



Minutes of the Recreation & Amenities Committee meeting held via Zoom on Thursday 28th January 2021, at 6.30pm

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 Hatley, Town Clerk; J Pibworth, Assistant to the Town Clerk; T Kirton, Project & Funding Officer and Councillor L Wearn.

RA 20/26 Apologies

None.

RA 20/27 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Patience Item 9d, Councillor Watson Items 5 and 9b).

RA 20/28 Approval of minutes of last meeting (26th November 2020,)

Councillor Wood-Mitchell asked for an amendment to RA20/19 Digital Town Trails which was agreed. With the noted amendment, the Minutes of the last meeting held on 26th November 2020 were approved as a true record.

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the last meeting on 26th November 2020.

RA 20/29 Matters arising from the minutes not on the agenda

None.

RA 20/30 Water – St. George’s allotments

The Projects and Funding Officer had produced reported that he had spoken to The Alnwick Garden about their rainwater harvesting system which was supplied by Polypipe. The water tank would need to be accommodated tank within one of the plots it would need to be placed underground on a concrete bed and with a concrete or a slab cap on top. He advised that a 5200 litre underground tank would cost £2500 and an above ground 10,000 litre tank £899.

A pump would also be needed to either fill an above ground tank or irrigate from an underground tank plus a lot of piping. A pump would be £478 but would also need a mains electricity supply to operate it, so this would have to be installed. Polypipe would only supply the equipment which we need to be installed by a contractor.

There are alternative methods of rainwater harvesting of course but would require rooves and water butts in each plot.

He explained that NWL costed a scheme for a mains water supply at St Georges in March 2016 with a cost of around £2,600 to install a mains pipe to the main St. George’s allotment gate.

The Town Clerk advised that he recommended the installation of water at St Georges as improving the facilities at all allotment sites should be seen as an investment for the Town Council.

Councillor Swinbank felt it would be difficult to have an overground rain harvesting system on the site. He agreed that water should be installed and rents increased for current allotment holders who wanted access to the water.

Councillor Patience supported the installation of a mains water system and felt fees should be the same as other locations which have water.

Councillor Harrington felt that water was now a standard requirement at all allotment sites and supported one tap rather individual taps being installed.

RESOLVED: To install a mains water system at St Georges allotments with one centrally located tap.

RA 20/31 Digital Town Trails

The Project & Funding Officer reported that he had spoken to NCC about suitable grant funding but advised that they were not aware of any funding that would support this at this present time.

Councillor Harrington reported that the main points of interest and images had been agreed and that the app should be launched about mid-February.

Councillor Swinbank asked what the annual cost would be. Councillor Harrington advised this would be £185 per year.

Councillor Edge asked how the new app would be advertised. Councillor Harrington advised that downloadable and printable versions would be available on the new Alnwick Town Council website.

Councillor Swinbank felt the TIC could be asked to put a link to the Town Council website.

Councillor Watson asked if the download would be free. Councillor Harrington advised that it would be free.

The Town Clerk advised that the new website would be used with the app and information would also be put in the Town Council noticeboard.

Councillor Lyford asked if a QR code could be available. The Town Clerk advised that this should be included.

Councillor Wood-Mitchell advised that Investing in Alnwick had been working on a Town Trail app for a couple of years. She advised that the focus of their app would include animation and was focused on young families. For example, the Lions at Tenantry Column would come to life to have images taken. Some funding has already been approved but there is a shortfall of £7.5k and they would be asking the Town Council for a contribution.

Councillor Watson asked if the Investing in Alnwick app would be free. Councillor Wood-Mitchell advised that there would be no on-going hosting costs and that they would decide if they wanted to charge a fee.

RA 20/32 Asset Management

The Assistant to the Town Clerk explained that the asset register is updated as new items over £250 in individual value are purchased. At the moment the asset list is used to produce a weekly checklist which the Town Handyman uses at the Play Areas. The standard form enables him to record the condition of items, if any need cleaning, repairing or replacing along with any comments which he feels are relevant. These forms then go to the office for review and filing.

The intention is to broaden the use of the asset register to other areas to include most of our outdoor assets.

This would ensure that:

1. Assets are checked on a more regular basis
2. Staff have a more structured work pattern
3. Any damaged assets are repaired or replaced quickly
4. Assets are kept in the best condition for residents / visitors

5. Any claims for damages caused by faulty / broken items can be checked

There are 346 items on the Asset Register of which around 320 of in and around the town centre. (e.g. 135 bins and 108 seats/benches, 7 bus shelters, 12 fingerposts,).

The intention is to produce checklists for our assets (including all street furniture) and divide them up between the two Town Handymen to be completed each month. We will also amend the current staff timesheet to include location and activity for each day.

Councillor Wearn felt this was an excellent idea.

