

**Minutes of the Recreation & Amenities Committee meeting held on
Thursday 26th March 2015
in the St James's Centre, Pottergate, Alnwick at 7.00pm**

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

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

RA 14/43 Apologies

Councillors M Harrington and R Roberts (arrived late).

RA 14/44 Declarations of Interest

None.

RA 14/45 Budget Update 2014/15

The Town Clerk circulated a copy of the Recreation & Amenities Committee Income and Expenditure as at 26th March 2015. This showed expenditure of £11,782.48 on events, £16,816.04 on projects and £35,162.04 on assets & services. Income was £4,382.50 at this point, most of which is from Allotments rents. The Town Clerk took councillors through each section noting the following:

EVENTS:

The only expenditure since January had been for Remembrance Sunday, Town Twining and Christmas Lights. He advised that there was still a bill outstanding for the Video conference.

PROJECTS:

Peters Mills Bridge - money will be carried forward into 2015.

Town Promotion - money will be carried forward into 2015.

Dog Bins / Litter Bins - expenditure currently under budget but two more bins need to be purchased.

Public Toilets Refurbishment - no payment made as yet as awaiting the outcome of the NCC value audit.

ASSETS & SERVICES:

Wages/PAYE for assets - slightly over budget due to pay award in January.

Playground Expenses - above budget as some additional expenditure due to vandalism.

Planting Floral displays - all invoices now in from NCC.

Councillor questions:

Councillor Symmonds asked if the money allocated to the Food Festival would be put back into the budget.

Councillor G Mavin asked how the Town Council would deal with the Food Festival's proportion of the storage costs.

The Town Clerk advised that, as the news regarding the Food Festival not taking place was new, these items would need to be discussed.

Councillor Broom asked if the Town Council knew why the Food Festival was not taking place. The Town Clerk advised that he understood it was a number of reasons.

Councillor Broom also asked who else paid for the storage unit. The Town Clerk advised that the costs were shared amongst the Spring Show, Alnwick Music Festival, Alnwick Markets, Alnwick Christmas Lights and the Town Council.

RESOLVED: To accept the budget update.

RA 14/46 Working Group Updates (Magna Carta, Events & Communications)

The Town Clerk gave an update from each working group:

Magna Carta - this had been discussed at the last Full Council meeting and a budget of £750 had been allocated. He advised that within the Baron towns some were doing a lot for the 800th anniversary and some were doing very little. Alnwick had put together a range of activities and suggested purchases suitable for the town. These include:

- a) displaying a facsimile of the Magna Carta, provided by the Magna Carta Barons Association, as part of a Magna Carta exhibition at the Bailiffgate Museum from May 19th to July 5th along with a translation.
- b) organising a Magna Carta schools competition where the winners will be on display as part of the Magna Carta exhibition at the Bailiffgate Museum.
- c) organising Magna Carta banners - one is a generic Magna Carta banner and the other has images of Alnwick relating to Eustace De Vesci.
- d) purchasing a book which will be on display at the Bailiffgate Museum then donated to the library.
- e) planting an oak tree which could be done on June 28th when the Town Clerk of Trowbridge arrives in Alnwick having undertaken a 800 mile bike ride.

He also advised that a letter had been received from Sir Peter Luff about a possible Liberteia event on Sunday June 15th to engage residents in a discussion about democracy as part of a tea party.

Councillor Symmonds advised that the Town Council could be lent the PA system to have a recorded peel of bells played.

Councillor Broom asked if the Town Crier had been invited. The Town Clerk advised that he hadn't at present.

Councillor Farrar asked what Warkworth were doing for the event and if several oak trees could be planted. The Town Council advised that Warkworth were holding a church service, village concert and displaying their facsimile.

Councillor Symmonds asked if the Town Council could donate a tree to their Canadian Twin Town.

Councillor Farrar felt it might not be the right time to plant trees. The Administration Assistant advised that a plaque could be put into the ground at the site of the trees then they could be planted later in the year.

Councillor Farrar asked for additional budget to be allocated to purchase more trees.

Events

The key dates for the Volunteer Fair were discussed:

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| April 14 th | Meeting with event organisers to discuss proposals |
| June 2nd | 'Looking after Your Volunteers' event for organisers run by Wansbeck CVS |
| June 27th | Volunteers fair in Northumberland Hall with market stalls in the Market Place. |

Councillor G Mavin advised that he had contacted Paul Larkin about publicising the event in the Gazette and had been advised that Paul would run something each week up to the event but that articles must have a local focus.

