

**Minutes of the Recreation & Amenities Committee meeting held on
Thursday 25th September 2014
in the Mechanic's Institute, Percy Street, Alnwick at 7.00pm**

Present: Councillors S Patience (Chairman), P Broom, D Farrar, C Goodfellow, P Holt, G Mavin, S Mavin, R Roberts, M Swinbank and A Symmonds.

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

RA 14/17	<p>Apologies</p> <p>Councillors M Harrington and A Shilton</p>
RA 14/18	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>None.</p>
RA 14/19	<p>Budget Update 2014/15</p> <p>The Town Clerk circulated a copy of the Recreation & Amenities Committee Income and Expenditure as at 25th September 2014. This showed expenditure of £3566 on events, £37 on projects and £14,651 on assets & services. Income was reported at £90 at this stage. Each section was discussed noting the following:</p> <p><u>EXPENDITURE</u></p> <p>EVENTS - Councillor Patience commented that conditions had been attached to the Grants and asked if the Food Festival had provided the required information. The Town Clerk confirmed that they provided an accounts spreadsheet. It was explained that at the next meeting, applications for funding from next year's events would be considered</p> <p>The Town Clerk explained the unallocated budget of £9,000 is to support events in the future. He reminded councillors that there is an Events sub group arranged for October 23rd at 7pm at the Mechanics Institute to which all councillors will be invited.</p> <p>Councillor Farrar asked if grant awardees have to send in accounts information to be awarded a grant? The Town Clerk said that not all organisations had audited accounts and accounts information was not always in a standard format. Councillor Farrar felt that perhaps it needed to be.</p> <p>Councillor Symmonds commented that the Music Festival was registered with Companies House and needed to have an external auditor to look at their accounts but that audited accounts were not needed.</p> <p>Councillor G Mavin commented that the Town Council have accepted hand written accounts statements in the past. The Town Clerk explained that these were accompanied by relevant bank statements.</p> <p>Councillor Roberts felt the Town Council needed to ask for something that is reasonable and that showed how people were spending money they had received.</p> <p>Councillor Patience said the Town Council needed to be reassured about each organisation requesting a grant. It is public money so procedures must be transparent.</p> <p>Councillor Farrar thought the Town Council need to specify the types of financial information that can be submitted. Councillor Symmonds felt a standard model would be useful.</p>

	<p>PROJECTS - the Town Clerk gave an update on some of the project budgets:</p> <p>Peters Mill Bridge - Councillor Harrington is arranging to have the mill stones moved.</p> <p>Communications - a new notice board has been ordered and will cost approximately £1723. He reminded councillors that there was still money in the budget to look to put notice boards elsewhere in the town.</p> <p>Litter bins - a review of bin locations and usage had been completed and had identified five bins that could be removed. This would enable bins to be placed in better locations including the new double bin at the bus station. Councillor Broom felt that another bin would be useful at the other end of the bus station. Councillor Patience reported that the dog bin at The Limes was still missing and suggested that it be replaced with a dual bin. Councillor Roberts suggested that the Town Council asked for clarification on the bin issue from NCC especially with new developments. The Town Clerk reported NCC had confirmed they needed to review their policy on bins.</p> <p><u>ASSETS & SERVICES</u></p> <p>WAGES - slightly up due to summer overtime but should flatten out.</p> <p>PLAYGROUND - costs include the new equipment at Swansfield Park.</p> <p>SEATS - some play area seats need replacing and this will cost around £1,200. Councillor Broom reported that a resident had asked if there could be seating at the Oaky Balks bus stop. The Town Clerk said there was a seat already there. Councillor Roberts thought perhaps they meant a seat at the bus stop opposite Oaky Balks. Councillor Holt felt that a seat was needed on both sides of the road.</p> <p>The Town Clerk reported that two benches on Column Field could be replaced along with two timber seats on Greenwell Lane near the entrance to Alnwick Garden.</p> <p>RESOLVED: i) To receive the update and budget figures; ii) To move the Heritage bin in Denwick Lane to Column Field; iii) To remove the bins at the entrance to the former Thomas Percy School and the lamppost bin in Denwick Lane beyond Alnwick Garden; iv) To place the new double bin at the bus station; v) To place another new bin at the bus station near to the Bus Station.</p>
<p>RA 14/20</p>	<p>Working Group Updates</p> <p>Allotments - The Town Clerk reported that a site meeting had taken place in August.</p> <p>St Georges - 3 allotments holders had been chased about the condition of their plots. A request had been received about a water supply.</p> <p>Ratten Row - 3 allotments holders told about untidy plots. Need to think about area near to new gate which could be a compost area. Water supply to be progressed.</p> <p>Councillor Patience commented that St Georges looked good and the new plots were well used.</p> <p>Councillor Swinbank asked if the water supply being installed at Ratten Row was frost proof. The Town Clerk said he thought so but would check.</p> <p>Councillor S Mavin asked if allotment holders could sell their produce? Councillor Patience explained that they cannot sell from the Ratten Row site as this was prohibited under the terms of the Town Council's lease with Northumberland Estates.</p> <p>WWI - The sub group had met to review the original suggestion list and had discussed the next recommendations to be put forward to the Rec & Amenities committee.</p> <p>They put forward two ideas - a Memorial Arboretum in either Swansfield Park or Column Field and a Rose Garden at the bottom of Column Field opposite the War Memorial. They reported that they plan to ask for sponsorship from local organisations including the RAF at Boulmer; the Fire Service, NHS and Police and any other local</p>

