

**Minutes of the Recreation & Amenities Committee meeting held on  
Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2016  
in the Mechanics Institute, Percy Street, Alnwick at 7.00pm**

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

**In attendance:** W Batey, Chief Officer and Town Clerk; J Pibworth, Assistant to the Town Clerk and Bob Hodgson, NCC Northern Area Neighbourhood Services manager.

**RA 16/16 Apologies**

Councillors Bell, Grisdale, Patience and Shilton.

**RA 16/17 Declarations of Interest**

None.

**RA 16/18 Updates from Bob Hodgson NCC Neighbourhood Services**

Bob had been sent a list of questions which he went through:

Q Can you give us an overview of Neighbourhood Services in Alnwick?

A All the staff are based at and the services delivered from the Lionheart Depot.

Q What services do Neighbourhood Services deliver directly from Alnwick?

A Horticultural services, litter picking, grass-cutting and non-statutory services.

Q Is it possible to have a schedule showing when services get delivered as this would help co-ordinate the tasks undertaken by the Town Handyman?

A A list is available.

Q Do you have an update on potential cuts to budgets and services in 2017/18 and beyond?

A No definite proposals for cuts but there could be. Internally developing a schedule to reduce costs by £20m. NCC are keen to have joint meetings with T&PCs to discuss areas such as toilets and grass cutting.

Q What services are contracted to other organisations?

A Street cleaning but this year this has not been done very well

Q How are weeds dealt with in Alnwick?

A Sweepers have sprays fixed and use quad bikes with sprayers. Contracted out at present but will bring back in house next year.

Q Are you happy that the Town Clerk / other Officers send in questions / resident concerns directly to staff at the local depot?

A Yes but copy BH into any emails.

Q What can the Town Council do to actively support Neighbourhood Services in Alnwick?

A Additional cleaning of the Shambles toilets has been very helpful. Berwick Town Council pay for two staff (employed between April and October by NCC) who ac support to the Neighbourhood Services team in Berwick.

Q Do you think communication between the Town Council and Neighbourhood Services could or needs to be improved?

A Good at present. The Town Council could have regular meetings with BH and supervisory staff if required.

Additional questions from councillors:

Councillor Swinbank asked what product was being used for weed killing. BH confirmed Roundup was being used.

Councillor Swinbank asked if something could be done about the small area on the pedestrian entrance to Chapel Lands. BH said he was happy to undertake a site visit to discuss what could be done. He explained that his team had removed shrubs and replaced with grass to stop litter collecting.

Councillor Edge asked if the beds and borders were maintained by NCC. BH advised that the Town Council pay for a lot of the planting around the town. Councillor Edge asked how the trees around Alnwick were maintained. BH advised that there was a dedicated team, led by Mike Jeffrey for the North Area.

Councillor G Mavin asked if NCC cut the grass in St Michael's churchyard. BH confirmed they did but a smaller mower was needed and was being organised.

Councillor G Mavin asked if Bob felt there was something more fundamentally wrong with the structure of the toilets at The Shambles. BH advised that he could recommend someone to undertake the survey. He added that it would need a full time attendant to improve the situation.

Councillor Harrington advised that McDonald's had waterless free urinals. He also commented about the amount of litter in the town on event days. BH agreed about the amount of litter after the food festival but explained that he had not been asked for further bins. He added that NCC had cleared 3.5 tons on the Monday after the festival.

Councillor Harrington added that there was a lot of litter being left in the market place. BH suggested speaking to the market traders about ensuring they take their rubbish with them.

Councillor Symmonds explained that the Music Festival clear up all the litter left in the market place after the festival and that it was the responsibility of event organisers to arrange this.

Councillor Swinbank advised that Local Living ask traders to take their litter away with them but that any litter put into bins was emptied by NCC. BH confirmed that the bins were emptied by NCC and that additional black bags would be provided if requested.

Councillor Swinbank asked whose responsibility it was to organise extra bins. BH advised that it was up to Local Living to organise extra litter bins.

Councillor Swinbank asked if Bob felt there was enough bins in the Market Place. BH explained that however many bins you put in it might still not be enough.

## **RA 16/19**

### **Minutes of last meeting – matters arising not on the agenda**

RA16/12 Toilets – The Town Clerk advised that the structural inspection by a hygiene engineer had not yet been undertaken.

