

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL
SERVICES COMMITTEE**

22 FEBRUARY 2016

PRESENT: Councillors Peat (in the Chair); Harrison, Hinchcliffe and Mrs Thompson.

Also in attendance: Councillor Mrs Moorhouse and Sutherland; one member of the public and; one member of the press.

Officers: Mr King (Town Clerk) and Mrs Woodward (Deputy Clerk).

52. ACCEPTANCE, OR OTHERWISE, OF APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Yarker.

Resolved – That Councillor Yarker's apologies be accepted.

53. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with this Council's adopted Code of Conduct (Minute 72(a)/Sep/12 refers), Members will be asked whether they have 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 are reminded that a declaration can be given later in the meeting if a need arises during discussion. Councillor Harrison declared an interest in respect of Item 55.

54. SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING – 14 DECEMBER 2015 – MINUTES

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

55. ALLOTMENTS

(i) General update

Following various activity the allotment waiting list total now stood at 22. No new applications had been received.

The Crook Lane site was now fully tenanted. The site had benefited from woodchip provided by Durham County Council and some sourced by the tenants themselves. As a result, the water logging situation had improved dramatically.

There were currently two vacant gardens, one at the Harmire Road site and one at Raby Avenue. It was anticipated that these vacancies would be filled by the end of March.

As a precautionary measure, the water supply to the allotments was turned off on 21 December 2015.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(ii) Disposal of Broken Glass/Greenhouses

The recent spate of bad weather had once again caused a lot of damage to greenhouses across the site. At least seven tenants on The Demesnes site had been affected along with some on Raby Avenue and Town Head. It would be necessary to have the glassed cleared by the town council's contractor and could involve having to hire a skip.

Resolved – (a) That the position be noted; and

(b) That approval be given to the hire of a skip for the disposal of broken glass and greenhouses, should that be necessary.

(iii) Tree and Building Work

Some of the trees that run along the bottom boundary of the Raby Avenue site were overhanging the gardens and causing a nuisance. Whilst the trees were on Durham County Council land, DCC was not able to undertake the work and suggested the town council carried out the necessary pruning.

A tree situated against a boundary wall on The Demesnes site needed to be removed. Its roots were invasive and it continued to be a problem to the drystone wall.

Emergency repairs were required to the Crook Lane store due to damage caused by the recent bad weather. The town council's contractor would be assessing the damage.

Resolved – That approval be given to:

- (a) The pruning of trees at the boundary of the Raby Avenue site;
- (b) The removal of the tree growing out of the boundary wall at the north-east corner of the Demesnes site and;
- (c) Emergency repairs to the Crook Lane store.

(iv) Annual Review of Tenancy Agreement & Allotment Rules

Submitted – a report providing members with suggested revisions for the 2016/17 season Allotment Tenancy Agreement and Allotment Rules. Particular reference was drawn to the proposed amendment to Allotment Rule 9 (Greenhouses – Glass), Allotment Rule 7 (bonfire restrictions) and Allotment Rule 12 (water management).

Resolved – (a) That Allotment Rule 9 be amended to encourage the use of polytunnels.

(b) That Allotment Rule 7 be amended to encourage the use of incinerators and with respect to bonfires as follows:

Crook Lane – No bonfires at any time (no change).

The Demesnes – Permitted during Jan, Feb, March, April, September, October, November and December between 10am and 4pm.

Harmire Road – Permitted in an incinerator during Jan, Feb, March, April, October, November and December (no change) between 10am and 4pm.

Raby Avenue - Permitted during Jan, Feb, March, April, October, November and December (no change) between 10am and 4pm.

Town Head – No bonfires at any time (no change).

(c) That the changes relating to water management be approved as follows:

Tenancy Agreement Clause 5q "To report to the Council any malfunctions or leakages, not to make any illegal connections to the mains water supply and to adhere to the conditions set out in the Council's Allotment Rules, Rule 12."

Allotment Rule 12 "The water supply shall be compliant with all water regulations. No permission will be granted for any additional standpipes or extensions for tenants for individual plots.

