

**Minutes of the Recreation & Amenities Committee meeting held on
Thursday 24th November 2016
in the Mechanics Institute, Percy Street, Alnwick at 7.00pm**

Present: Councillors P Broom (Chair), S Bell, P Edge, M Harrington, G Mavin, M Swinbank and A Symmonds.

In attendance: W Batey, Chief Officer and Town Clerk; T Kirton, Project & Funding Officer; Philip Angier (Local Living) and Elizabeth Jones (Alnwick in Bloom).

RA 16/23 Apologies

Councillors B Grisdale and S Patience.

RA 16/24 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Bell declared an interest in Item 4, Presentation of Alnwick in Bloom 2017/18 Grant application. Councillor Swinbank also declared an interest in Item 4, as the Town Council's representative on Alnwick in Bloom. Councillor Edge declared an interest in Item 7, Consideration of Grant application for Alnwick Garden's 2016 Christmas Lantern Parade. Councillor Symmonds declared an interest in Item 9 Consideration of 2017/18 grant for the Music Festival. Councillor Broom declared an interest in Item 9 consideration of the Christmas Lights Committee grant application.

RA 16/25 Feedback from the 2016 Food Festival and the Taste of the North

Philip Angier presented a progress report on the Food Festival and plans and priorities for 2017. Having secured LEADER funding Local Living is recruiting a part-time Promotions Officer to raise the profile of the Market and will buy a second-hand van to replace the van currently being rented, which will result in an improvement in cashflow. A full year of marketing and promotions should yield clear benefits in a year's time.

The lockup unit used by Local Living for Market equipment is located at Willowburn Industrial Estate where there is a proposal for the redevelopment of the site for housing.

This year's Taste of the North event attracted 30% more people than expected, whilst the Food Festival attracted double the number of people. Taste of the North made a £250 loss whilst the Food Festival made a slight profit. Local Living needs both events to make a good profit, not just to breakeven.

It is intended to hold the next Taste of the North in June and a further Food Festival in September 2017. A third event will be held in December 2017. These events raise the profile of Alnwick, generate more visitors and in-turn, more revenues and attract additional traders for Local Living.

Local Living has experimented for two years now with the Farmers' Market;

several stalls do okay but there is no critical mix determined yet. The town needs a 7-day economy but it has to be recognised that there are more and more weekend events happening elsewhere in Northumberland and as a result there is more and more competition to attract stalls and members of the public as customers.

The support for the Food Festival events enables them to work more with Alnwick Chamber of Trade and other partners; they are currently in dialogue with the Chamber of Trade to encourage more of their members to open on Sundays.

In response to a question from Cllr. Swinbank, Bill Batey confirmed that ATC had committed to providing an additional £1,000 of funding should LEADER funding be secured, but this had not yet been paid.

In response to a question from Cllr. Edge Philip confirmed that while many people are drawn into Alnwick Garden there is still a need to find the right mix of trading offerings to attract those same visitors to continue into Alnwick town centre and spend there. Some people whom Local Living would really like to attract to Alnwick Market are going to rival locations.

Philip said that a fleamarket in Alnwick Market Place was not something which has appealed; there is a fine line between a fleamarket and a car boot sale and he felt that the Market Place was not the right location for this.

Philip advised that this year's Christmas Market is expected to have approx. 49 stalls on the Saturday and slightly fewer on the Sunday. These have been well publicised.

RA 16/26 Presentation of Alnwick in Bloom 2017/18 Grant Application (Elizabeth Jones)

Alnwick in Bloom had won Gold in the "Town" category of Northumberland in Bloom in 2016. In Bloom projects around the town included Pottergate Gardens, the Bus Station and the Column Field. An application for support was being made to Morrisons for support in planting at the bus station and tackling anti-social behaviour in the vicinity.

Alnwick in Bloom have a plan for Green Batt Garden but have not been able to do as much work as they would have liked because of ongoing problems with vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

At the Column Field, consideration is being given to a ribbon of poppies in commemoration of World War 1.

Alnwick in Bloom continue to undertake some grounds maintenance throughout the town, including additional grass trimming and removal of the cuttings.