Councillor Broom asked if weeding could be added to the checklist.

RESOLVED To note the update.

RA 20/33 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 December 31st 2020 highlighting the budget lines with additional expenditure since the last meeting:

EXPENDITURE

EVENTS - Total payments made £16,500 against a budget of £25,950.

Remembrance Sunday £250 (British Legion donation)

VE Day £50 for floral tribute.

PROJECTS - Total payments made £4,980 against a budget of £18,100.

ASSETS & SERVICES - Total payments made £32,462.83 against a budget of £97,150.

Wages/PAYE - £18,256.14 (9 months salary costs).

Play Areas – £547.37

Town Hall Lighting – £115.29 (8 months electricity)

Memorials – £246 (8 months electricity, 3 qtrs water charges)

Allotments - £5,732.37 (3 qtrs water charges, skip hire and materials)

Dog bins/litter bins – £503.05 (new locks for heritage bins)

Seats – £1364.87 (3 new seats)

Fingerposts / Alnwick signs – £392.00 (repairs to Alnwick sign)

Flags - £229.76 (new Alnwick flag and Union flag)

Alnwick Bike Track - £1362.49 (gravel and dolomite)

INCOME – Total income for 2020/21 was £3,021 (allotment rents £2452.50) against a budget of £5,000. There has been an additional £1174 income from allotment rents making the total income figure £4,195.

Councillor Swinbank felt that the low energy lights under the Town Hall were having a positive impact on electricity costs. He asked what the annual costs for dolomite would be . The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that this would be around £500 a year.

Councillor Edge asked about the progress on the WWI bench. The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that she had emailed the blacksmith for an update.

Councillor Edge asked if the water fountain was still working at Robertson’s Fountain. The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that it was.

Councillor Grisdale thought the skip hire figure seemed high. The Project & Funding Officer advised that this was because all the sites had been cleared during the year.

The Town Clerk added that there had been a lot of rubbish to clear which had not been done for several years.

Councillor Grisdale asked if there was a rota for the flags on the Civic flagpole. The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that the new Alnwick flag had been flown between December 1st and 31st.

Councillor Wearn reported that she had received communication asking when Alnwick had declared themselves as County Town of Northumberland and had been advised that it was Newcastle. Councillor Harrington advised that the archives held at Woodhorn would confirm that Alnwick was the county town. Councillor Watson advised that Morpeth was the administrative centre but that the County and National Archivists had confirmed that Alnwick was the county town.

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

RA 20/34 Updates:

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

Community Orchard: Replacements for the missing rope and anchor points for the triangular climber have been sourced but we are still awaiting delivered as the firm supplying have furloughed their staff during the new lockdown. This should have been delivered today.

Play Equipment for older children: He reported that students at DCHS had identified 6 pieces of equipment including a basket swing and outdoor sports equipment and sunken trampolines, which have also been requested by Barnsdale School. Items will be costed up and bought back to this committee. He advised that Investing in Alnwick had contacted him to advised that they were looking at gym equipment in Column Field. Councillor Wood-Mitchell reported that this was a project being led by David Taylor and that they were looking at putting 7 pieces of equipment in Column Field at a cost of around £10k. She added that David Taylor would contact the Project & Funding Officer to avoid any duplication.

Councillor Harrington asked if approval had been sought to put equipment in Column Field and felt this was important. Councillor Wood-Mitchell advised that it was early days so they had not been to Northumberland Estates as yet and whether NCC would be retaining management of the area.

The area being considered was the area on the left of the field near to the Sensory Garden.

Councillor Watson was concerned that planning permission might not be given as the Column is a Listed Building and that other areas of the town, such as Swansfield Park, would be more suitable. Councillor Wood-Mitchell advised that this might be correct but that they needed to investigate. People had confirmed that they would like gym equipment in the town centre.

Councillor Swinbank asked if S106 funding was being looked at as potential funding for the play equipment for older children.

Councillor Harrington thought that it had been a requirement of the developers of the Willowburn housing estate to provide play equipment. The Town Clerk advised that conditions for use of S106 funding this had changed and was less likely to be available.

Councillor Swinbank explained that some S106 funding from the former Duke's Middle School site, which needs to be explored further. The Project & Funding advised that he would investigate the options.

The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that there had been some vandalism on the hand sanitiser units at Swansfield Park.

Councillor Broom suggested this was reported to the police and publicised in the Gazette.

Councillor Harrington reported that in Rothbury the hand sanitiser had been removed and he would not replace the ones at Swansfield Park.

Councillor Patience reminded councillors that the Town Council had agreed to provide hand sanitisers as a safety measure and that they should be replaced.

Councillor Edge felt that as the replacement cost was a small one the hand sanitisers should be replaced.

The Town Clerk felt that the Town Council should maintain the hand sanitiser units to provide a level of safety for people.