Not to wilfully waste water or to use any form of unattended mains connected irrigation such as sprinklers and timed appliances. Not to leave hosepipes unattended and use in moderation. The water supply is for the benefit of all tenants and due consideration should be shown towards neighbouring tenants. All tenants are to make every effort to conserve water using water harvesting. Rain butts and guttering should be fitted to all appropriate structures. To avoid costly repairs it may be necessary during extreme weather conditions to turn off the water supply at the mains. If this is the case, a notice will be displayed on the entrance to the allotments to enable tenants to make alternative temporary arrangements."

(d) That the Contravention policy be approved for 2016/17.

(v) Allotments Improvement Action Plan

a. Water Regulations Compliance

Pursuant to Minute 30(iii)/Oct/15 an officer from Northumbrian Water recently conducted a Water Regulations Inspection on all of the allotment sites. The subsequent report identified a number of contraventions relating to standpipes and taps fitted in individual gardens. The time-scale for the completion of this work was tight and remedial work needed to be completed by 17 March. Due to the urgency, a discussion took place between the Clerk, Chairman and Vice Chairman of Services along with the Allotment Champion to obtain permission to progress with this compulsory work. Estimates were currently being sought and it was hoped that the rectification work would commence in early March. Tenants had been notified of the situation.

Once this essential work was completed and the full costs were known, work could then commence on pursuing further areas of improvement in line with the Allotment Improvement Action Plan.

Resolved – (a) That the information be noted; and

(b) That delegated authority be given to the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair of Services, to award a contract for the replacement of stand pipes on the allotment sites on the basis of the most economically advantageous estimate.

56. PLAY AREAS

(i) Repairs and maintenance

Pursuant to Minute 31(i)/Oct/15, inspections of all five play areas were carried out in January 2016 by Durham County Council. As a goodwill gesture, due to the disruption to the quarterly inspection programme, the Town Council was not charged. Minor actions were required as part of ongoing maintenance. It was reported that a manhole cover had recently been re-pointed at Kalafat Playing Field.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(ii) Marwood Drive Flooding

Pursuant to Minute 43(i)/Dec/15, Northumbrian Water confirmed that it did not accept land drainage connections to its network. The only surface water Northumbrian Water would accept was from hardstanding areas i.e. drives, roads and roofs of dwellings.

Consequently, it was not possible for the residents of 9 Marwood Drive to install a drain from the garden to link in with the drains under the Marwood Drive Play Area.

Members were reminded that a growth bid to secure funding of £1,000 was made as part of the 2016/17 play areas budgetary bid to carry out remedial drainage works to the playing area (Minute 31 (ii)/Oct/15 refers). This was subsequently approved at Resources Committee (Minute 56/Jan/16) and ultimately at Full Council on 11 January (Minute 101/Jan/16).

An estimate was received from A. A. Thrustboring Services Ltd for £550 to undertake drainage and rodding works. It was not possible to get three estimates due to the specialist nature of the work.

Resolved – (a) That the information be noted; and
(b) That approval be given to A.A. Thrustboring Services Ltd to undertake drainage works to Marwood Drive Play Area at a cost of £550 out of 2016/17 budget.

(iii) Tree Work - Green Lane

Pursuant to Minute 43(ii)/Dec/15, four estimates were received to carry out work to two storm damaged trees, ranging from £150 to £400. As the estimates were all under £500, the Chair of Services Committee and the Clerk considered and awarded the work to Thom Robinson Arboriculture at a cost of £150. Work was carried out at end January to the Ash tree (to prune and remove broken branches), and Beech tree (fell and remove, leaving stump levelled at the ground).

It was subsequently reported that the storm damaged ash tree had suffered a fracture and ripped down the stem. It was recommended that it be checked annually.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(iv) Play Area Inspections 2016/17 (CONFIDENTIAL)

57. SCAR TOP PLAY AREA/MINI GOLF FREEHOLD ASSET TRANSFER

The Scar Top play area and fencing either side of the pathway sustained damage due to a falling tree on 4 December 2015. Repairs were completed to the damaged play equipment at the end of January. The fence section had now been repaired. Detailed provision to novate the external funding conditions relating to the play area had been made. Legal transfers were due to be completed shortly. It was reported that leaf clearance was needed and bark chippings needed replenishing in the corner of the play area.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

58. MINI GOLF – 2016 SEASON

(i) Pre – season Cleaning

Pursuant to Committee Minute 44/Dec/15 an update of the pre-season cleaning of the mini golf course was submitted to this meeting.

