

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL
SERVICES COMMITTEE**

20 OCTOBER 2014

PRESENT: Councillor Peat (in the Chair) (Minutes 23 to 34 inclusive); Councillors Mrs Grady, Harrison (in the Chair for Minute 35), Hinchcliffe (Minutes 23 to 34 inclusive), Marshall and Yarker.

Also in attendance: Councillor Deacon (Minutes 23 to 34 inclusive); two members of the press.

Officers: Mr King (Clerk) and Mrs Plant (Deputy Clerk).

23. ACCEPTANCE, OR OTHERWISE, OF APOLOGIES: None.

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with this Council's adopted Code of Conduct (Minute 72(a)/Sep/12 refers), Members were asked whether they had any personal or prejudicial interests in any matter on the agenda and, if so, to declare those interests at this point of the meeting. Members were reminded that a declaration could be given later in the meeting if a need arose during discussion. Councillor Harrison declared an interest in respect of Minute 26(iii) and took no part in the voting on that item.

25. SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING – 28 JULY 2014 – MINUTES

Resolved – That the Minutes be accepted as a correct record.

26. ALLOTMENTS

(i) General

A summary was provided in respect of the current position of the allotments service, including the waiting list situation and the fact that further path improvement works had been carried out at Raby Avenue.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(ii) Allotments Improvement Action Plan

Submitted – An updated Allotments Improvement Action Plan, outlining potential projects and consideration was given as to which projects could potentially be carried out in the short-term and which long-term projects should be deferred until further funding was available.

Resolved – That, the Allotment Improvement Action Plan, as now agreed, be progressed.

(iii) Allotments 2015/16 Budgetary Bid

Submitted – A report to consider an Allotments 2015/16 budgetary bid for inclusion in the overall town council's budget for 2015/16. It was confirmed that the allotment plot rental for 2015/16 had already been determined (£42) because 12 months' notice had to be given to tenants and that the Allotments' annual income for 2015/16 would be £3,846 (£3,696 rental from 88 plots plus £150 received from Northern Powergrid (Northeast) Limited for Crook Lane's sub-station rent). The allotment rental for 2016/17 was also considered.

Reference was also made to the provision of skips that the Demesnes allotment site were provided with on a bi-annual basis and the fact that the Demesnes was the only site to receive this facility.

Resolved – (a) That the following be recommended to the Resources Committee meeting scheduled for 3 November 2014:

- (i) that the 2015/16 Allotments Expenditure be £3,846 (increase of £216) and Income be £3,846 (increase of £216);
- (ii) that the allotment rental for 2016/17 be increased to £45.

(b) That it be recommended to the Council meeting scheduled on 17 November 2014 that the Demesnes allotment site should only be provided with a skip in exceptional circumstances.

27. PLAY AREAS

(i) Future Play Area Provision – Consultation Exercise

It was confirmed that, pursuant to Council Minute 75(4(a)(ii))/Dec/13 and Committee Minute 17(ii(b))/Jul/14, a public consultation exercise had been carried out on 28 August at Green Lane play area to ascertain if Kalafat, Ten Fields and Green Lane play areas required further development and to identify preferred options, which was reasonably attended and that Cllr Robinson had also hand-delivered consultation leaflets around the area. In addition, Mrs Plant (Deputy Clerk), Mrs Smith (Services Officer) and Cllr Harrison had attended a number of Green Lane School CE Primary School classes and had carried out a consultation exercise directly with the children.

Details of the consultation had been well publicised and a deadline for comments had been set for 30 November 2014. The outcome to be reported at the next Services Committee meeting on 15 December.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(ii) Dawson Road Wheelchair Swing

It was confirmed that a further funding application had been submitted to the County Durham Community Foundation, to make up the shortfall so that a piece of play equipment suitable for children in wheelchairs can be purchased, and that a decision was awaited.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(iii) Play Areas 2015/16 Budgetary Bid

Submitted – A report to consider a Play Areas 2015/16 budgetary bid for inclusion in the overall town council budget for 2015/16, including details of the standard expenditure items, i.e. annual general maintenance (grass-cutting and litter picking, etc.), the annual and quarterly play area inspections and minor equipment repairs, and it was recommended that an allowance of £8,000 for this expenditure be taken into account.

