



Minutes of the Recreation & Amenities Committee meeting held via Zoom on Thursday 22nd April 2021, at 6.30pm

Present: Councillors P Broom (Chair), P Edge, 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 20/37 Apologies

None.

RA 20/38 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Watson Item 9b.

RA 20/39 Approval of minutes of last meeting (28th January 2021,)

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 28th January 2021 were approved as a true record.

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the last meeting on 28th January 2021.

RA 20/40 Matters arising from the minutes not on the agenda

RA20/31 Digital Town Trail – Councillor Harrington had emailed the link to the app to all councillors.

Councillor Wearn thought the app was very good and had walked some of the trail. She and Councillor Wood-Mitchell had spotted a few typos which they had notified to Councillor Harrington.

RA 20/41 Budget Update 2020/21

The Assistant to the Town Clerk had circulated a copy of the Recreation & Amenities Committee Income and Expenditure for 2020/21 as March 31st 2021 highlighting the budget lines with additional expenditure since the last meeting:

EXPENDITURE

EVENTS - Total payments made £16,800 against a budget of £25,950.
Alnwick Round Table Duck Event £300.

PROJECTS - Total payments made £6,168 against a budget of £18,100.

WWI anniversary bench - progressing well and will be unveiled on VE Day in June.
Trees, bulbs and tree guards - £1,425.63.

ASSETS & SERVICES - Total payments made £32,462.83 against a budget of £97,150.
Wages/PAYE - £24,057.07 (12 months salary costs).

Play Areas – £1,459.04 (including replacement rope at Swansfield Park).

Town Hall Lighting – £167.47 (11 months electricity)

Memorials – £334.00 (11 months electricity, 4 qtrs water charges)

Allotments - £8,532.06 (4 qtrs water charges, skip hire, materials, new greenhouse)

Dog bins/litter bins – £3,350.23 (new bins £2,267.49)

Street Planters - £2,543.60 (re-siting planter £102.66)

Seats – £3,436.42 (materials for repairs £462.12, new seats £2,974.30)

INCOME – Total income for 2020/21 was £6,109 (allotment rents £5,540) against a budget of £5,000. There has also been an additional £568.62 from Local Living.

Councillor Patience asked if Cussins had repaid the money owed for the dolomite. The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised they hadn't and she would chase them.

Councillor Wearn asked for clarification of the income and costs for the allotments. The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that the costs for allotments were £8,532.05 against an income of £5,540. She added that the Town Council would never make a profit from its allotments.

The Town Clerk added that money had been spent clearing allotments to re-let them.

Councillor Edge asked what the anticipated rent for Ratten Row might be with Northumberland Estates. The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that at this stage this was unknown.

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

RA 20/42 Event Grant Applications

The Town Clerk reported that there were two applications for event grant funding:

The Project & Funding Officer reported that an application had been received from the Harley Davidson Geordie Chapter for their event on September 18th to raise money for Help for Heroes. NCC have agreed to close the road for the event and have reduced the fee to £100 for this. Councillor Watson asked that the businesses in town were told about the event so they could plan accordingly.

The Town Clerk reported that the 2nd application was from Bailiffgate Museum for funding towards a Viking Village Event on August 8th 2021.

Councillor Patience thought this was exactly the sort of event the Town Council were looking for to be in the Market Place and supported the request for £1,750.

Councillor Edge felt the event needed communicating.

The Town Clerk advised that money had been put aside for publicity.

Councillor Wood-Mitchell asked if the event was ticketed. The Town Clerk advised that event was free.

RESOLVED: To award £100 to the Harley Davidson Geordie Chapter and £1,750 to the Bailiffgate Museum for their Viking Village Event.

RA 20/43 Updates:

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

Swansfield Park – the cone climber has been damaged and had been taken down and a new one ordered. The old one will be kept as spares. A new toddler swings and basket for the basket swing have been ordered.

Play Equipment for older children: He reported that he was working with Rosie Bush and student at DCHS and that a full report would be available at the next meeting.

Councillor Broom reported that there were some marks on the play equipment at some of the play areas including Glovers Green and Barresdale. The Project & Funding Officer advised that he would do a monitoring visit. The Town Clerk asked councillors to report issues to officers as soon as possible.

Councillor Patience asked if the sign had been put up. The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that the sign was ready and would be picked up shortly. A temporary sign should have been installed and she would check with the Town Handyman.

Councillor Swinbank asked how often litter was collected at Swansfield Park. The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that on the previous Tuesday NCC had also been collecting litter and that there had not been any litter.

Councillor Watson asked how the net at Swansfield Park was damaged. The Project & Funding Officer advised that he was unsure but that it was probably vandalised.

Councillor Wearn felt that councillors might be able to do inspections at Swansfield Park to pick up any issues including litter.

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

He reported that at the beginning of April there had been 8 vacated allotments (5 at Ratten Row, 2 at St James's and 1 at St Georges) and immediately re-let. There is only one vacant allotment at present at St George's.

There are currently 14 people on the waiting list.

Northumbrian Water have advised that the Town Council will need to install their pipework first then NWL will connect to the mains.

Councillor Wearn reported that there was one very overgrown allotment. The Project & Funding Officer advised that the plot had been let and that the tenant had been given a rent reduction.

Councillor Swinbank asked if there had been any progress on the request for extending the allotments into the old cricket field and asked if this could take this to the next Forum meeting. The Project & Funding Officer advised that he thought there had been some reluctance to do this at this stage. The Town Clerk felt that additional allotments were needed but wanted to do more work on the best locations to meet the need.