In the weeks leading up to the start of the season, the mini golf course was subject to an intensive pre-season clean carried out in line with the maintenance schedule provided by the installation contractors.

At this time, any loose felt which was identified would be repaired with the recommended contact adhesive. The stone features had been coated with a water seal and natural weathering of the stone was encouraged. Cleaning of the features should only be done by hand with a soft brush and detergent and therefore they would only be cleaned to remove any unsightly staining and a further coat of water seal would be applied.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(ii) Operating Arrangements

Detailed arrangements were being made for the 2016 mini golf season. The season would commence on Saturday 19 March and would close on Sunday 30 October 2016. During that period, and weather permitting, the course would be open every weekend, bank holidays and full weeks in line with local school holidays.

During the 2015 season, and for the second time, the main summer opening (7 days per week) was extended from 6 weeks to 8 weeks with the course being open 2 weeks earlier. This proved very popular and it was therefore proposed, subject to the availability of the attendants, to do the same this season. Opening times would once again be 10:30 am to 4:30 pm (low season – 19 March to 27 May and 5 September to 30 October) and 10:30 am to 6:30 pm (high season – 28 May to 4 September).

The course was operated by four attendants and for the 2016 season two attendants were returning, one for a third year and one for a second year. Recruitment for the two vacant posts was successful.

As approved at Council 125(32)/Jan/2013, the Mini Golf was now run as a 'self-funding service' with a 'Mini Golf Holding Account' in place to enable underspends to be set aside for future repairs and upkeep of the facility. It was imperative that every effort was made to 'future proof' the facility and protect the council's investment in the course. At the 2014/15 year end the sum of £5,017 was transferred in the holding account. Taking into consideration costs associated with the pre-season clean of the course and the costs associated with recruitment of two attendants, there would be approximately £2,800 transferred into the holding account at 31 March 2016.

The mini golf kiosk continued to be an official leaflet distribution outlet for Visit Durham with the literature rack available within the kiosk to signpost visitors to other attractions in the local area. This was provided and stocked on a regular basis at no cost to this council. Free use of the course would again be available to local schools during term time for practical lessons and was also available for private hire by groups and organisations outside the normal operating hours. Information about hire of the course, Booking Forms and Terms of Hire were available on the town council's website.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

59. DELIVERING DIFFERENTLY

Submitted – a report outlining progress in the asset and service transfers from Durham County Council under the delivering differently programme and seeking approval for the consequent advertisement of a new, embracing grounds maintenance contract.

The transfer of responsibility for maintenance was expected to take place on 1 April 2016. The Demesnes would be transferred on a lease basis. DCC would retain responsibility for any trees. Two toilet facilities would be transferred as would a member of staff.

Heads of Terms were circulated for Woodleigh grounds, The Demesnes and land at the Bank and Pearson Terrace

Resolved – (a) That the Heads of Terms be approved;

(b) That a specification for grounds maintenance covering all the town council's areas of responsibility be prepared and advertised for consideration at full Council on 21 March; and

(c) That the existing Grounds Maintenance Service arrangements continue until the transfers of additional open spaces from DCC are concluded and the award of a new contract for grounds maintenance is completed.

60. WEDNESDAY MARKET

The Town Council was due to take over responsibility for running of the Wednesday Market from 1 March 2016. Handover from DCC was underway. This included the transfer of existing procedure documents and logs relating to existing market operations. Initial discussions had been held with market traders regarding the changes taking place and would continue with those who did not form part of the permanent core traders. Arrangements for the storage and movement of barriers were under discussion. In the early operation of the market no significant change was proposed. General improvement options would be explored with existing traders and reported to the April meeting for consideration.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

61. FLORAL AND OPEN SPACES

(i) Floral Displays 2016/17

It was reported that estimates needed to be sought from competent companies to carry out planting of the town's 2016/17 summer and winter floral displays.

The 1940s Event Task & Finish Group resolved that it be recommended to Services Committee that the Town Council's summer floral displays be 1940s themed, possibly with colourful vegetable and herb planting sensitively placed. It was noted that the toilet beds opposite the King's Head were already planted out with rosemary and lavender.

Resolved– (a) That the office strives to get three estimates for planting of the town's 2016/17 summer and winter floral displays, to be presented for consideration at next Services Committee on 11 April.