In respect of the income, the collection of Gate Licence fees was anticipated to be £17 (increase of £3) and £100 (no change) for the rental of Ten Fields from Barnard Castle Football Club. Reference was made to the ongoing difficulties in respect of the proposed new lease between this Council, Barnard Castle Football Club and Fields in Trust for the rental of Ten Fields and it was recommended that, in anticipation of the matter being delayed beyond the 2014/15 financial year, the £500 included in the 2014/15 Play Areas budget to cover the cost of the lease renewal should be earmarked.

Pursuant to the decision to create a community walk from Green Lane play area, through Ten Fields down to Kalafat (Council Minute 75(4(a(ii)))/Dec/13), it was confirmed that, since the walk had been publicised, a number of concerns had been received, including one from Barnard Castle Football Club, which had been circulated to members. Discussion ensued and the project was reconsidered, including that any existing gaps in the perimeter hedges and fences should be repaired.

Members' attention was also drawn to the fact that, recent play area inspections had highlighted that the safety surfacing at all of the play areas was deteriorating and should, within the next few years, be repaired or replaced which, it was noted, would be a costly exercise either way.

With that in mind, and as grant funding would not be available for such expenditure, members were advised that provision for such costs should be taken into greater consideration. Two options were put forward, to increase the Play Areas budget by a large amount in a specific year or, the preferred option of setting up a rolling funding programme, i.e. that a commitment of at least £2,500 be included in the 2015/16 Play Areas budget and each year thereafter. In addition, it was recommended that a 'Play Areas Repairs and Future Provision Reserve Fund' be set up to build up reserves to carry out work on projects which were greater than any one year's budget and for any underspends to add to that fund. This would also potentially allow the council to have a pot of money that could be used for match funding when applying for grants in respect of future play area provision.

Resolved – (a) That it be recommended to the Council meeting scheduled on 17 November 2014, that the decision to create a community walk between Green Lane, Ten Fields and Kalafat be rescinded.

(b) That the following be recommended to the Resources Committee meeting scheduled for 3 November 2014:

- (i) that, should the Ten Fields lease renewal be delayed, £500 from the Play Areas 2014/15 budget be earmarked.
- (ii) that the Play Areas 2015/16 Expenditure budget be £10,500 (increase of £2,500) and Income budget be £117 (increase of £3).
- (iii) that from 2015/16, any Play Area budgetary underspends be transferred into a Play Areas Repairs and Future Provision Reserve Fund.

28. FLORAL AND OPEN SPACES

(i) Floral Displays

It was confirmed that the Winter/Spring replanting of the town's floral displays would be carried out shortly.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(ii) Upper Demesnes Haymeadow

A summary of the work that had been carried out on the hay meadow during 2014 was provided, including the fact that the Hay Meadow had now become self-sustaining.

Reference was made to the intended creation of a Hay Meadow information board and the fact that, following a further consensus between the Friends of the Upper Demesnes Hay Meadow, it was considered that this should be deferred for another year in anticipation of further eye-catching specimens being found next year that should be included on the board. It was therefore suggested that a Hay Meadow leaflet be

created as an alternative to be made available to pick up from an outdoor leaflet dispenser located within the hay meadow from the beginning of May. It was confirmed that the Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership agreed with this arrangement.

Resolved – (a) That the decision to create a Hay Meadow information board be deferred until 2016.

(b) That a Hay Meadow leaflet be made available to pick up from an outdoor leaflet dispenser located within the hay meadow from the beginning of May 2015 to be paid from the Floral and Open Spaces 2015/16 budget.

