

**Minutes of the Recreation & Amenities Committee meeting held on
Thursday 28th July 2016
in the Mechanics Institute, Percy Street, Alnwick at 7.00pm**

Present: Councillors P Broom (Chair), S Bell, P Edge, B Griddale, G Mavin, S Patience, A Shilton, M Swinbank and A Symmonds (arrived late).

In attendance: W Batey, Chief Officer and Town Clerk; J Pibworth, Assistant to the Town Clerk and T Kirton, Project & Funding Officer.

RA 16/10 Apologies

Councillor M Harrington.

RA 16/11 Declarations of Interest

Councillor B Griddale declared a pecuniary interest in Item 5c) Lectern maps.

RA 16/12 Minutes of last meeting – matters arising not on the agenda

RA16/03 Toilets – Councillor G Mavin said he agreed with Councillor Patience's comment that the problem was the infrastructure of the building. He felt that with the expansion of the Your Welcome Scheme he did not see the need to keep the Shambles toilets open. He felt that they could be better utilised as offices.

Councillor Griddale felt they were always going to be a problem especially with more cuts in NCC budgets.

The Town Clerk advised that officers had undertaken inspection visits to the toilets over the past few weeks. He reported that although on each occasion the ladies toilets had been satisfactory or good the gents' toilets had been poor or very poor on each occasion. He explained that a standard inspection was being used and items which did not score satisfactory or above were reported to NCC.

Councillor Patience restated her comment that the toilets were not adequate.

Councillor G Mavin suggested that a structural inspection by a hygiene engineer be undertaken to ascertain the actual issues. The findings could then be discussed and the appropriate action taken.

Councillor Swinbank asked if the Your Welcome Scheme signage for the toilet doors had been done. The Town Clerk advised that the signs were done and the frames and fixing had just arrived and would be fixed in the next couple of weeks.

Councillor Edge asked that if the problem was with the urinals could these be replaced with cubicles. He did not feel that the Your Welcome Scheme would replace the need for toilets in the town.

Councillor Patience said that some of the issue was caused by the old grouting which had absorbed the odour over time.

Councillor Griddale reminded councillors that it was a Listed Building and that in

the past it used to have through flow of air.

Councillor Broom said that the problem with closing the toilets was that some businesses relied on them for staff and customers.

Councillor Bell felt that the issue could be put back to NCC to deal with.

The Town Clerk advised that the urinals could be set to flush more frequently to help the problem

RESOLVED: To instruct a hygiene engineer to carry out a structural inspection to ascertain the issues and report the findings.

RA16/06 Play Area audit – Councillor G Mavin asked for clarification on Councillor Patience question about the status of Community@NE66. Councillor Patience advised that she had asked about the charitable status.

Councillor Symmonds asked if there was any update on the bike park. The Project & Funding Officer explained that a new organisation was being set up and that monies received so far would be transferred once this was done.

RA 16/13 Budget Update 2016/17

The Town Clerk circulated a copy of the Recreation & Amenities Committee Income and Expenditure as at 26th July 2016. He advised that expenditure was £692.95 for events £864.55 for projects and £5173.14 for assets & services. Income was £485, which was Allotments rents. The Town Clerk noted the following:

EVENTS:

Music Festival – the Town Council had purchased a stage out of the Music Festival's grant money. The stage cost approximately £2,400 plus VAT and NCC had given approximately £1,400 towards this.

Councillor Symmonds thanked everyone for their support especially NCC and the Town Council. He advised that the new stage was very impressive and would be available for community groups / schools to use.

Councillor Patience asked if there would be charge for hiring the stage. Councillor Symmonds advised that the stage would be free of charge to community groups and schools but that there would be a rental charge for private functions.

Councillor Symmonds left the meeting.

Councillor Broom asked councillors for their thoughts on adding an extra £1,000 to the Music Festival's grant to help with the cost of the stage.

Councillor G Mavin said he was not sure about adding more grant money as the Music Festival already receive the largest event grant.

Councillor Swinbank felt it was important that all community assets had an owner and suggested that the Music Festival own the new stage.