The Town Clerk advised that a small budget was needed for this event, mostly for room hire, and requested a budget of £400 be allocated.

Councillor Patience advised that the list of organisations being invited was not exhaustive and that councillors should inform the Town Clerk if they had any additional names to add / invite.

Councillor Broom asked if the Town Council were looking to invite other groups such as the football club. The Town Clerk advised that they could be invited.

The Town Clerk also advised councillors that on the same day as the Volunteer Fair there would be a group of motor cyclists stopping off in Alnwick Place on their way to RAF Boulmer. This was a regular event, which took place as part of Armed Forces week, and the bikers always stopped off in the Market Place.

Councillor G Mavin was concerned about the use of the Market Place in such a way. Councillor Symmonds advised that it was well organised, the bikers always drove slowly and they were always stewarded in and out of the Market Place.

Communication - no further update from this sub group.

RESOLVED: i) To note the updates; ii) To allocate an additional £40 to purchase more oak trees for the 800th Magna Carta Anniversary; iii) To allocate a £400 budget for the Volunteer Fair in June.

RA 14/47 Updates:

a) Allotments - The Town Clerk gave an update:

St James - all plots are let and all rents had been paid.

St Georges / Cawledge - rent demands have been sent out and one allotment has been given up so far.

Ratten Row - about six plots have been given up and about four re-let to date.

Remaining 3-4 plots are more difficult plots to let so might offer a rent free period.

The Town Clerk advised that the Town Council were nearing the end of their three year lease on Ratten Row and that he had spoken to Northumberland Estates who did not see an issue extending the lease.

Councillor Farrar added that the Town Council might have to look at some anti dumping measures in the collective areas. There may also be a possibility for existing plot holders to extend their plots to take in some of the unused ground.

Councillor Farrar also advised that more trees could be planted to stop some access and that security cameras may be installed in a couple of locations. He suggested that the Town Council review their allotment agreements in order to restrict the types of materials allowed on site, including tyres, and the types of sheds and buildings allowed on site.

Councillor Farrar advised that at St Georges some allotments that are rented to people whose houses back onto them are not being maintained and that in future plots may not be let right behind someone's house.

Councillor S Mavin asked about the main reasons for plots being given up. The Town Clerk advised that some were age related and some just did not have the time.

Councillor Broom advised that he had not come across anyone using pigs.

b) Public Conveniences

The Town Clerk advised that he was still awaiting the outcome of the NCC Best Value audit but that he had not paid the invoice.

Councillor Swinbank commented that he had been speaking to a local resident who had advised him that the toilets used to be further down the building and occupy a much bigger space. Councillor Symmonds advised that they had been moved when the lift had been installed in Northumberland Hall.

Councillor Farrar informed the committee that he had heard that some Parish Councils would only have their toilets open during the summer months. The Town Clerk advised that he had not heard anything about this.

Councillor Holt asked if it was correct that NCC were planning to do something with Northumberland Hall. The Town Clerk advised that this was correct.

c) Play Areas

Glovers Green - The Town Clerk advised that the hard landscaping had been removed and that the new play equipment would be installed once the grass had been seeded. Councillor Broom asked how much it would cost just to re turf the immediate area around the play equipment. The Town Clerk advised that he would get costs.

Swansfield Park - The Town Clerk advised that there had been a small amount of vandalism to the slide. Councillor Broom asked if there was any update on providing equipment for older children. The Town Clerk advised that there was no update.

d) New Seat Locations

The Administration Assistant took the committee through the list of possible additional seat locations that had been received from councillors. The surface on which these would need to be fixed had been added, to give a better idea of the potential costs involved. She advised that the list would be now sent to NCC for review and comment.

Councillor Farrar suggested that the list also be sent to Travelsure and Arriva as most of the seats were at bus stops. Councillor G Mavin suggested that some of the seats could be offered for sponsorship.

e) Notice Board and Website

Notice Board - The Town Clerk advised that the NCC sign in front of the new location for the notice board had been removed, and that the new notice board would be put up the following Monday.

