

**Minutes of the Recreation & Amenities Committee meeting held on
Thursday 27th November 2014
in the Mechanics Institute, Percy Street, Alnwick at 7.00pm**

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

In attendance: W Batey, Chief Officer and Town Clerk, J Pibworth, Administration Assistant and Elizabeth Jones, Alnwick in Bloom.

RA 14/25 Apologies

Councillor S Mavin.

RA 14/26 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Symmonds declared a pecuniary interest in Item 5. and Item 7. Councillor Broom declared a non pecuniary interest in Item 7.

RA 14/27 Budget Update 2014/15

The Town Clerk circulated a copy of the Recreation & Amenities Committee Income and Expenditure as at 24th November 2014. This showed expenditure of £7,832.11 on events, £14,912.91 on projects and £14,561.93 on assets & services. Income was £185 at this stage although Allotments rents for St James's and Ratten Row are due in December. The Town Clerk took councillors through each section noting the following:

EXPENDITURE

EVENTS: Town Twining - reported that he was still waiting to hear from Norway about the video conferencing.

Unallocated - reported the figure of £9,000 had been put in the budget for supporting events. There is an Events sub group meeting on December 4th and feedback will be given at the next meeting.

PROJECTS: Town Promotion - this figure is allocated for new Town Maps.

ASSETS & SERVICES

PLAYGROUND EXPENSES - costs are slightly up due to £1,600 costs for replacement equipment at Swansfield Park. The Town Clerk explained that this cost could be funded from the endowment. Councillor Farrar felt the £1,600 should be taken from the endowment fund where we could identify that it was for Swansfield Park. The Town Clerk suggested that the endowment be used where direct costs, such as parts and labour, could be attributed to Swansfield Park. Councillor Symmonds asked if a management cost for Town Council officers should be added. The Town Clerk said he had tried to keep the model simple so didn't feel this was necessary.

RESOLVED: i) To note the current budget position; ii) To take money from the endowment fund for all costs directly attributable for Swansfield Park.

RA 14/28 Working Group Updates

Communication and Events sub groups - The Town Clerk had issued the actions sheets from the two sub group meetings. Councillor Symmonds felt it was too close to the next meetings on December 4th to have further discussions. Councillor Roberts

asked what had the Events checklist asked. The Town Clerk advised that it had asked the events to score a number of headings to identify their priorities. He advised that most of the forms had been returned and that he would put together a summary sheet and send out to councillors.

RESOLVED: To note the updates.

RA 14/29 Feedback from council representatives on the outside bodies

Music Festival - Councillor Harrington reported that he had not attended any meetings as the Town Council already receives feedback through Councillor Symmonds who is heavily involved in the music festival. He advised that the Town Council can sit and listen but are not asked to be more involved than that. Councillor Roberts had a sense that they may be having problems. The Town Clerk advised that next year will their 40th year and that the festival would possibly be rebranded in 2016.

Alnwick in Bloom - Councillor Broom reported that he had been to several meetings. He also reported that they were a very motivated group of people.

Alnwick Food Festival - Councillors S and P Allcroft do not sit on the Rec & Amenities committee so had provided a written report through the Town Clerk. They reported that the event is a great success but that more volunteers would be helpful especially with the breakdown of stands on the Monday. Councillor G Mavin felt that, in his experience, everything had to be done the festival organiser's way or not at all.

RESOLVED: To note the feedback.

RA 14/30 Updates:

a) Allotments - The Town Clerk reported that the rent demands were due out for St James's and Ratten Row. He also reported that he had had one allotment given up at St James's which will be split into 2 plots and take two people off the waiting list. He also reported that he had received two out of parish applications for allotments.

Councillor Farrar felt that the working group meeting had discussed this and felt that they should be for Alnwick residents only as they pay for the upkeep of the allotments through their precept. He felt that the Town Council should market the allotments more.

The Town Clerk advised that a press release could be prepared about the allotments that were available and the committee review the situation in January 2015. Councillor Patience felt a flyer handed out with the allotment demands would widen awareness.

Councillor Swinbank felt the allotments should be promoted to local people first and suggested notifying local groups including Friends of the Earth about the allotments.

Councillor Roberts felt that the committee should review in April 2015 rather than January 2015 then make a decision. Councillor Symmonds agreed that allotments should be kept for locals. He thought a press release about setting up an allotment group might get people engaged.

Councillor Holt was concerned about the money the Town Council spend on allotments so would support outside people having Town Council allotments.

Councillor G Mavin asked if the allotments were mentioned in the Alnwick and District Neighbourhood Plan. Councillor Patience advised that they were. Councillor G Mavin then asked if Denwick Parish Council had allotments. Councillor Farrar advised that they could provide them if they chose to.