(iii) Castle Walls Bulb Planting Scheme

It was reported that Rotters had volunteered to plant out the remaining daffodil bulbs to fill the gaps identified after the Spring bloom earlier this year.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(iv) Floral and Open Spaces Budgetary Bid 2015/16

Submitted – A report to consider a Floral and Open Spaces 2015/16 budgetary bid for inclusion in the overall town council budget for 2015/16, including a breakdown of the floral displays potential costs for 2015/16 and that the shrubs in the stone troughs should be replaced as they had outgrown the stone troughs but these could be replanted elsewhere in the town.

Members' views were sought in response to a request received from the Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership about the Flatts Wood improvement project, i.e. to cover the costs of regular strimming along a 175m stretch of permissive footpath from Raby Avenue upwards.

Reference was made to the fact that, whilst the Red Well had historically been dealt with by the council and had a specific budgetary allocation, since the implementation of the council's revised constitution, it was deemed practical that the Red Well budgetary allocation be amalgamated into the Floral and Open Spaces budgetary allocation. On a side issue, it was noted that the well currently appeared clogged-up.

It was confirmed that no further progress had been made in respect of the Galgate greens' ownership issue by Durham County Council. Members' were asked whether further improvements should be carried out as a small amount remained in the Galgate Greens Improvement Project earmarked reserve account.

Following recent reports that the Aviation Memorial was in need of a new home, which was sited within the grounds of HMYOI Deerbolt but that land had recently transferred into the ownership of the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), a solution to the dilemma was put forward for members' consideration, i.e. rehoming the Memorial stones in the Garden of Remembrance. With this in mind, members were asked to consider becoming the Memorial's custodian and that it be encompassed within the town council's existing War Memorial service responsibilities. It was noted that the memorial's relocation costs would be covered via an arrangement with HCA. It was not anticipated that the re-siting of the Aviation Memorial within the Garden of Remembrance would be an issue.

Members' views were also sought as to how the underspend in respect of the 2014/15 budget should be spent.

Resolved – (a) That, in respect of the Floral and Open Spaces 2014/15 budgetary underspend, investigations be made into the costs of replacement wooden tubs and that the shrubs be replaced and re-used.

(b) That, it be recommended to the Council meeting scheduled on 17 November 2014, that the Aviation Memorial be re-sited in the Garden of Remembrance and that the town council consequently becomes the Memorial's custodian and encompassed within the council's existing War Memorial service responsibilities.

(c) That investigations into the costs of removing the tree stump (by stump grinding) at the upper Galgate green be made as part of the Galgate Greens Improvement Project.

(d) That the following be recommended to the Resources Committee meeting scheduled for 3 November 2014:

- (i) that the Red Well budgetary allocation from 2015/16 onwards be amalgamated into the Floral and Open Spaces budgetary allocation;
- (ii) that the town council includes the cost of regular strimming along a 175m stretch of permissive footpath in Flatts Wood, from Raby Avenue upwards, within the Floral and Open Spaces budget; and
- (iii) that the Floral and Open Spaces 2015/16 budget be £6,000 (no change).

(e) Lowfield Gardens be requested carry out the 2015/16 floral display watering service.

29. MINI GOLF 2015/16 BUDGETARY BID

Submitted – A report to consider a Mini Golf 2015/16 budgetary bid and consideration of Fees and Charges for inclusion in the overall town council's budget for 2015/16. It was noted that income figures were not guaranteed as the nature of the facility relied heavily on good weather and periods of inclement weather would have a negative effect on visitor numbers generally.

Members' views were requested in respect of the fact that, as the mini golf service was operated on a 'seasonal' basis, whether from 2015, the wages paid to the mini golf attendants should be brought in line and be paid on a 'per season' basis.

It was acknowledged that, pursuant to Council Minute 125(32)/Jan/13, the Mini Golf service was a self-funding service and that any underspends would be set aside for future repairs and future upkeep of the facility in a 'Mini Golf Holding Account'.