Website - The Administration Assistant issued the website stats (at Mar 26th 2015). There had been 914 visits and 1,924 page views in the period, the average number of pages viewed was 2.11 and the average duration of stay 1 minute 39 seconds. The number of new visitors remained high although the bounce rate had gone up slightly. She noted that referrals were now coming from Northumberland Tourism website.

The Search word analysis was issued and will be reviewed at the next Communication working group.

f) Additional Grass Cutting Policy for 2015/16

Councillor Farrar informed the committee that he had spoken to Bill Pringle and agreed to have the usual three grass cuts this year. He also advised that he was having a meeting with Elizabeth Jones from Alnwick on Bloom and will come to the next committee meeting with a suggested list of types of bulbs, costs and locations.

RESOLVED: To accept the updates.

RA 14/48 Joint meeting with NCC

1) to consider the matters raised at the last meeting:

- a) Smoking outside businesses and provision of bins - The Town Clerk reminded councillors that this item concerned the issue of the number of cigarette ends dropped on the pavements in the town centre.

Councillor Broom asked how this could be enforced. The Town Clerk advised that NCC could enforce this as littering.

Councillor Broom also felt that buckets might be a better solution as they could be taken in at the end of the day.

Councillor Swinbank asked if it was correct that NCC do not pick up cigarette ends. The Town Clerk advised that he thought it was correct.

Councillor Farrar suggested checking what legal responsibility pub owners had to provide bins (especially ones for cigarette ends) outside their premises. He advised that all pubs in London have cigarette end bins but that these were sponsored. He advised that the Town Council could find out what was permitted in the Conservation Area.

Councillor Holt felt it was not only pubs that were at fault as it was staff and that the problem also extended to litter. She felt it was advisable to write a polite letter to businesses in the town about the problem.

Councillor Farrar suggested that members of the committee notified the Town Clerk of problem locations.

Councillor Broom felt the matter could be raised with NCC's licensing committee.

The Town Clerk advised that a list could be put together ahead of the next joint meeting with NCC in April.

- b) Litter relating to empty shops - Councillor Holt asked if there was a policy relating to litter outside empty buildings. She advised that the area down the steps outside George Lambert's former house was particularly bad as access was not possible. Councillor Patience commented that NCC's Building Control would need to be involved. The Town Clerk also advised that NCC could serve notice on the owners.

Councillor Swinbank commented that there was also a problem in the Market Place where a lot of plastic cups are blowing out of bins as they are so full. He asked if NCC were not emptying them as often as they did. The Town Clerk advised that NCC have cut down on weekend working so the bins do not get emptied as often as they did.

Councillor Holt asked if there was any more information on whether NCC would use weedkiller on the edges of pavements etc.

Councillor Broom felt the entrance to the cemetery and the path towards Sainsbury's were looking untidy. The Town Clerk advised that the area round the roundabout in the cemetery had been tidied the previous weekend and work would be undertaken to tarmac the patches in the main avenue and at the entrance.

Councillor G Mavin felt that the bank above the footpath towards Sainsbury's was a real mess and wondered if anything could be done.

2) To raise any matters for the next joint meeting on April 22nd

Councillors suggested that following items be added to the next joint meeting from the Recreation & Amenities committee:

- a) Weedkilling policy
- b) Tidying the bank above the path to Sainsbury's
- c) Bin emptying policy

- d) Smoking outside pubs/businesses
- e) Play equipment for older children
- f) Northumberland Hall refurbishment / toilet improvements
- g) Availability of an access survey for Alnwick (re wheelchair users) and budget for identified works
- h) The Peth - replacing missing cones and longer term solution / double yellow lines.
This was put forward as part of the Town Council's LTP - did this get adopted?

Councillor Roberts advised that the 20mph sign in Swansfield Park Road had not been repainted following re tarmac work.

Councillor G Mavin asked if NCC asked the Police for advice about potential yellow line locations for new developments.

Councillor Farrar suggested that the list was sent to NCC ahead of the meeting so that relevant answers could be obtained. The Town Clerk advised that he would table the draft agenda at the Full Council meeting on April 9th for approval.

RA 14/49 Any Other Urgent Business

Councillor Roberts advised that she had had a message from a resident about litter blowing up Denwick Lane and asked if they could borrow litter picking equipment. The Town Clerk advised that this was available to borrow.

Meeting closed at 8.48pm