Councillor Swinbank asked if Ratten Row had the only available allotments. The Town Clerk advised that they were 75 allotments and four were currently free.

b) Public Conveniences

The Town Clerk confirmed that he had received overall costings from NCC but was awaiting a breakdown of individual costs.

Councillor Roberts advised that there had been no hot water in the ladies toilets. Councillor Patience advised that she thought there should be.

c) Play areas

Glovers Green - The Town Clerk informed councillors that there was a large amount of hard landscaping which NCC had agreed to let the Town Council remove. Once this was done the new play equipment would be installed. A quote had been received from Sanders to remove all the hard landscaping for £2,278. He also advised that letters would be sent to the surrounding houses about the work was to be carried out.

Councillor G Mavin asked if the cost of the play equipment would be extra. The Town Clerk advised that the cost of the new play equipment was already in the budget.

Councillor Holt endorsed the recommendation as it definitely needed doing.

Councillor Roberts asked if extra equipment would be needed as the new area was bigger and would additional budget be needed. The Town Clerk advised that extra equipment was not needed as the new equipment had already been chosen by pupils at the First School. He also advised that the equipment would be moved from under the trees. Councillor Harrington thought moving it closer to the houses would be beneficial.

d) Memorial Schemes

The Administration Assistant had previously distributed a sheet with suggested benches for use in the Memorial Scheme which she re-issued to councillors. She requested their approval and comments so the scheme could be taken forward.

e) Notice Board and Website

Notice Board - The Town Clerk advised that the new notice board had arrived and a site meeting to discuss how it would be fixed to Northumberland Hall. He also advised that a NCC parking sign had been erected in front of the arch where the notice board was planned. He had requested this be moved slightly which Lynne Ryan was organising.

Councillor Roberts advised the Town Council about a Community Electronic Noticeboard Project being undertaken by Newcastle University. She felt this might be of interest to the Town Council and would get more information for the council.

Website - The Administration Assistant issued the website stats (at Nov 26th 2014). There had been 1,295 visits and 2,481 page views in the period which was the third consecutive increase. Largest search word was Christmas Lights and the largest user days were Nov 9th (Remembrance Day) with 52 hits and November 21st (Christmas Lights switch on) with 257 hits. Nov 17th - 21st saw 468 hits. An analysis of Search words was issued and will be gone through at the Communication sub group.

f) Proposed location of seats

The Town Clerk reported that two seats in Greenwell Lane need to be replaced. As one was donated by Alnwick Central WI they need to decide what they want to do with it. Two other benches need replacing – one at the top of Hotspur Street and the other in Clayport Bank opposite Lisburn Street, which is under a tree and needs moving. He also advised that there was enough money in this year's budget to replace all four.

Councillor Farrar asked if the Town Council could consider putting more seats around the town and suggested that the committee review possible sites. Councillor Broom asked if one could be at The Plough bus stop.

RESOLVED: To give delegated powers to the Town Clerk and Committee Chair to decide on type of replacement benches.

RA 14/31 Consideration of grant applications for Events 2015/16

Elizabeth Jones from Alnwick on Bloom gave a presentation in support of their grant application. She reported that in 2014 Alnwick in Bloom had a focused approach to planting across the town. She gave details of some specific areas they had dealt with:

The bus station - they had tidied borders and litter picked but she felt there were areas that needed attention including the railings where baskets could be fitted; Greenwell Lane – weeds cleared; Column Field – weeds cleared, general tidying including curbs; Green Batt gardens and Pinfold. She also noted that they had received help from Boulmer in Greenwell Lane and Column Field. She advised that in 2015 they planned to undertake work in the same areas and add Pottergate gardens. She also confirmed that the items on the draft budget submitted included extra mowing in small areas.

She confirmed that the competitions they had run had been well supported especially by the local schools.

Councillor Broom asked if she had any ideas for the bus station. Elizabeth advised that RAF Boulmer could take on the front border on a regular basis. She also felt that more work could be done on the border at the right hand side and the dead trees taking out and replacing. Councillor Symmonds asked if she had been in touch with Arriva and whether she had asked for any money? Elizabeth said she had been in touch about tidying up and the work done to date but had not approached them about funding. Councillor Patience felt it would be worthwhile as they had joint funded the bin.

Councillor G Mavin commented that as the shrubs at the front trapped litter could the shrubs be removed or replanted in stone / raised beds. Elizabeth felt that something needed to happen more short term.

Councillors discussed the grant applications received:

Alnwick in Bloom – previous grant amount £2,575. The Town Clerk highlighted three items in their draft budget: £200 covers entries which the Town Council already pay directly, the cost of the sign at Green Batt which the Town Council will pay for and the cost of cutting back shrubs at Pottergate which is responsibility of NCC. He also confirmed that the grant had been the same level for the last 4 years.