(b) That summer floral displays be 1940s themed, with colourful vegetable and herb planting sensitively placed, if practical.

(b) That the central section of the Gateway Bed by Niche Living be used to create a 'Dig for Victory' vegetable display managed by Veg out in Barney for 2016.

(ii) Interpretation Board – Sculpture Garden

Pursuant to Minute 37(iv)/Oct/15, Heritage Interpretation Services had been engaged to redesign and replace the Sculpture Garden interpretation panel on the former Gasworks site. The proposed design and content of the panel was set out in the Interpretive Site Inventory (ISI) circulated to members for discussion.

Suggestions had been made for a more suitable name for the site. It was agreed that the chosen name should be one that best reflected the site's significance, whilst also resonating with the heritage of the town, and sounding sufficiently attractive to visitors and locals.

Members also considered a directional signpost on Scar Top, to help raise awareness and direct people to the site.

Resolved – (a) That the information be noted;

(b) That a competition be run via The Mercury week commencing 1 March, for members of the public to rename the sculpture garden site; and

(c) That it be delegated to the Clerk, in consultation with Chair of Services Committee, to determine a suitable name for the site following the Mercury competition.

(iii) Woodland Trust Tree Packs

Pursuant to Minute 49(v)/Dec/15 an application was submitted to the Woodland Trust, which was successful. The Town Council had been awarded a wetland tree pack, consisting of 105 saplings, between 20 – 60cm tall; a mix of downy birch, goat willow, osier, hawthorn, rowan and hazel. Bamboo stakes and spiral tree protection was also provided. The trees would be delivered between 7 and 11 March and planted by volunteers around Crook Lane/Kalafat area.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(iv) Amen Corner Richard III Garden

It was reported that the Northern Dales Richard III Group had adopted the Amen Corner Richard III Garden for a trial year to help with weed control and general tidiness.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(v) Paths for All – Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership

It was reported that Phase 2 of the improvement works on Tees Bank and in Flatts Wood would take place after Easter. The works included some drainage on Druid's Walk (top of the Serpentine Path), along the Teesdale Way on Tees Bank and on the path to the Viaduct.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

62. DOG FOULING

Durham County Council was challenged over its decision not to distribute dog poop bags from its customer access point and Teesdale Leisure Centre, but to no avail. The Police Station had now agreed to distribute dog poop bags weekdays between 10am and 3pm.

Dog poop bags were also available from the Mini-golf hut once the season started and as usual from the town council's office.

The Town Council had been notified of a particular problem of dog fouling around Newgate and St. Mary's churchyard, as well as down The Bank, Thorngate and Gray Lane. A resident had also complained of dog owners dumping filled dog poop bags in a ditch behind Hawthorn Drive.

It was suggested that dog owners should be reminded that any bin could be used to dispose of dog poop bags.

Resolved – (a) That the information be noted.

63. BIG SPRING CLEAN

It was reported that Durham County Council was delivering Litter free Durham's Annual Big Spring Clean from 29 February to 17 April.

There had been complaints to the Teesdale Mercury about the state of Waterloo Yard, and whilst the area had recently been cleared, it was proposed that it could be included in the town's Big Spring Clean.

Resolved – That the Town Council participates in the 2016 Big Spring Clean on Saturday 19 March 10am to 12 noon commencing at Scar Top.

64. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (IN RESPECT OF CONTINUATION ITEM 56(iv))

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 matters referred to in the continuation of item 56(iv) below, due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted: in that it would put into the public domain information, which, if disclosed, might prevent the council from acting in the best interests of council tax payers.

56. (iv) Play Area Inspections 2016/17

Submitted – a report providing the Committee with an update on the position regarding annual and quarterly play area inspections, considering the play area inspection estimates received and seeking to determine which company should be appointed to provide play area inspections for 2016/17.

Five companies were invited to provide an estimate to carry out quarterly play area inspections (including an annual inspection) of the Town Council's five existing play areas. Durham County Council offered more regular monthly inspections at the same cost as quarterly inspections.

Members were reminded that inspections and repairs associated with Bouch Way play area were met from the Bouch Way Play Area Earmarked Funds. It was also noted that the town council was due to take over management of an additional two play areas in the near future.

Resolved – That Durham County Council be awarded the town council's play inspection contract for 2016/17 at a cost of £991 to carry out monthly inspections at all five play areas.