



**Minutes of the Recreation & Amenities Committee meeting held on
Thursday 24th September 2020
in the St James's Church Centre, Pottergate, Alnwick at 7.00pm**

Present: Councillors P Broom (Chair), P Edge, W Grisdale, M Harrington, J Lyford, S Patience, M Swinbank, A Symmonds, G Watson and L Wood-Mitchell.

In attendance: P Hately, Town Clerk; J Pibworth, Assistant to the Town Clerk; T Kirton, Project & Funding Officer and Councillor L Wearn.

RA 20/01 Apologies

None.

RA 20/02 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Patience Item 8 (Bike Track Management) and Councillor Watson Item 11b (Allotments).

RA 20/03 Approval of minutes of last meeting (23rd January 2020)

The Minutes of the last meeting held on January 23rd 2020 were approved as true record.

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the last meeting on January 23rd 2020.

RA 20/04 Matters arising from the minutes not on the agenda

RA19/44 Alnwick Market / Local Living assets - Councillor Watson asked if there was any update. The Town Clerk advised that the Town Council were expecting an amount back from Local Living.

Councillor Watson asked about the £45k of assets Local Living had in 2008 and whether any, including the stalls, had been gifted to the new market provider. The Town Clerk advised that the stalls had been gifted to the new market provider and that a health & safety assessment had been carried and some assets were found to be unsafe.

RA19/46 Zip Wire – Councillor Patience asked if a sign with an age range on it had been put up as she felt this was important. The Town Clerk advised that he would check but thought that the relevant sign had been put up.

RA19/48a) Bullfield Orchard Play Area – Councillor Swinbank asked if there was an update on the broken handrail which had been removed. The Project & Funding Officer advised that this had been taken up with the supplier and that he would check.

Councillor Patience asked about the sign, which had been vandalised, had been replaced and advised that it needed to be attached to a sturdier post.

RA 20/05 Budget Update 2019/20

2019/2020 Budget: The Assistant to the Town Clerk had circulated a copy of the Recreation & Amenities Committee Income and Expenditure for 2019/20 as at March 31st 2020:

EXPENDITURE

EVENTS - Total payments made £22,199.87 against a budget of £21,800. The recommendation for 2021/22 is to have a different format for Events.

PROJECTS - Total payments made £12,622.50 against a budget of £26.575. Main variance lines are Town Promotion as no new Town Leaflet was produced, WWI bench (£6,450 carried forward into 2020/21).

ASSETS & SERVICES - Total payments made £57,548.64 against a budget of £115,355.00. Main variance lines were Allotments (underspend of £3k carried forward to 2020/21), Replacement planters (underspend of £1,500 carried forward to 2020/21, Stage parts (underspend of £4k carried forward to 2020/21, Robertson Fountain capital works (£6,350 carried forward into 2020/21).

INCOME – Total income for 2019/20 was £18,428 (made up of allotment rents, Bullfield Orchard Play Area grant, FOE contribution for Ribbon of Trees project, County Councillor contribution to Street Furniture, VE Day and Town Crier contributions). This was against a budget of £6,000.

RESOLVED: To receive the budget update for 2019/20.

RA 20/06 Budget Update 2020/21 (August 2020)

2020/2021 Budget: The Assistant to the Town Clerk had circulated a copy of the Recreation & Amenities Committee Income and Expenditure for 2020/21 as at August 31st 2020. She highlighted the following lines:

EXPENDITURE:

EVENTS – No expenditure to date but some of the event grants are due for payment.

PROJECTS – No expenditure to date.

ASSETS & SERVICES - Total payments made to date £12,023.73:

Wages and salaries £7,844 (4 months salaries).

Play Area – repairs and parts £320.78.

Town Hall lighting £43.86 (3 months electricity).

Robertson’s Fountain £90.31 (3 months electricity, qtr 1 water £41.40).

Allotment expenses £1,169.32 (qtr 1 water £892.99, new gate at St Georges £150, general materials £126.33).

Street Planters £1,901.97 (3 new two-tier planters purchased).

Fingerposts, signs and bollard painting £213.00 (fingerpost painting and gold paint).

Alnwick Bike Track £440.00 (Dolomite and gravel).

INCOME:

Total income to date is £244 (allotment rents).

Councillor Swinbank asked about the renovation works to Robertson Fountain. The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that she had spoken to the contractor and they would keep in touch about dates for the work.