Councillor Symmonds advised that it was not current Town Council policy to pay for additional grass cutting. He felt that they needed better value for money from NCC and a meeting should be arranged with Bob Hodgson.

Councillor Swinbank asked if AIB had any other sources of funding. Elizabeth confirmed they had a little bit of funding from elsewhere but the committee are very busy.

Councillor Farrar agreed with Councillor Symmonds commenting that it was too easy to pay for extra work when something isn't done well. He agreed that NCC need to do a better job and a Service Level Agreement for grass cutting with AIB as part of the checking process.

Councillor Holt suggested an increase in their grant.

Councillor Roberts asked for clarification of their financial position. The Town Clerk confirmed that he had received a spreadsheet but needed to consolidate the financial information using for example, a bank statement.

Councillor Symmonds suggested a 10% increase in the grant amount. Councillor Patience asked for confirmation that the grant increase would include the cost of the Northumbria in Bloom fee and the Green Batt sign plus help asking Arriva for money.

The Town Clerk confirmed that the grant would be £2,835 and would be paid in the same way as this year.

Councillor Broom asked if AIB could apply for extra funding for special projects. The Town Clerk confirmed that they possibly could. He also confirmed he would speak to Northumberland Estates about roses for Pottergate.

Alnwick Christmas Lights – previous grant amount £2,200 plus electricity from Robertson's Pant.

Councillor G Mavin felt it was a great event and gave a huge amount of pleasure to the whole town.

Councillor Roberts asked what figure they had asked for? The Town Clerk said they hadn't specified an amount.

Councillor Harrington advised the committee that funding was down on the previous year as about 10 shops had not paid anything towards them.

Councillor G Mavin suggested £2,500 which was supported by most councillors.

Alnwick Spring Show – previous grant amount £500.

The Town Clerk reported that around 700 people had attended the event in 2014 which was a one day event. He also confirmed that there would be some additional costs in 2015. Councillor Harrington reported that it was a very family orientated event and the Town Clerk confirmed it was the only Spring Show in Northumberland.

Councillor Symmonds proposed a figure of £500 as last year.

Alnwick International Music Festival – previous grant amount £4,000.

The Town Clerk reported that this would be the 40th year. He also confirmed there had been higher costs in 2014 due to increased number of performers a bigger event was planned. Councillor Shilton felt it was a brilliant event but should have more local performers. Councillor Harrington agreed it was a fantastic event for Alnwick.

Councillor Farrar said he was happy for the Town Council to give a grant but felt they should keep some funding for 2016. Councillor Harrington felt the Town Council should support them. Councillor Roberts recommended the same grant as the previous year and review for 2016. Councillor Shilton commented that the Town Council should also encourage them to include more local performers.

Alnwick Food Festival – previous grant amount £1,100.

The Town Clerk reported that 2014 was their 11th festival. He also confirmed that there would be been higher costs in 2015 to offset the usual input from NCC. Councillor Broom asked if the accounts included the costs for the celebrity chef. The Town Clerk confirmed that all the costs had been picked up by Newton Hall.

Councillor Harrington confirmed that he would like to see more financial information before agreeing to a grant for 2015 as last time there had been concerns about some of the payments to organisers. Councillor Symmonds felt the Town Council should offer them something as the festival is very good for the town and suggested that the grant was kept at £1,100, the same figure as last year.

Councillor Roberts felt that all recommendations should be made on appropriate financial documents being received. The Town Clerk confirmed they would and also on the basis that each event took place.

RESOLVED: To offer the following grants on production of appropriate financial documents and the events going ahead: Alnwick in Bloom £2,835; Christmas Lights £2,500; Spring Show £500; Music Festival £4,000; Food Festival £1,100.

RA 14/32 Setting the Draft Budget for 2015/16

The Town Clerk reviewed the suggested budget figures with the committee.

Councillor Roberts felt a communications budget was needed and suggested £2,000. Councillor Farrar felt the Play Area budget seemed low and suggested adding £7,500. The Town Clerk suggested adding the extra budget figure to the unallocated heading as it may be possible to obtain some Section 106 funds.

The Town Clerk reminded the committee that there were a number of CAP (Community Action Plans) from the Neighbourhood Plan that will need budgets but not all in year 1. He recommended that CAPs were reviewed at Finance & Policy committee and a Full Council meeting and relevant budgets allocated.

RESOLVED: To forward the budget for £65,270 to Finance & Policy meeting on December 18th for recommendation to Full Council.

RA 14/33 Any Other Urgent Business

None.

Meeting closed at 9.55pm