	<p>companies who lost staff during WWI. The idea was to plant some trees and roses over each of the next five years and each year the type of trees and roses would reflect a point during WWI. E.g. one of the middle year's trees with black stems or peeling bark could be planted whilst the last planting would include Peace Roses.</p> <p>A request for a £500 budget was put forward to the committee for the first batch of trees and roses which will be ordered this year and planted before next Spring.</p> <p>RESOLVED: i) To accept the updates; ii) To allocate a budget of £500 to the WWI sub group for trees and roses.</p>
<p>RA 14/21</p>	<p>Planting and grass cutting proposals 2015-16</p> <p>GRASS CUTTING</p> <p>The Town Clerk advised the committee that NCC have asked the Town Council if they want three additional (paid for) cuts next year, the same as year (two in October and one in March). Councillors reviewed the map of Alnwick to look at the grassed areas involved.</p> <p>Councillor Swinbank asked if the cuts take place regardless of the weather. The Town Clerk explained that the Town Council only pay for the cuts that are actually done.</p> <p>Councillor Broom asked if the Town Council could review grass cutting at the Play Areas especially Swansfield Park. He asked if the Town Council could go out to tender to pay for some grass cutting in the Play Areas using some of the endowment money. The Town Clerk advised that he had seen strimming being done and had asked them to trim around the play equipment but it hadn't been done. He suggested that NCC's new Local Services Manager be invited to a site meeting to discuss the grass cutting.</p> <p>Councillor Farrar suggested that as the Town Council had lots a grassy verges they could consider having less cuts done or starting the cuts later in the year in some areas, to allow spring bulbs to be planted. Councillor Swinbank advised that the mowing at the top of Clayport Bank is done around the daffodils so bulbs should be fine. Councillor Symonds asked if this would look like Cramlington? Councillor Patience said in the early stages in would not look at its best.</p> <p>Councillor Symmonds asked for more information about the strimming by NCC. He felt the Town Council should ascertain if it was bad workmanship and should push to have the work done properly before paying for any additional work to be undertaken. He also felt that the Town Council should raise their concerns with a NCC Local Services Manager and ask how he will address them. The Town Clerk advised that the new NCC Local Services Manager had been invited to a meeting but that a site visit would be more useful. Councillor Broom felt it was important that it was sorted out.</p> <p>Councillor G Mavin said he supported the others councillors' comments about quality control of NCC Services in Alnwick and that the Town Council need to get NCC to do what they are paid for.</p> <p>Councillor Farrar asked if there was a Service Level Agreement for grass cutting. The Town Clerk confirmed there wasn't and said that the first thing was to arrange a site meeting in the next couple of weeks with the new NCC Local Services Manager then agree if extras cuts would be needed next year and add to the budget if necessary.</p> <p>PLANTING</p> <p><u>Hanging baskets, tubs and flowerbeds</u> - The Town Clerk advised councillors that last year they had only received one full quote for the planting and watering work around the town which was from NCC. The quote was £10,800 and included planting up and watering hanging baskets, tubs & flower beds.</p> <p>The Town Clerk informed councillors that if they wanted to go out to tender for next year's planting then this would need to go out shortly. Councillor Broom stated that as</p>