Resolved – (a) That the following be recommended to the Resources Committee meeting scheduled for 3 November 2014:

- (i) that the Mini Golf 2015/16 Income and Expenditure budgets of £10,000 respectively.
- (ii) that the Mini Golf 2015/16 fees and charges be as follows:
 - £2.00 per round for all users (no change);
 - £6.00 group ticket (up to 4 players – saving £2.00) (no change);
 - £10.00 loyalty ticket (7 rounds in advance – saving £4.00) (no change);
 - £0.50 lost ball (no change); and
 - £5.00 damaged club (no change).

(b) That the mini golf attendants' wages continue to be uprated in line with the National Minimum Wage (for those age 21 and above), at 1 October, annually.

30. WAR MEMORIALS 2015/16 BUDGETARY BID

Consideration was given to a War Memorials 2015/16 budgetary allocation, which took into account the fact that there was a 3-yearly maintenance programme in place to enable a further clean to be carried out in 2016.

Resolved – That a 2015/16 budgetary allocation of £710 be recommended to the Resources Committee meeting scheduled for 3 November 2014 with £710 also being made available in 2016/17.

31. DOG FOULING

(i) General Update

Details of the number of complaints received by Durham County Council since April 2014 were summarised and members' views were requested as to how the potential underspend in the 2014/15 Dog Fouling budget should be spent. Discussion ensued and reference was made to the lack of appropriate anti-dog fouling signage at the play areas.

Resolved – (a) That additional 'Shop-a-Popper' leaflets be printed.

(b) That an inter-school anti-dog fouling sign competition be approved involving the town's primary schools.

(c) That a suitable outdoor sign, based upon the winning design, be installed at all of the play areas managed by this council.

(ii) Dog Fouling 2015/16 Budgetary Bid

Submitted – A report to consider a Dog Fouling 2015/16 budgetary bid for inclusion in the overall town council's budget for 2015/16. It was considered that the existing budgetary allowance was a useful amount to aid with ongoing initiatives and potential new ones.

Resolved – That the Dog Fouling 2015/16 budgetary bid be £500 (no change).

32. PUBLIC SEATS

It was confirmed that the memorial bench scheme continued to progress and that, since the start of the 2014/15 financial year, four new benches had been installed and three benches had been revamped.

The current situation of the Public Seats Earmarked Funds account was outlined and with that in mind, a Public Seats 2015/16 budgetary allocation was not considered necessary.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

33. CASTLE FLOODLIGHTS 2015/16 BUDGETARY BID

Consideration was given to the Castle Floodlights 2015/16 budgetary bid for inclusion in the overall town council's budget for 2015/16. It was confirmed that this council continued to be responsible for the electricity and maintenance costs of the floodlights and that Durham County Council recharged this council for the electricity costs on an annual basis. It was confirmed that, to date, there had been no indication that the electricity recharge costs for 2015/16 would increase dramatically. A reasonable sum for maintenance issues was also considered.

Resolved – That a Castle Floodlights 2015/16 budgetary bid of £400 be recommended to the Resources Committee meeting scheduled for 3 November 2014.

34. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (IN RESPECT OF MINUTE 35 BELOW)

Resolved – That, under the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 §1(2), the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the matter referred to at Minute 35 below, due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted: in that it would put into the public domain an offer, the sum of which, if

disclosed, might prevent the council from achieving 'best consideration' on the terms of a proposed transaction.

35. PLAY AREAS – MARWOOD DRIVE - FLOODING ISSUE

Submitted – A report seeking the approval for the payment of the cost of preliminary works to address the drainage issue at Marwood Drive playing field, including details of those contractors who had been requested to carry out site visits with a view to submitting quotations for the works. Details of the budgetary situation were also outlined.

Resolved – (a) That, it be recommended to the Resources Committee meeting scheduled on 3 November 2014:

- i) that £600 from the Contingencies budget be used for Marwood Drive play area Phase 1 drainage works to be carried out; and
- ii) that, should there be an unexpected underspend in the 2014/15 Play Areas budget, then that underspend be vired to the Contingencies budget.

(b) That Fairbairns Ltd be appointed to carry out Phase 1 drainage works at Marwood Drive play area at a cost of £600.