RA16/13 Budget: Assets & Services - Councillor Edge asked if there was any update on Robertson's Fountain being bought back into use as a drinking fountain. The Town Clerk advised that nothing had been done as yet.

## **RA 16/20 Budget Update 2016/17**

The Town Clerk circulated a copy of the Recreation & Amenities Committee Income and Expenditure as at 9th September 2016. He advised that expenditure was £5,373.73 for Events, £864.55 for Projects and £18,950.68 for Assets & Services. Income was £485, which was Allotments rents. The Town Clerk noted the following:

### **EVENTS:**

Grants – grants would be agreed at the Recreation & Amenities meeting in November. He explained that the Christmas Lights team would not be requesting a grant in 2016 but that the Town Council would be paying for the erection of the stage which had been allocated a budget of £2,500.

Councillor G Mavin asked if NCC had received any payment for closing the car park in Greenwell Road during filming and if any of this would come to the Town Council.

### **PROJECTS:**

Town Promotion - a decision was needed as to whether the town leaflet would be reprinted.

Communication Project – he advised that there was £4,000 in the budget but that this could be reallocated to something else.

He explained that the lease for the Bike Track was almost ready to be signed and although Northumberland Estates had notified the Town Council that a compensation payment of some £1,280 would be payable to the tenant. He advised that there were several possible outcomes: Northumberland Estates could be asked to waive this as their contribution to the bike track; the Town Council could pay the compensation to the tenant or the cost could be passed on to Gallery Youth.

Councillor Harrington asked if the Town Council contributed anything towards the bike track. The Town Clerk explained that the Town Council would be the leaseholder for the site.

Councillor Harrington felt that the Town Council could consider paying the compensation to progress the lease. The Town Clerk advised that there was £1,000 in the bank that had been given by Alnwick Youth Hostel, for this project. Councillor G Mavin expressed concern about the viability of the whole project especially as to whether the money was in place. The Town Clerk advised that there is a clause in the lease which gives an 18-month period to get the funding. If this does not happen the land can be handed back to Northumberland Estates. Councillor Swinbank said he was supportive of the project but felt that the Town Council needed to be careful putting in public money. He suggested that if the bike track did not go ahead the Town Council would not pay the compensation.

Councillor Symmonds said he supported the project and suggested that the money from the Youth Hostel be used towards the compensation, if this was required.

### **ASSETS & SERVICES:**

Planting floral displays – invoices had been received from NCC for the main floral displays and the additional basket at the bus station.

He advised that NCC had quoted £3,200 for the additional grass cuts in 2016/17 but after discussion had agreed to the same figure of £1,953 paid in 2015/16.

Councillor Edge asked when the additional grass cuts took place. The Town Clerk advised that 2 additional cuts took place in March and one in October.

Councillor Swinbank asked if the cost of the planting include watering. The Town Clerk advised that it did.

Bus shelters – Councillor G Mavin felt that a budget of £500 was inadequate. The Town Clerk advised that the budget figure was just for repairs to existing bus shelters and not for replacements.

The Town Clerk explained that the Cemetery committee had allocated a budget of £750 for a leaf / grass blower and requested that the same budget be allocated from the Recreation & Amenities budget to purchase an additional hedge trimmer. Councillor Edge advised that the Alnwick Garden had purchased an electric hedge trimmer which lasts for an hour on one charge.

**RESOLVED: (i) To accept the 2016/17 budget update;  
(ii) To take £750 from unallocated to purchase equipment.**

**RA16/21**

**Updates on:**

**a) Play Area works**

**Allerburn Lea Play Area:** New equipment installed, Wetpour area enlarged, remedial work to Wetpour edging completed week beginning September 5th:

The self-closing gate at Allerburn Lea Play Area has not yet been installed as Jupiter Play withdrew their quote for works as it was only valid if Jupiter were undertaking other improvement repair works at Allerburn Lea at the same time. The Town Council have contacted the gate supplier, IAE Fencing of Stoke-on-Trent, about prices to purchase the gate directly and to have a local firm undertaken the installation. IAE have quoted:

Gate 1-metre-high, 1.2-metre-wide, yellow, coated, £512 + VAT

Gate 1.2-metre-high, 1.2-metre-wide, yellow, coated, £534 + VAT

It was recommended that a 1-metre-high gate be purchased and installed.