Councillor Edge asked if there was any update from Alnwick in Bloom. The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised had been no official meetings but she would ask for an update.

Councillor Broom reported that the usual Christmas Lights display would not be possible this year as it was not possible to maintain social distancing whilst installing the lights. He asked if Councillor Castle could be asked what the Christmas Lights team were planning to do this year. He understood that they would be installing displays on the Bondgate Tower, the Market Place and the Welcome to Alnwick signs. He asked if the Town Council could find a way of putting light sup on the shops.

Councillor Wearn reported that Town Centre & Retail group had met and discussed a Victorian themed town centre and were applying for grants for lighting for the shops as well as window displays.

Councillor Wearn reported that although the Music Festival had not taken place in Alnwick they had put on an on-line festival and had paid the performers.

RESOLVED: To receive the budget update for 2020/21.

Councillors Patience and Gridale left the meeting.

RA 20/07 Bike Track Management

The Town Clerk explained that he was looking for some clarity on the management of the bike track. The Town Council had agreed to maintain the site for

Councillor Harrington advised that Gallery Youth through Sue and Ian were managing the site and suggested that a working group which would give more control of the site

Councillor Swinbank explained that the intention had be that young people would be involved in the management of the site in order for it to be successful. The Town Clerk advised that they had not been able to get anyone involved. He felt it was difficult

Councillor Broom advised that it was a Gallery Youth project and that the Town Council had taken on the lease and the maintenance of the site.

Councillor Watson suggested formalising joint responsibility with Gallery Youth.

Councillor Wearn asked why it was treated differently from the other play areas.

Councillor Broom advised that it was built on charity funding as the Town Council could not apply for funding.

Councillor Lyford explained that some of the funding was from charitable sources so the stakeholders may have a view on the management of the bike track budget.

The Town Clerk advised that the Town Council hold the lease which commits them to maintaining the site for 7 years. He advised that Gallery Youth are quite relaxed about how the Town Council

Councillor Lyford explained that the Town Council maintenance was what the Town Council had agreed to

Councillor Edge asked what management of the site would entail.

The Town Clerk advised that he could speak to Gallery Youth and report back.

RESOLVED: The Town Clerk to discuss with Gallery Youth and report back to Full Council.

RA 20/08 Event grant application process

The Assistant to the Town Clerk explained that there had previously been one set of criteria and form to cover all grant applications but it felt it was not working effectively to inform decisions as it was too generic so a working group was set up to review and amend the criteria and form to develop a General Grants application process. Councillor Watson then put together an Environmental criteria and form and both of these were approved by the Finance & Policy Committee who are responsible for General and Environmental grants.

She explained that the criteria and form that councillors had been sent was developed specifically for grant applications for events based on the grant process approved for General Grants. It uses some of the criteria and questions from the other grants application forms plus, taking best practice from other Councils, asks for much more detailed information on expenditure (under given headings), anticipated income and shortfall. With this information provided the Town Council can make more informed decisions on which parts of an application they can fund. She advised that Councillor

Watson had quality assured the process and was able to review it as a member of the working group who updated the general grant processes and as an applicant.

Councillor Patience thought Section D had too many criteria and that some groups/organisation might not have all the information requested. The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that these had been kept the same as the General Grant criteria which had been approved by the Finance & Policy Committee.

Councillor Lyford explained that any on-line events should be asked about secure content especially if they have adult only content. The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that, if grant applications for on-line events were submitted, additional information could be requested as is the case with some applications now.

Councillor Swinbank explained that the Town Council had supported the previous market operator with grants and wondered if the new market provider would be able to apply for a grants for the food festivals. The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that the Town Council grants were not usually intended for private companies.

Councillor Wearn advised that the new market provider was planning to run the food festivals in 2021 but was unsure if they would apply for any grant funding. She added there was some concern about the Christmas Market and closure of Bondgate Within. Councillor Broom advised that the Town Council could organise the road closure.

The Town Clerk advised that the form could be amended and an extra meeting held to approve it.

Councillor Swinbank said it was important that the Town Council supported events in the town.

Councillor Harrington thought the new process was very professional.

Councillor Watson explained that one reason for changing the form was to make it easier for councillors to interpret.

Councillor Patience felt it was important that electronic versions of grant applications were accepted.