Councillor Grisdale informed councillors that it had been suggested that the

Playhouse use Northumberland Hall as a second venue. He suggested that the Town Council talk to the Playhouse about the cost of the stage.

Councillor G Mavin felt that it might be more advisable if the Town Council could look to fill any financial gap at the end of the Music Festival.

Councillor Grisdale advised that the £1,000 would help the Music Festival.

RESOLVED: To offer the Alnwick International Music Festival an additional £1,000 grant.

Councillor Symmonds re-joined the meeting.

PROJECTS:

Peter's Mill Bridge – The Town Clerk advised that the cost of moving the mill stones would be around £300.

ASSETS & SERVICES:

Councillor Edge asked what the expenditure for Robertson's Fountain was for. The Town Clerk advised that the money was for the electric and water for the 1st quarter of the year. He added that the fountain provided power for some of the Christmas lights.

Councillor Edge asked if it could be a drinking fountain.

Councillor Swinbank thought it looked like it had once been a drinking fountain.

RESOLVED: To accept the 2016/17 budget update.

RA16/14 Updates on:

a) Play Areas

The Town Clerk reminded councillors that there was a budget of £17k for Play Area plus the remainder of the £99k endowment for Swansfield Park. He advised that the independent inspections had recommended self-closing gates. Modern self-closing gate mechanisms are below ground to make them more tamper proof. Money for the play area at Swansfield Park could come from the endowment.

Councillor G Mavin advised that the hedge was very high around the Allerburn Lea play area. The Town Clerk advised that it was the wrong time of year to cut it, this and that it would be done in the autumn or earlier if possible.

Councillor Swinbank asked if gates came with a guarantee. The Town Clerk advised that all equipment came with a guarantee and the type of equipment determined the length of the guarantee.

Councillor Swinbank asked if the replacement Wetpour at Allerburn Lea was for the whole play area. The Project & Funding Officer advised that the replacement Wetpour was the area under the new play equipment.

The Project & Funding Officer gave an update on the quotes received for the Play Area work:

Swansfield Park – installation of larger Wetpour area under the Cone Climber. Streetscape to undertake the work at a cost of £2,688.

Allerburn Lea – new equipment and repair to Wetpour under toddler swings. Sutcliffe Play to undertake the work at a cost of £9,155.

GATES

Swansfield Park – two self-closing gates. Two quotes had been received. The Town Clerk advised that Streetscape had made a site visit.

Councillor G Mavin recommended accepting the quote from Streetscape at a cost of £3,230. He also suggested asking Streetscape if there would be any discount as they were doing the two jobs.

RESOLVED: To accept the quote of £3,230 from Streetscape for the self-closing gates at Swansfield Park play area. The Clerk to look to achieve a discount as two jobs now offered to the same contractor.

Allerburn Lea – installation of one self-closing gate. Two quotes were received.

Councillor Swinbank asked about the state of the fence. The Town Clerk advised that it was very solid.

Councillor G Mavin recommended that Jupiter Play undertake the work at a cost of £686. This would then give the Town Council a comparison with the other gates.

RESOLVED: To accept the quote of £686 from Jupiter Play for the self-closing gate at Allerburn Lea play area.

b) Allotments (feedback from Allotments working group)

The Project & Finding Officer gave the feedback:

There are currently 5 vacant plots across the four allotment sites. A few plot holders still owe money and will be sent reminder letters.

St Georges

Two allotment holders at St Georges have been sent notice to tidy their plots or further action will be taken.

Consultation showed that the majority of allotment holders were not in favour of having a water supply installed.

Ratten Row

Complaints had resulted in four allotment holders being written to about the noise caused by cockerels. No further complaints have been notified to the Town Council by NCC's Environmental Health Officer.

Water supply – allotment holders think a communal stand pipes will not work owing to vandalism and would prefer each of the 70+ allotments to

be connected to the mains water supply.

Allotment Association – a further meeting needed to be held and it had been suggested that allotment holders be invited to the next Allotment working Group and that this should be held close to Ratten Row.

Tidy up day – date set for October 1st when two skips will be hired.