**Swansfield Park Play Area:** Repairs to the damaged Wetpour and extension of Wetpour, new pin kerbs and supply and installation of two new self-closing gates into the Play Area were undertaken week commencing Monday 5th September. The contractor, Streetscape confirmed a further discount to the cost for undertaking two jobs reducing the total cost from £3,230 to £3,000.

**RESOLVED: To accept the quote and install a 1-metre-high gate at Allerburn Lea play area.**

**b) Allotments**

Tidy up - A Tidy Up Day has been arranged on October 1st at Ratten Row. Two large skips have been ordered for delivery early in the morning of October 1st.

A meeting of the Ratten Row allotment holders and Town Council has been arranged at 10am on Saturday October 1st, at Community@NE66 to discuss setting up a Ratten Row Allotments Association.

Padlock / keys – A quote has been obtained for a chain and key operated padlock for the gate at Ratten Row allotments, at a cost of £29.99. There would be an additional cost of keys for each allotment holder. An alternative would be to purchase a combination padlock at £19.99. A chain would need to be bought separately but should not cost more than £30.

### **c) Lectern Maps**

The cost of supplying four replacement Lectern maps, from Bill Grisdale Design amounts to £1,000 which includes a £200 copyright fees for use of Cityscape's updated town map. This is cheaper than the previous quote.

The four new maps will include references to the Four Quarters of Alnwick and the will include updating and manufacturing of four maps and the replacement of the three at the Market Place, the Castle Barbican and the Column Field. The fourth map will be installed once a suitable location has been determined. A lectern may need to be built for this fourth map as the previous one on the Cobbles was destroyed.

Sponsorship for the new Lectern maps has been most generously pledged by the following organisations, in support of the Town Council's contribution: Northumberland Estates/Alnwick Castle; Alnwick Civic Society; The Halifax Bank; Alnwick Lions and Boots the Chemist.

### **d) Seat and bin replacements/provisions**

- a) An order had recently been placed for a heritage seat, to replace the one damaged by the car near Greenwell Lane
- b) Wooden bench outside Bailiffgate Duchess High School has been removed
- c) Heritage bench at the top of Pottergate has been moved to Bailiffgate near the defibrillator and a 2<sup>nd</sup> heritage bench has been order for the same site
- d) Ordered two square Jubilee bins for Taylor Drive
- e) Ordered two round Guppy bins with dog and litter signage for the Community Orchard

Councillor Swinbank asked about the bin for Chapel Lands. The Town Clerk advised that this was in stock.

Councillor Broom asked if a bench would be put outside The Plough. The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that the space needed measuring to ensure enough room was left on the pavement for pedestrians. Councillor Broom thought that a leaning seat could be installed attached to a bus shelter.

Councillor Broom reported that pressure washing had been undertaken on some of the bins. The Town Clerk felt that the power washing had really made a difference to the bins and thought that the Town Council might need to consider purchasing a power washer in the future.

Councillor Harrington asked how often the bins would need pressure washing. Councillor Broom advised that they be done about every two to 3 year.

The Town Clerk advised that the cost of pressure washing was £5 per bin and £10 per seat and that he would allocated some more of the budget to have more cleaned.

**RESOLVED: To accept the update.**

### **e) War Memorial and Hotspur Statue inspections**

War Memorial - The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that the structural survey had been carried out on September 1<sup>st</sup> by Charles Blackett-Ord. NCC provided a cherry picker and driver for the morning at no charge.

Charles carried out a detailed examination of the structure and felt that there was no danger of the column falling over. He did notice some movement and felt that some remedial work would be beneficial. This would entail pushing small pieces of slate between the blocks of the column. Charles will produce a report and specification for the work which needs undertaking which can be used to go out for quotes. He felt the work would cost around £2,000.

Whilst at the War Memorial it was noted that more of the stonework had deteriorated. A couple of the areas were where conservation was undertaken by Hirst whilst the other areas were new and include parts of the column where more patches of stonework have fallen off. She explained that she would contact Hirst about the work they had undertaken and also contact the War Memorial Trust to see if any further grants were available.

Hotspur Statue - The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised Keith Maddison had not been in touch again and she felt he may not be able to undertake the work. She advised that she would look for an alternative contractor although it was not vital that the work be done this year.

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

**RA 16/22 Any Other Urgent Business**

None.

Meeting closed at 9.20pm