There have been cutbacks to Northumbria in Bloom Special Awards visits which Elizabeth feels will put people off participating in the future; she would like to put more finance back into transport for this.

Elizabeth reported that during recent works to Pottergate Garden a plaque had been discovered which records that the Garden was in fact a memorial to the

11th Duke of Northumberland; because of this Alnwick in Bloom will approach Northumberland Estates in January when they undertake their annual fundraising, to seek a contribution to future Pottergate Gardens works.

As part of the annual grant award, Alnwick Town Council pays Alnwick in Bloom's £200 entry fee for Northumbria in Bloom.

RA 16/27 Minutes of last meeting – matters arising not on the agenda

The Town Clerk advised that no progress had yet been made with the investigations into bringing Robertson's Fountain back into use as a drinking water fountain.

RA 16/28 Budget Update 2016/17

The Town Clerk circulated a copy of the Recreation & Amenities Committee Income and Expenditure as at 23rd November 2016. He advised that expenditure was £11,734 for events, £6,382.83 for projects and £35,975.37 for assets & services. The Town Clerk noted the following:

EVENTS:

Most expenditure has been undertaken and there is now not much difference between actual expenditure and the predicted year-end figure. However, one additional item was a request from Alnwick Garden for the Town Council to cover the costs of providing the stage at the Lantern Parade on December 18th, to be discussed later in this meeting.

PROJECTS:

In response to a question from Cllr. Mavin it was confirmed that each of the three "You're Welcome" locations was receiving a grant of £500 payable in two tranches of £250 each.

We may be looking at carrying some budget heads over into 2017-18.

ASSETS & SERVICES:

Cllr. Swinbank declared an interest in the Community Orchard Play Area works.

Cllr. Mavin was concerned that the formation of the proposed Allotment Association at Ratten Row should generate additional external grant monies which would reduce the Town Council's commitments there. The Town Clerk reported that we do have a group at Ratten Row interested in taking this further, but this is not finalised yet.

There will be some expenditure required on repairs to bus shelters; it is stressed that these are repairs to the existing shelters, not the provision of new shelters.

The costs of replacing the Hotspur Tower seat damaged after being struck by a car has been reimbursed through the insurance claim.

Planting:

Cllr. Edge circulated an illustration of his proposals for planting in Greenwell Lane car park including silver birch, crab apple, rowan and ornamental cherry trees. Cllr. Edge has consulted with Alnwick in Bloom on these proposals. Northumberland County Council have advised Cllr. Edge that they would be

happy to maintain the trees identified. Alnwick Lions have also undertaken some planting in this area. Cllr Edge also proposed planting daffodil bulbs at Meadow Riggs.

The Town Clerk clarified that Cllr. Edge was requesting a budget towards this planting of £300 this year and in subsequent years.

Cllr. Mavin said he would like to see further planting elsewhere in the town; Cllr. Edge advised that Barresdale and possibly lime trees in Taylor Drive were also being looked at.

Cllr. Harrington welcomed the proposals but suggested also planting on Clayport Bank, in Chapel Lands and on the cobbles, close to the White Swan.

Cllr. Mavin urged caution as over the next 18 months, the Town Council will have to take on much of the burden from Northumberland County Council and tree maintenance is expensive.

RESOLVED: that an annual budget of £300 for bulb and tree planting be approved.

Leaflet – Town Promotion

The Town Clerk reported that 25,000 copies of the "Discover Alnwick" leaflet produced by Cllr. Mavin had been distributed throughout the North-East of England in places such as Durham, Hexham designed to encourage day and weekend visits.

The Tourist Information Centre staff had advised the Town Clerk that they thought the leaflet had gone well. All 25,000 leaflets distributed had gone within three months of issue. The Chamber of Trade were strongly encouraging the Town Council to repeat the leaflet, although the Chamber had not offered any financial contribution to its production.

The cost of designing and producing the leaflet this year had been £2,100. Councillors were now being asked whether they wished to repeat the leaflet for 2017.