RESOLVED: To approve the Event Grant application criteria and form which will be used from the date of this meeting.

RA 20/09 Additional SLAs with NCC

The Town Clerk advised that he had met with Bob Hodgson (NCC Local Services Manager) about the tidiness of the town centre. He had explained that additional SLAs were available e.g. extra cleans of the Market Place at weekends and that he would cost any additional work required.

Councillor Harrington felt that the Town Council could undertake more work themselves at weekends.

Councillor Griddale advised that some Town and Parish Councils are abandoning their SLAs with NCC.

Councillor Edge thought it would be useful to have someone locally but was concerned that NCC would do less.

Councillor Harrington reported that NCC had already reduced the amount they did without notifying the Town Council e.g. the cleaning schedule.

Councillor Swinbank agreed and said it was difficult to check what had been done especially for areas such as additional toilet cleaning. He agreed with Councillor Edge

about NCC doing the job properly and that a schedule of work undertaken by NCC would be useful.

Councillor Harrington explained that it was becoming an issue every day and that jobs had to wait for NCC to deal with them.

The Town Clerk advised that the Town Council need to decide what and when needs doing. He advised that there could be additional hours worked during the visitor season.

Councillor Broom explained that NCC were blaming COVID-19.

The Town Clerk advised that he would email the SLA with NCC to all councillors then revisit at the next meeting.

RESOLVED: To email the NCC SLAs to all councillors.

RA 20/10 Updates:

a) Play Areas - The Project & Funding Officer gave an update:

Swansfield Park play area – new scramble net ordered.

He advised that hand sanitiser had been installed at all play areas but that some had been vandalised.

Councillor Swinbank felt there must be tamper proof dispensers available. Councillor Harrington advised that protectors had been made so should be safer. They just need to be maintained.

The Town Clerk reported that councillors needed to be aware that the hand sanitiser was expensive to keep replacing.

Councillor Edge felt that it was an essential requirement for the Town Council to keep hand sanitiser in all the dispensers.

Councillor Wearn advised that responsibility for using play areas safely was on users.

Councillor Swinbank asked what the projected cost would be. The Town Clerk advised that to date the cost was around £800.

Councillor Patience felt it was important that the Town Council provided safe play areas so needed to keep them clean.

Councillor Watson agreed that play areas must be kept open.

The Town Clerk advised that risk assessment to reopen play areas had identified that hand sanitisers would be provided in all play areas.

Councillor Broom reported that Swarland play areas had a very good system.

Councillor Grisdale reported that the head teacher at Swansfield Park School had asked the Town Council to close the play area in Swansfield Park. The Town Clerk advised that this was not possible as the play area was not just used by schoolchildren.

The Project & Funding Officer reported that the seat had been replaced on the zip wire.

RESOLVED: To replace the hand sanitiser at all play areas as and when needed.

b) Allotments - The Project and Funding Officer gave an update:

Ratten Row - Thirteen vacant plots at Ratten Row have now been re-let over the last two months. These plots were heavily overgrown so tenants have been given a rent free period to the end of 2020. The new tenants have been advised that, in exchange

for the rent-free period, they will need to clear all weeds and undertake new planting by the end of 2020.

Ratten Row allotments are now fully let except for one vacant plot which is a large plot and subdivided into two. Five plots are in a neglected state and tenants have been advised they need to be cleared of weeds within a month and cultivated between now and the end of 2020 in accordance with the terms of their tenancy or the Town Council may take them back for re-letting. Several tenants owe rent to the Town Council and have been advised that this needs to be paid immediately or the Town Council may take their allotments back for re-letting.

Two plots at Ratten Row have asbestos roof sheeting which needs removing by an appropriate registered licence-holder as a matter of priority. The estimated cost is £500.

St. James - The vacant quarter plot at St James's has been taken by a new tenant and the two vacant half plots have been offered to two new tenants. Once these are taken St. James's will be fully let.

St. George's - The new Community Allotment is becoming established by a working group including representatives of Gallery Youth, Alnwick Medical Group, The Alnwick Garden and Councillors Watson and Patience. The formerly heavily overgrown site has been cleared and a shed has been built.

There is only one vacant plot at St. George's plot which is very overgrown. The Town Council staff will clear it and the plot then re-let. They will also cut back of all hedges in St. George's by the end of September.

Councillor Swinbank thought it was good that the so many people were interested in allotments. He asked if there was any more space at Ratten Row.