Locking gate – the majority of allotment holders (from plots 34 to 61) who replied were in favour of having a lock to which they would each have a key.

Councillor G Mavin felt that if an Allotment Association was a way of attracting grants to improve allotment sites why the allotment holders were not keen. The Town Clerk was confident that an allotment association would be set up but it might take some time.

Councillor Swinbank asked if all Allotment Association were still supported by their Town or Parish Council. Councillor G Mavin advised that Ashington Town Council no longer fund any of the allotments in Ashington.

c) Town Lectern Maps (Councillor Grisdale and Councillor Patience left for this item).

The Project & Funding Officer reminded councillors that the original idea was to replace the existing three Lectern maps in Alnwick rather than the original four. He advised that three quotes had been received for the work; two of whom had quoted to replace three lecterns and one who had quoted to replace four panels (with the fourth panel being kept until a suitable location was decided).

He advised that the cheapest quote was from Bill Grisdale at £800 but that this did not include a cost for the Cityscape copyright fee.

Councillor Swinbank asked if a cost was known for replacing the lectern that had been removed after having been damaged. The Project & Funding Officer advised that he did not have a cost as yet. He advised that the panel could be mounted on a wall.

Councillor G Mavin said he was concerned about the potential cost of the copyright from Cityscape. He recommended that the quote from Bill Grisdale be accepted provided it did not exceed £1,800 including the copyright fee.

Councillor Swinbank asked of the Chamber of Trade or the Town Team own the Four Quarters branding. The Town Clerk advised that the copyright fee was for the use of the map not the Four Quarters branding.

RESOLVED: To accept the quote from Bill Grisdale Designs provided it remains lower than the Cityscape quote including fixing fee.

Councillor Grisdale and Councillor Patience re-joined the meeting.

d) Town Council Flagpole (possible locations)

The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that the Town Council's planning

application for the flagpole had been withdrawn following discussions with NCC's Planning Officer. He had advised that although the principle of a permanent civic flag pole in the town was acceptable he was concerned that the visual impact it would have on the area considering its location within the conservation area. He also felt that it would add to the visual clutter of the area and would interrupt views into Column Field.

He had stated that he was happy to work with the Town Council to identify a more suitable location but if we did not withdraw the application he would make the recommendation for refusal. He suggested three possible locations the flag pole which the Town Clerk and Assistant to the Town Clerk had reviewed:

- a) Outside Barter Books - the site is the central point for the all the telephone lines coming into Alnwick so there is no area on the pavement large enough to accommodate the flag pole
- b) On the cobbles near Robertson's Fountain – there is little room due to trees to site a flag pole or a groups of people around it
- c) In the Market Place on the opposite side to the Market Cross – the area needs to be kept clear as vehicular access is needed (especially by the Co-operative funeral directors). The only area of the Market Place that might be suitable was the area at the Fenkle Street end of the Northumberland Hall close to Clayport Street.

The Town Clerk advised that he had also spoken to Peter Ennor from Alnwick Civic Society who felt that the end of Wagonway Road, on the cobbles opposite the Chocolate Box or the Market Place were the best alternatives. He confirmed that the Civic Society were against any application for a flag pole in Column Field.

Councillor Broom said he did not understand the issue with a flag pole in Column Field as it showed respect to the Armed Forces being close to the War Memorial. He felt that a planning application should be resubmitted for a flag pole in Column Field.

Councillor Patience suggested speaking to NCC Planning Department to talk through acceptable locations for the flag pole in Column Field.

Councillor Symmonds asked if all members of the Civic Society had objected to the flag pole in Column Field. Three councillors who are members of the Civic Society confirmed they had not been asked for comments.

Councillor Swinbank agreed with Councillor Patience that NCC's Planning Department should be involved in the new application and their statements used to strengthen the resubmitted planning application.

Councillor Symmonds reminded councillors that it was not just the Civic Society who had objected to the planning application there had also been a petition submitted to NCC.

The Town Clerk advised that he had spoken to the lady who had organised the petition and she had not been aware that the flag pole would have an

internal halyard so would not make any noise and that the chosen flag pole was similar to the ones outside Buckingham Palace.