Councillor Watson felt the matter should be reported to the police. The Town Clerk advised that he report the incident to the police.

Councillor Swinbank thought that alternative hand sanitisers could be sourced with less flammability.

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

Ratten Row – Northumberland Estates put me on to Exploration & Testing Associates Limited of Tyneside who have quoted £3,675.

Councillor Broom felt that the area should be left as an open field for wildlife. He thought it could be fenced off so that fly-tipping could not take place. Some oak trees could be planted and a walkway through the area put in.

Councillor Patience was uncertain if trees should be planted without a soil test first. She advised that the site had once had a midden which had been removed.

Councillor Edge confirmed that some suitable trees could be found for the area.

Councillor Grisdale asked what the costing was for?

The Project & Funding Officer advised that the test would be for contamination.

Councillor Swinbank felt that the area might not be contaminated than other allotment sites and could be bought back into use by adding some top soil.

Councillor Wearn certainly felt that more allotments would be needed with the new housing sites.

The Project & Funding Officer advised there are currently 12 people on the waiting list.

Councillor Harrington explained that once anything was found on the site it could cause a lot of problems for the Town Council and that he would leave the site alone.

Councillor Edge asked about using the cricket space above Ratten Row as an allotment site.

Councillor Broom asked Councillor Patience about the area near the bike track would still be allocated for allotments. Councillor Patience advised that there was an area identified in the Alnwick & Denwick Neighbourhood Plan for allotments.

Councillor Wearn advised that this area is no longer available as the SUDs for the Windy Edge site has been moved there.

Councillor Patience said she would prefer to keep the cricket ground site as open space as it was widely used it could have trees planted.

Councillor Edge felt the area needed to be used for community use.

Councillor Patience felt the matter could be picked up by the Environmental Advisory Group to discuss further.

Councillor Watson was not in favour of offering raised beds on any land that was potentially contaminated.

Councillor Broom felt the land should be left as a community use area rather than allotments.

RESOLVED: To allocate the space as community use.

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

Bins: the planned bin moves have now all been done.

The dog bin has been put back at the top of Peter's Mill Lane which was well received, with a request for bins on the new estate; the replacement bin has been installed near Swansfield Park; a bin has been installed at the Denwick Lane entrance to the Pastures.

6 new bins have been ordered some of which will be installed in Taylor Drive.

Seats: the 3 seats which had been delivered before the last meeting have been installed. 5 new seats have been ordered We will have a look for a seat for Meadow Riggs which may be one of the ones we recycle from elsewhere.

Planters: there are 3 x 2-tier planters which, along with the 3 in Narrowgate, are waiting to go into the Market Place as replacements for some of the older planters.

Some of our wooden tubs are beginning to rot badly so will need to be replaced. I have sourced some recycled plastic ones from the company that provides our Play Area seats which have feet and should need less maintenance.

Councillor Swinbank asked if the bench from Clayport Bank would be reused. The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that all benches were recycled when possible.

Councillor Swinbank asked if a bin could be located at the Aln Valley Railway to replace the plastic bag which was currently in place. The Town Clerk felt this was a well used area and if Denwick Parish Council were unable to provide a bin Alnwick Town Council would provide one.

Councillor Harrington thought Aln Valley railway may have a bin which could be used but agreed that a bin needed to be provided.

d) Bike Track

Councillor Patience reported that the Alnwick Bike Track management group had met and that she could provide the notes from the meeting. It was agreed that the Town Clerk would put together some terms of reference for the group would have Terms and Reference written, based on the existing Advisory Groups. Gallery Youth would manage the site and be responsible for the welfare cabin on site, do outreach work during the summer work with other agencies to offer services at the bike track, report back to Recreation & Amenities Committee.

RESOLVED: To accept the updates.

RA 20/35 Any Other Urgent Business

Councillor Wood-Mitchell reported that £15k had been secured towards the repairs to the lights in Column Field.

Councillor Wood-Mitchell advised that all Investing in Alnwick events have been cancelled in 2021 and moved to 2022.

Councillor Wood-Mitchell reported that the cherry trees which were thought needed moving in Column Field can remain in place.

Councillor Wood-Mitchell asked if there were any ideas for a local NHS appreciation event. The Town Clerk thought the idea should be discussed further at the Retail & Town Centre Advisory Group.

Councillor Harrington reported that the level of dog fouling was unacceptable and felt the Town Council should do something positive.

Councillor Edge asked if the trees for the community planting projects could be held in at the cemetery. The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that she would check. Councillor Watson offered space on his allotment to heel in the trees.

Councillor Patience advised that the issue at the Mechanics Institute which had been reported to the police by neighbours, had been resolved, and that the police were happy that all dance sessions were taking place via Zoom and groups were not meeting in the building.

Meeting close at 8.42pm