Councillor Edge felt that there was a need for more allotments which the Town Council manage and that this is a CAP in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Councillor Patience advised that the area near to the sewage works was still in Northumberland Estates plans for future allotments.

The Assistant to the Town Clerk advise that although it was in the Neighbourhood Plan it was not necessary be Town Council allotments. She felt that it might be advisable to identify potential sites for allotments. She also advised that some of the existing allotments could be made smaller to be able to offer more people an allotment.

The Town Clerk felt the Allotment Working Group could be tasked to look at this further.

Councillor Wearn reported that the site identified for future allotments at Windy Edge was being used to store earth and that there was quite a lot of water on the site.

Councillor Edge felt it was important that the site at Windy Edge was kept for allotments and that it was not used for further development.

Councillor Swinbank let it would be helpful if other people outside the Town Council were involved in the allotment group.

RESOLVED: That the Allotment Working Group becomes an Advisory Group and involves other stakeholders.

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

Street Furniture

Bins – 5 bins ordered and delivered and 2 have been installed on the left-hand side of Taylor Drive. One at the bus stop and one done at the crossing.

New metal bin installed in Swansfield Park and the existing large green plastic bin will be installed at Aln Valley Railway.

3 bins kept in stock to replace bins which get vandalised.

NCC report the 4 larger bins in the Market Place are working well and are happy that we replace any other bins in the town centre with larger bins. Could the Retail & Town Centre Advisory Group be asked for their suggestions.

Seats – 4 Phoenix recycled seats delivered and 2 installed at Alnwick Moor and the bottom of The Peth. The other 2 plus to the 2 existing seats in Column Field will replace 4 heritage seats which will then be moved into Column Field.

Planters – 3 new large square planters have arrived to replace some of the old wooden tubs. The other wooden tubs will be replaced during this year with some of them being filled with sustainable planting and some with dwarf fruit trees.

The 2nd millstone from the Cemetery will be moved to the pavement outside Barter Books to form the centre of a feature display.

Dog bag dispensers: 3 dispensers have arrived and are ready to be installed.

Councillor Harrington reported that there were no bins on the trading estate. The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that she had spoken to NCC who asked that the Town Council requested Advance Northumberland could install bins.

Councillor Edge asked for a bin on The Battlements as the road was being used more heavily and litter was becoming a problem.

Councillor Swinbank felt a more strategic approach was needed regarding bin locations.

Councillor Broom reported that the bins outside M&Co were always full and could be replaced with larger bins and the smaller ones relocated elsewhere.

Councillor Harrington agreed that the bins outside M&Co would certainly benefit from larger bins.

Councillor Wood-Mitchell reported that there was an excessive amount of litter, including plastic gloves, and asked if the Town Council could write to the garage about this.

Councillor Broom asked if NCC could supply biodegradable bags.

Councillor Harrington reported that the green dog walker scheme did not seem to be working and that progress regarding dog bag dispensers was needed by the next meeting.

Councillor Wearn reported she had written to Paul Jones at NCC, copying in Councillor Sanderson, regarding the new cycle racks in town. Paul had asked that any issues were sent to him.

Councillor Harrington reported that the cycle stands were the wrong size and had been installed badly by the contractors from Cumbria.

Councillor Broom agreed the standard of the workmanship was appalling and that the attempts to tidy up had just spread the problem.

Councillor Wearn advised that Paul Jones had acknowledged that the work was not of a good enough standard.

b) Tree Planting

Councillor Edge reported that 26 fruit trees had been planted at Swansfield Park and the Community Centre.

The Assistant to the Town Clerk reported that the revised locations for the 176 cherry trees have been approved by the Japanese Embassy and that planting had started at the beginning of April and that the first trees planted in Swansfield Park were coming into blossom. 40 trees have been planted so far at local care / residential homes and 4 local schools. Year 6 pupils from Swansfield Park helped plant their trees and 6 reception class pupils from St Paul's helped put their trees in and all care homes and schools will water and look after their trees.

13 trees have been planted in Swansfield Park and the final locations for the 30 trees for in Taylor Drive, Weavers Way and Willowburn Avenue have been agreed with NCC.

Taylor Drive – test digs show the soil to be ok but has a lot of granite chippings so we need to use a digger to make the work easier.

Weavers Way - unfortunately test digs found it was dense clay so the cherry trees have been planted with the existing fruit trees in the grassed area at St end of Weavers Way. No further planting is planned and the remainder of the trees will be kept in a nursery bed at Alnwick Garden and will be planted in the autumn.

Other Tree Planting:

4 more fruit trees have been planted in Greenwell Road on the grassed area between car park C and D.

Other NCC Items:

Spoke to NCC about use of non-glyphosate weedkiller. NCC are trialling other forms of weed killing (in Shilbottle) such as burning and will report back after the trial. Also asked them to leave some grassed areas unmown so that wildflowers can be sown.

Councillor Edge reported that strimming around trees was an issue and that an area should be left.

RESOLVED: To accept the updates.

RA 20/44 Any Other Urgent Business

Councillor Wood-Mitchell reported that the stone bus shelter opposite Barter Book needed cleaning and was full of litter. The Town Clerk advised that he would ask a member of staff to look at this.

Councillor Harrington advised that the Town Handyman had a portable washer.

Councillor Edge advised that he had appreciated Councillor Patience help and support during her time as a councillor.

Councillor Broom thanked officers for the help and support with this committee.

Meeting close at 8.38pm