Cllr. Mavin said that some Alnwick attractions had requested that any new issue should also feature a town map within but this would increase the price. Cllr. Mavin said that whilst he had initially been enthusiastic to repeat the leaflet he is now unsure because of the financial impact of forthcoming cutbacks at Northumberland County Council and he felt that the Town Council should give priority to projects which will benefit Alnwick Town's residents rather than visitors. The leaflet could be seen as a "nice to have, not an essential".

Cllr. Harrington felt that such promotions should be done through the internet rather than through a printed leaflet and pointed out that there are already three or four town maps available.

The Chairman expressed his support for a repeat run of the leaflet and suggested we should emphasise within it, that Alnwick was a Gold Award winner in Northumbria in Bloom 2016.

The Mayor expressed his support for a new production run as the leaflet attracts tourists which in turn creates local jobs and suggested a print run of 30,000 to 50,000.

Cllr. Mavin advised that 50,000 leaflets could be produced for up to £3,500 printing costs plus a further £800 for distribution.

Cllr. Swinbank said that whilst he supported the production of another leaflet the Town Council should also look at internet-based provision of promotional material in future and to start to move towards this. A QR code could be added to the new leaflet to encourage access to further, internet-based Alnwick promotion.

RESOLVED that: a) £3,500 be approved for this year for the Town Council to proceed with the production of the updated leaflet, b) That the provision of the leaflet be reviewed again next year and c) that a contribution towards the Leaflet be requested from the Chamber of Trade.

RESOLVED: To accept the 2016/17 budget update.

RA 16/29 Consideration of Grant applications -2016 Christmas Lantern Parade.

Cllr. Edge declared an interest in this item and left the meeting.

The Town Clerk reported that a request had been received from Alnwick Garden for the Town Council to cover the estimated costs of £729.39 for the provision and erection of the stage within the Market Place for the Lantern Parade on 18th December 2016.

Cllr. Swinbank expressed concern that through this the Town Council may be perceived as supporting a commercial organisation. The Town Clerk reported that the Garden was not expected to make a profit from this event and that it was a community event rather than commercial.

RESOLVED: that the costs of stage provision be met by the Town Council.

RA 16/30 Updates on:

a) Play Areas

The Project & Funding Officer reported that he, the Town Clerk, Cllr. Sue Patience representing the Bullfield Community Orchard and Mandy Thompson of NCC Estates had met the previous day, at the proposed site of the new play area. Mrs. Thompson had advised that the present lease between NCC and the Orchard Group, which has most of its 99 years left to run, does not allow for the assignment of any of the Community Orchard land in order for any play area to be created at the site and therefore would need to be amended to allow this; the legal fees payable to NCC for this would be £600 and it may take up to 9 months for NCC to complete the legal work, during which time designs would be drawn up and applications for external grants to fund the play area could be submitted. Before this proceeds it is proposed that ATC (a)

obtain from the Community Orchard Group final confirmation that they are prepared to proceed with the Play Area proposal and that (b) ATC undertake consultation with the residents of the houses around the site of the proposed new play area to obtain their approval and support for this proposal.

b) Allotments

The recent clean-up day at Ratten Row was successful and this year's rent collection day was on 3rd December.

c) Lectern Maps

The Project & Funding Officer circulated copies of the four final map designs. The required funding is pledged through sponsorship from Boots the Chemist, The Halifax Bank, Alnwick Lions, Alnwick Civic Society and Alnwick Castle/Northumberland Estates. Three maps can be manufactured and installed now, i.e. those for the Castle, Market District and Bondgate Without. The fourth, for Bondgate Within, cannot be installed until a suitable location has been arranged for it, which may require a new lectern and possible planning approval.

d) Seat and bin replacements

The Town Clerk reported that Janet Pibworth has discussed the possible provision of a seat outside Robert Adam Court with residents of that building but they are split as to whether they want it. This will be determined by a vote amongst the residents.

RESOLVED: To accept the updates

RA 16/31 Consideration of the 2017/18 Budget including:

a) events – 2017/18 grant applications

Spring Show:

RESOLVED: To give a grant of £500 to Alnwick Spring Show.

Alnwick in Bloom: Cllr. Bell declared an in interest and left the meeting for this item. There was some concern expressed as regards increasing the grant when there expected to be difficult financial times ahead for the Town Council.