	<p>NCC had done such a good job this year could the Town Council ask them to do it again. Councillor Roberts felt that by not going out to tender the Town Council may lose the opportunity to get a local new business the chance to quote.</p> <p>Councillor Swinbank asked about the process with NCC if the Town Council did not go out to tender. The Town Clerk said he could speak to NCC and negotiate around last year's price.</p> <p>Councillor S Mavin asked if the Town Council got a choice of colours? The Town Clerk confirmed they did.</p> <p>Councillor Symmonds said he was not keen to go with any new company that had not already contacted the Town Council about potential work. He felt the Town Council should go with NCC early to ensure they got any discounts that they can. He felt the committee should give the Town Clerk leeway to negotiate with NCC.</p> <p><u>Oaks Roundabout Flowerbed</u> - The Town Clerk reminded councillors that NCC had planted annuals (marigolds and geraniums) this year. Councillor Patience explained a proposed planting scheme to councillors based on a scheme put together by Friends of The Earth (FOTE). She explained that there would be a central tree with planting underneath and the idea was to give all year round colour and interest.</p> <p>Councillor Farrar explained that The Oaks hotel had offered £50-£100 towards the scheme and FOTE £75. The Town Council would need to contribute £75. Planting and maintenance would be done by ATC and FOTE and the watering by NCC.</p> <p>Councillor G Mavin asked if the planting was in front of the seat at The Oaks and asked if the location of the tree could be checked to ensure that it did not obscure the view for drivers approaching the roundabout. Councillor Patience commented that the planned tree was not a dense one, and if necessary a shrub could be considered instead.</p> <p>Councillor Broom reminded councillors that Alnwick in Bloom had been awarded a gold award this year.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">RESOLVED: i) To add three additional grass cuts to the budget for 2015-16; ii) To give delegated powers to the Town Clerk to negotiate a rate with NCC for planting and watering baskets, tubs and flowerbeds in 2015/16; iii) To allocate £75 towards the cost of seasonal planting at The Oaks roundabout.</p>
<p>RA 14/22</p>	<p>Updates:</p> <p>a) Allotments</p> <p>See RA14/20 Working Group updates. The Town Clerk updated councillors that there is a small waiting list for allotments at St James's and St George's.</p> <p>b) Public Conveniences</p> <p>The work on the Market Place toilets was bought up at the joint meeting with NCC on Monday September 22nd. Councillor Goodfellow asked when the money for the work would be handed over to NCC. The Town Clerk confirmed this would be when the work was finished.</p> <p>Councillor S Mavin reported that the new hand driers were not easy to use.</p> <p>Councillor Broom reported that attendees at the Food Festival had complained about the toilets.</p> <p>Councillor Goodfellow said they were not being cleaned properly and that service standards were needed between NCC and ATC.</p> <p>Councillor Broom commented that the grouting hadn't been cleaned for two months. Councillor Roberts remarked that the grouting wasn't even finished in the ladies toilets.</p>

Councillor G Mavin felt that NCC and the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan (ADNP) saw tourism as a key sector but did not see toilets as a priority.

Councillor Farrar suggested that perhaps the Town Council could ask local cafes and hotels to make their toilets available to the public. The Town Clerk explained that The George Hotel already get paid by NCC to make their toilets available but this was not well signposted. He felt the Town Council or NCC could ask other people in the town such as Costa Coffee and the Wetherspoon's (if they go ahead) to make their toilets available.

Councillor Patience thought this could be an issue for the Town Team. Councillor Farrar reminded councillors that the cost breakdown requested by the Town Council had not come through from NCC. He also felt that better 'free' toilets were needed.

c) Play areas

The Town Clerk informed councillors that the equipment at the top area of Glovers Green needs replacing and that ATC are waiting for NCC to remove some of the brickwork (option1) but have very little budget for this. The alternative was to remove all the brickwork, flags, wall and replace the top soil (option 2). Councillor Roberts felt that ATC should take a longer term view on how they want it to look. What would the costs be? The Town Clerk informed her that it option 1 would cost around £500 for skip hire and NCC labour whilst option 2 was more difficult to cost but could be around £5,000.

The Town Clerk reported that there had been bits of vandalism at Swansfield Park play area and that this had been reported to the police.

d) Memorial Schemes

The Administration Assistant gave an update on the memorial scheme which will be split between the Cemetery and Recreation & Amenities Committees. For Recreation & Amenities this will be benches that can be put around the town, for example, in Column Field.

