and the options for improvement of Swansfield Park with Northumberland County Council, and to establish a memorial seat scheme.

RA 13/44. Request for financial assistance towards Alnwick Bike Track scheme

Councillor Broom took the chair for this item. A letter and enclosure from Groundwork North East had been circulated with the agenda papers, this asked the Council for financial assistance towards their initial costs of progressing the Alnwick Bike Track scheme. The request was for £1,000 - £2,000. The Clerk reminded Councillors that the Council had agreed to take on the lease for the scheme, if it received planning permission. Councillors were supportive of the request.

RESOLVED: To give a grant of £1,000 towards the initial costs of progressing the scheme.

RA 13/45. To consider quotes received for replacement play areas at Cawledge View and Clovers Green

The clerk informed councillors that 3 quotes had been received for the play area replacement equipment; one quote did not meet to the specification required. The remaining quotes were all within the budget figures given. To progress matter it was agreed a group of Councillors meet with the clerk to look at the quotes and once a choice was made, to progress the replacement schemes.

RESOLVED: Councillors Patience, Roberts and Mavin meet with the Clerk to agree the replacement equipment and then the clerk progresses the schemes.

RA 13/46. Future town twinning commitments

This matter had been referred by the full Council. Councillors first discussed the request from Lagny to join in their Great War Commemoration. The Clerk explained the exact nature of the commemoration was not yet known, nor were the dates. Councillors discussed the possibility of sending a veteran to represent the town, this would be discussed further when more details were known. Councillors then discussed the request from Time Kommune for a meeting in Alnwick or Norway to investigate the future twinning direction. Some Councillors were concerned about the costs associated with such a meeting and it was proposed to look to see if technology such as video conferencing could assist with such a meeting.

RESOLVED: To consider the request from Lagny further when more details are known and to explore the possibility of a video conferencing meeting with Time Kommune.

RA 13/47. Ideas for commemoration of the First World War and Anniversary of Magna Carta

Councillors discussed commemoration ideas including planting poppies, looking to refurbish the war memorial, a service of commemoration (perhaps on 3rd August) and collating information for the website. It was agreed that a small group of councillors form a sub group to look at ideas. The clerk reported that The Magna Carta Barons association had submitted a Heritage Lottery Fund application and as part of the first phase a total contribution of £2,178 was required towards funding of £44,700. The Trustees had come up with a formula for obtaining contributions from the towns involved, which meant the Alnwick contribution should be £150. The clerk also explained a meeting was being organized with the Bailiffgate Museum and the Alnwick Castle to look at ideas for 2015.

RESOLVED: The Committee agreed to pay £150 towards the Heritage Lottery Fund first phase plans and Councillors Farrar and Symmonds attend local planning meetings on behalf of the Town Council.

RA13/48. Any other business

The need to progress the new notice board was highlighted and agreed.

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The meeting closed at 9.38 pm