RESOLVED: To give a grant of £3,355 to Alnwick in Bloom.

Christmas Lights: The Chairman, Cllr. Broom, declared an interest and left the meeting for this item, the Vice-Chairman, Cllr. Peter Edge, acted as Chairman. The Town Clerk reported that the Christmas Lights Committee has not applied for Town Council grant this year although the Town Council covered the stage erection costs for the Christmas Lights switch-on in November 2016.

RESOLVED: To give a grant of £2,500 to Alnwick Christmas Lights.

Music Festival: Cllr. Symmonds, declared an interest and left the meeting for this item. The Town Clerk advised that the last audited Music Festival accounts received are for 2015 because the 2016 accounts have only just been closed. It was agreed that the Town Council will look at the 2016 accounts when available, but anticipate that they will give a similar position.

RESOLVED: To give a grant of £4,650 to Alnwick International Music Festival.

Food Festival and Taste of the North 2017:

RESOLVED: To give a grant of £1,100 to the Food Festival and £400 to Taste of the North.

Lantern Parade 2017:

RESOLVED: To cover the stage erection costs in the event that the event is repeated in 2017.

Alnwick Garden Town Trust: The Town Clerk reported that an application had been received and it is proposed to raise funds for this charity through a music festival, to be undertaken entirely by volunteers. The Alnwick Garden Town Project is looking to deliver a project in collaboration with Canada and this is a bid for the project which at this stage, remains to be worked up in detail. It was unanimously agreed that until there is more detail on the project a grant request cannot be considered.

RESOLVED: That this application be considered again when more detail is available.

b) projects – including tourism leaflet, communications etc.

RESOLVED: To allocate a budget of up to £3,500 for the town promotion leaflet for 2017/18.

c) assets/services – including fingerpost signs, grass cutting, planting, public toilets

Fingerpost signs: The Town Clerk reported that the town's fingerpost signs had been erected in about 2003 by Alnwick District Council and had passed to Northumberland County Council in 2009. They had been updated only occasionally but were now looking neglected.

The Town Clerk had obtained a quote for repair and updating work and this amounted to £7,000; the removal, repair and repainting of the signs will be a skilled job beyond current council employees' skills. Although they do not currently belong to the Town Council, if we do not seek to have them transferred to us and undertake repairs and repainting, they are unlikely to receive any attention.

RESOLVED: That NCC are approached to have the fingerposts signs transferred to the Town Council and a budget of up to £7,000 be approved.

Cllr. Symmonds left the meeting at 9.22pm.

Toilets: The Town Clerk reported that he had recently met a representative from the specialist washroom services firm, Initial, on site at the Greenwell Lane and the Shambles toilets to discuss possible improvements. Initial had made a number of proposals for improvements to help cure the ongoing problems of odours and of poor flushing of urinals, these were discussed at the meeting and would cost in the region of £3,000.

RESOLVED: That an additional budget of £3,000 for public conveniences be approved.

The Committee resolved to waive standing orders to enable the meeting to proceed beyond 9.30pm.

Floral Displays: Councillors felt more hanging baskets could be provided in the Narrowgate and Fenkle Street part of the town.

RESOLVED: To extend the planting budget by £550 to £11,785.

The Town Clerk took councillors through the proposed budget which included the figures agreed at the meeting. The proposed budget for events was £14,455, projects was £19,650 and assets and services £53,126. He highlighted that £3,171 had been included for grass cutting, justification for this increase had been requested from NCC and £2,000 had been included for repairs to the war memorial central column. He had anticipated £2,000 of repairs at Swansfield Park play area being funded out of the endowment as well as some possible replacement works, these play area works were excluded from the figures.

RESOLVED: To recommend the proposed Recreation & Amenities Budget for 2017/18 of £87,231 to Full Council, for approval.

RA 16/32 Any Other Urgent Business

It was agreed that a running total be kept of the money which the Town Council is spending which would formerly have been spent by Northumberland County Council.

Robertson Fountain: The additional costs of restoration of the fountain to operational condition to be determined.

Meeting closed at 9.48pm