Councillor Broom thought the grass could be left to grow.

Councillor Patience felt that fruit trees could also be planted on the site.

Councillor Watson thought that the soil could be tested at Ratten Row.

Councillor Broom asked if installing water at St Georges allotments could be looked at and if Northumbrian Water could be asked for a cost for connection. The Town Clerk advised that the cost if installation could be looked into and a budget added in 2021/22 if feasible.

RESOLVED: To look into bringing some of the used area at Ratten Row into use as allotments.

c) Street Furniture – The Assistant to the Town Clerk gave an update:

Seats: 5 new heritage seats of which 4 have been purchased and installed around Northumberland Hall. The 5th is awaiting installation by NCC.

All wooden seats on out asset register are being inspected with a view to replacing those in the worst condition.

Two requests have been received for memorial benches. One is on Alnwick Moor and has been passed to Edlingham Parish Council. The other is on Wagonway Road and will probably replace the existing bench.

Councillor Wood-Mitchell asked if an additional seat could be installed at The Oaks roundabout as the existing one gets a lot of use.

Bins: At Cllr Harrington's request, a bin had been installed at the entrance to the Pastures on The Peth. NCC have requested that the bin is put back at fish market end of Northumberland Hall as their staff are reporting lots of litter.

A request has been received to put a dog bin at the junction of Swansfield Park Road and Lindisfarne Road.

Map cases: The new map case was installed at the bus station yesterday and new maps put in all the map cases.

Other town centre street furniture:

Fingerposts – the new fingerpost has been installed at the bus station. Gold paint has been provided by the contractor for the Town Centre lettering on the archway at Greenwell Road end of Greenwell Lane.

Alnwick signs – one of the Alnwick signs had lost a couple of letters and she had requested costs for replacements. The cost of replacement aluminium letters would be £12 each with an additional cost to paint and fix them so the total cost for replacing all the letters on one sign plus a complete set of spare letters would be around £230. She advised that the alternative was to have vinyl letters which would cost a total of £65.

Councillor Swinbank felt that they were an important part of the town entrances so the replacements needed to be the same

RESOLVED: i) To purchase and install new seats including one for The Oaks roundabout, ii) To ask permission from NCC then install a new bin at Swansfield Park Road / Lindisfarne Road, iii) To purchase replacement aluminium letters for the Alnwick sign.

d) Bike Track

Councillor Patience reported that Gallery Youth were getting a portacabin put on site in the next weeks which had permission for 5 years. She had spoken to the site manager from Cussins who had agreed to reimburse the cost of the dolomite and gravel which the Town Council had purchased and Cussins had used.

She reported there were still safety issues with huge machinery being used and no-one manning the crossing. She had requested more signage which Cussins had agreed to.

Councillor Broom asked if there could be a temporary zebra crossing installed. Councillor Wearn advised that there weren't many people using the footpath so she was unsure that a zebra crossing would help.

RESOLVED: To accept the update.

RA 20/11 Fruit Tree Planting in Alnwick

Councillor Edge had circulated a document setting out 2 projects which he wished to undertake at Alnwick North Community Centre and Swansfield Park.

He advised that he had approached Community@NE66 about a tree planting project which they had been keen to do. He had also spoken to NCC about planting fruit trees in Swansfield Park.

Councillor Watson thought both projects were excellent.

Councillor Swinbank explained that there are Community Action Proposals (CAPs) in the Neighbourhood Plan to plant fruit trees.

Councillor Wood-Mitchell asked if there was an update on the cherry trees. The Project & Funding Officer advised that Alnwick had been allocated a number of trees but that he had not had an update for some time. He understood that they still planned to supply them in November.

RA 20/12 Any Other Urgent Business

Councillor Grisdale reported that the Youth Hostel had received complaints about the church bells at St Paul's and asked if the Town Council were able to do anything to have them stopped between midnight and 6am.

Councillor Symonds felt it was totally unreasonable to church bells to ring all night.

Councillor Broom asked if the matter should go to Full Council. The Town Clerk advised that he would think about the matter.

Councillor Watson felt the Youth Hostel could ask St Paul's for their view on the issue.

The Town Clerk reported that QR scanning posters had been put up at the Mechanics and the Cemetery. He explained that he was awaiting a response from NALC as to whether these were needed at play areas.

Meeting closed at 8.36pm