People will have a choice between recycled and wooden benches but when the Town Council replace benches these should be recycled as it is more environmentally friendly and many other councils are choosing to do this. If we do use wooden benches they should be as locally sourced as possible.

Information sheets were issued with details, images and prices of recycled and wooden benches along with costs of other councils' Memorial Schemes. Councillors were asked to take these away and review for discussion at the November meeting. Decisions will then be made about which benches the Town Council will offer and which locations.

e) Notice Board and Website

Notice Board

The Town Clerk advised the committee that the new notice board has been ordered to replace the one on the west end of Northumberland Hall. It will be in light oak and will have the words Alnwick Town Notices on it. He reminded councillors that we could look at notice boards for elsewhere in the town. Councillor Farrar thought the Communications sub group could look at this.

Website

The Administration Assistant issued the website stats (as at Sept 22nd 2014). Both visits and page views had increased for the third consecutive period and the referral sites have also increased with referrals this period from Northumberland Tourism and NCC websites. An analysis of the search words used was issued and will be used by the Communication working group to ensure Search Engine Optimisation.

RESOLVED: i) To accept the updates; ii) To look at quotes for work to Glovers Green Play Area option 2; iii) To add notice boards and website to Communications sub group agenda for October 23rd (6pm) meeting.

<p>RA 14/23</p>	<p>Allotment Rents 2015/16</p> <p>The Town Clerk reminded the committee that they needed to put a recommendation to Full Council regarding rents for 2015/16 as letters need to be sent out by the end of November. Councillor Farrar asked if the size of the plot impacted on costs. The Town Council said the main differences in price reflected whether a full or 1/2 plot and whether the site had water.</p> <p>Councillor Roberts thought the increase should not just be the same across all plots as water was a real issue. Councillor S Mavin asked if water butts could be put in at St George's. The Town Clerk said that some allotment holders had their own water butts.</p> <p>Councillor Swinbank asked if we knew whether the allotment sites paid for themselves. The Town Clerk explained that St James's and St George's generally did but Ratten Row didn't.</p> <p>Councillor Farrar and Councillor G Mavin made suggestions for rents for 2015/16, both of which included slight increases and it the following rents were agreed:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="336 734 1310 1182"> <thead> <tr> <th>Site</th> <th colspan="2">Proposed Rents</th> <th>Rent Period</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td rowspan="4"><u>Ratten Row</u></td> <td>Full Plot</td> <td>£45 with water</td> <td rowspan="2">Jan -Dec</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>£35 without water</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Half plot</td> <td>£35 with water</td> <td rowspan="2"></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>£25 without water</td> </tr> <tr> <td rowspan="2"><u>St James's</u> (site has water)</td> <td>Full plot</td> <td>£40</td> <td rowspan="2">Jan-Dec</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Half Plot</td> <td>£30</td> </tr> <tr> <td rowspan="2"><u>St George's</u> (no water supply)</td> <td>Full plot</td> <td>£30</td> <td rowspan="2">April-March</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Half Plot</td> <td>£20</td> </tr> <tr> <td rowspan="2"><u>Cawledge View</u> (no water supply)</td> <td>Full plot</td> <td>£30</td> <td rowspan="2">April-March</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Half Plot</td> <td>£20</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>RECOMMENDED: That full Council agree the above allotment rents for 2015-16.</p>	Site	Proposed Rents		Rent Period	<u>Ratten Row</u>	Full Plot	£45 with water	Jan -Dec		£35 without water	Half plot	£35 with water			£25 without water	<u>St James's</u> (site has water)	Full plot	£40	Jan-Dec	Half Plot	£30	<u>St George's</u> (no water supply)	Full plot	£30	April-March	Half Plot	£20	<u>Cawledge View</u> (no water supply)	Full plot	£30	April-March	Half Plot	£20
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<p>RA 14/24</p>	<p>Any Other Urgent Business</p> <p>Councillor G Mavin asked that Reporting from External Bodies be added to the Recreation & Amenities agenda. Councillor Roberts felt that as Councillors S Allcroft and P Allcroft represent the Town Council sit on the Food Festival they need to be invited to the relevant Rec & Amenities committee meeting to give feedback.</p> <p>Councillor Swinbank reported that two trees had been taken out of the Cobbles and asked if they could be replaced?</p> <p>Councillor Roberts advised councillors that the Community Orchard will be holding a Gardeners Questions on Sunday October 19th.</p>																																	

Meeting closed at 9.45pm