RESOLVED: To re-submit a planning application for a Civic flag pole after speaking to the Planning Department.

e) Seat and bin replacements/provisions

Seats - The Town Clerk advised that an inspection of all the seats and benches was underway and had identified two benches which needed moving:

- i. a wooden bench outside the Bailiffgate site of the Duchess High School which was now located in front of parked cars since the cobbled car parking area had been made bigger to be removed
- ii. a heritage bench at the top of Pottergate which was underused and could be moved – suggested moving to replace the wooden bench outside the DCHS and siting on opposite side of road near to the defibrillator
- iii. a wooden bench at the bottom of The Peth was in poor repair and needed replacing

He also advised that the list of potential locations for additional seats and benches had been reviewed and a priority list drawn up for 2016 -17:

- i. Weavers Way between Cordwainers / Arkle Court (bus stop)
- ii. Weavers Way bus turning circle (has new bus stop)
- iii. Bondgate Without beside the entrance to The Plough
- iv. Willowburn Avenue on Taylor Drive (on Greensfield Court side of road)
- v. Green Batt outside the library
- vi. Outside the Community Orchard

He confirmed that the appropriate type of bench would be used at each location to tie in existing street furniture.

RESOLVED: To purchase six new seat / benches for the priority list and one replacement bench for the bottom of The Peth.

Bins – The Town Clerk advised that some of the bins had been power washed and it had made a really big difference. He suggested having some more done and confirmed that the Town Council may purchase their own power washer in the future.

He confirmed that the Town Council had received some requests for bins.

Councillor Broom asked if an extra bin could be sited at Glovers Green play area as the existing one was always very full.

Councillor Swinbank asked if there as anywhere on Taylor Drive that bins

could be sited for the new high school. The Town Clerk advised that the Town Council had responsibility for half of Taylor Drive and that a bin could be sited near to the new seat.

Councillor Broom suggested speaking to McDonalds to see if they would consider sponsoring some bins. The Town Clerk agreed to do this.

Councillor Edge asked if recycling bins were used at all. The Project & Funding Office reported that the bins were not used properly so NCC had withdrawn them.

Councillor Symmonds reported that he had seen a very useful programme about a simple and effective way to recycle cans.

Councillor Broom advised that O'Brien's recycle everything they collect.

f) War Memorial and Hotspur Statue inspections

War Memorial - The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that she had received quotes from three structural engineers (from the Conservation Accreditation Register for Engineers list) and the Chair and Town Clerk had chosen Charles Blackett-Ord to undertake the inspection. An email had been sent requesting a date. The Town Council will organise a cherry picker with NCC for use by the engineer.

Hotspur Statue - The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that she had spoken to Keith Maddison, the original sculptor of the statue. He had inspected the statue the previous week and although there were some small patches of discolouration this was not an issue. He will let the Town Council know if he is able to do the waxing and if not will recommend someone to undertake the work. It was expected that the waxing would cost around £500.

Keith confirmed that the insurance value of the statue was around £60k.

She suggested that the Hotspur Statue be added to the War Memorial maintenance schedule and inspected at the same time with any works also being carried out at the same time.

RESOLVED: To organise to have the Hotspur Statue waxed at a cost of up to £500.

RA 16/15 Any Other Urgent Business

Councillor G Mavin said how pleased he was with the coloured planting around the Hotspur Tower.

Councillor Swinbank reported that the Local Living Leader Funding Application was being held up. He asked if the Town Council could write to Anne Marie Trevelyan asking for her help with the matter. The Town Clerk advised that they would take this to the Full Council meeting in August.

Councillor Symmonds asked how the Town Council knew they were getting a good service from NCC with regard to the Shambles toilets. The Town Clerk confirmed that inspections were now taking place and issues reported to NCC.

Councillor Swinbank asked if Bob Hodgson would be attending a future meeting. The Town Clerk confirmed that he would be invited to the September meeting.

Councillor G Mavin suggested asking NCC for their toilet inspection sheet.

Councillor Broom reported that the hedges were overgrown on both sides of Denwick Lane close to Allerburn Lea.

Meeting closed at 9.20pm