

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL
SERVICES COMMITTEE**

20 FEBRUARY 2017

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

Also in attendance: Hannah Parratt, YMCA; two young people: Keiran and Elizia;
One member of the press.

Officers: Mrs Woodward (Deputy Clerk).

64. ACCEPTANCE, OR OTHERWISE, OF APOLOGIES

None

It was noted that Cllr Mrs Grady was not present.

65. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with this Council's adopted Code of Conduct (Minute 17(b)/May/16 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. Cllr Harrison declared an interest in respect of items. 67 and 77.

66. SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING – 12 DECEMBER 2016 – MINUTES

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

67. ALLOTMENTS

(i) General update

There were no vacant allotment gardens. One garden had been re-tenanted since the last meeting. The waiting list now stood at 13 with no new applications received since the end of December 2016.

In line with guidance from the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, those tenants who kept hens had been contacted and information cascaded as to what action to take to reduce the risks and protect poultry from avian flu. Currently, hens were being housed undercover; an update on the situation was expected on 28 February 2017.

The Allotment Services Officer was to attend the National Allotment Society Northern Region Allotment Officers Forum held at Morpeth Town Council on 22 March. A report would be given at the next meeting.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(ii) Allotments Improvement Action Plan

During January, essential path improvement works took place at Raby Avenue and The Demesnes sites. Cllr Roger Peat and a group of volunteers had made additional path improvements to The Demesnes site.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(iii) Bee Keeping

Pursuant to Minute 22(iv)/July/16, it was resolved that the Allotment Rule on bee keeping be reviewed for 2017/18. A draft Bee Keeping Agreement for tenants was presented for consideration. It was noted that the town council would only consider applications for beekeeping on The Demesnes and Raby Avenue sites.

Resolved – That the town council's draft Bee Keeping Agreement for 2017/18 be approved.

(iv) Annual Review of Tenancy Agreement & Allotment Rules

Submitted – a report providing members with suggested revisions for the 2017/18 season Allotment Tenancy Agreement and Allotment Rules. There were no proposed changes to the Tenancy Agreement for 2017/18. Two amendments were proposed to Allotment Rule 2 and 6a. A new Allotment Rule 13 was suggested. There were no scheduled amendments to the Contravention Procedure for the forthcoming season.

Resolved – (a) That Allotment Rule 2 be amended to relax the termination of an Allotment Garden Tenancy if a Tenant moves outside the Administrative boundary of the town council;

(b) That Allotment Rule 6a be amended with respect to the keeping of bees;

(c) That Allotment Rule 13 be created with respect to tenants adhering to guidance and precautionary measures issued by Government bodies; and

(d) That the Contravention Procedure be approved for 2017/18.

68. PLAY AREAS

(i) Repairs and Maintenance

Monthly inspections of all five play areas managed by the town council were continuing. Pursuant to Minute 58(i)/Dec/12, when it was reported that no written reports had been received from Durham County Council (DCC) since June 2016, inspection reports for July to December 2016 had been since received on 4 January 2017.

Bouch Way required a powerwash to all surfaces and removal of overhanging branches. This was completed by the town council's grounds maintenance contractor at the end of January 2017.

Dawson Road required new brake blocks to the cable rider. Green Lane required three new plastic chain covers to the basket swing and a new bearing to the Rotate Spica. Estimates for parts were being sought.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(ii) Gate Licences

There were still 6 outstanding gate licences for 2016/17 not returned, despite reminder letters being sent. Members discussed possible options to take next.

It was proposed that for 2017/18, letters would be issued to households in July 2017 granting permission for gate access onto town council play areas and playing field (Tens Field) for a time limited period of 12 months. This would reduce the administrative cost of collecting £1.00 gate licence fees and sending reminder letters.

Resolved – (a) That the town council takes no action regarding outstanding gate licences for 2016/17; and

(b) That for 2017/18, letters would be issued to households in July 2017 granting permission for gate access onto town council play areas and playing field (Tens Field) for a time limited period of 12 months.

(iii) Dawson Road – Potential MUGA Lighting

Pursuant to Minute 58(ii)/Dec/16, Councillors Peat and Harrison hand delivered letters on 20 February to residents in properties adjoining Dawson Road play area (Dawson Road, Wilson Street and Richardson Fields) to canvass local views, both about the current use of the play area and MUGA and about the potential for lighting of the MUGA. The Scouts were also to be contacted. To date, comments were largely positive. YMCA offered the possibility of detached youth work and organised sports as a way of addressing residents' concerns. It was noted that Cockfield Parish Council had recently installed external lighting to the sports pavilion and would be worth contacting.

There was currently £1,122.98 in the Dawson Road Play Area Earmarked Reserve and it was proposed that this was allocated to the potential MUGA lighting project.

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

(b) That in principle, the Dawson Road Play Area Earmarked Reserve of £1,122.98 be used to fund a potential lighting scheme at the Dawson Road MUGA.

(iv) Green Lane Playground Improvements

Pursuant to Minute 58(iii)/Dec/16, the grant offer from Durham County Council's Neighbourhood budget had been accepted. Funding would only be released once planning permission and evidence of the tender process was confirmed. The tender process would be progressed in time for the next meeting on 3 April. Planning permission would be taken forwards only by resolution of the Resources Committee.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(v) Play Area Inspections 2017/18 (confidential)

This Committee needed to appoint a contractor for inspections of play areas for the following year 2017/18, considered under item 77.

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

It was reported that documentation relating to this transfer had been received on 20 February from the town council's solicitor. This would be taken to Council on 20 March for resolution supplemental to the decision of Full Council to accept terms for the freehold transfer made in January 2014 (93(b)/Jan/14).

The outstanding repairs to the play area, following the damage suffered in storms in December 2015 and which were with Durham County Council to complete, would need to be made prior to transfer being finalised.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

70. DELIVERING DIFFERENTLY

A meeting between the county council's solicitor and assets manager, the town council's solicitor and the clerk, was still awaited. Issues to be resolved centred upon the conditions (if any) which might constrain operation of the areas to be leased to the town council and clarification regarding freehold possession of the Galgate Greens.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

71. MINI GOLF – 2017 SEASON

(i) Re-felting and pre-season cleaning

Pursuant to Council on 23 January when Urban Crazy was appointed as approved contractor to carry out re-felting of the town council's mini golf course (Minute 91/Jan/17 refers), this work was completed on 10 February. A pre-season clean was carried out by Robson Horticulture prior to re-felting of the course and it was advisable to carry out another power wash of the felt prior to season opening on 8 April.

Investigations were now commencing into the feasibility of getting power to the mini golf kiosk. A report would be presented to a future Services Committee for consideration.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(ii) Operating Arrangements

Members were informed that detailed arrangements were being made for the 2017 mini golf season, commencing on Saturday 8 April and closing on Sunday 29 October 2017. During that period, and weather permitting, the course would be open every weekend, bank holidays and full weeks in line with local school holidays.

For the previous two seasons, 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 for low season (8 April to 26 May and 4 September to 29 October) would once again be 10:30 am to 4:30 pm. However, it was proposed that during high season (27 May to 3 September), the course would open between the hours of 10:00 am to 6:00 pm.

Members recalled that the increase in ticket prices was approved at Council (Minute 85/Jan/17 refers). New signage was also needed to advertise the changes to prices and opening times. William Smith estimated that two exterior signs could be produced for a total net cost of £70.

The course was operated by four attendants. Last year, a fifth attendant was recruited to assist with shift cover during holidays. For the 2017 season, four attendants were returning.

As approved at Council (minute 125(32)/Jan/2013 refers), 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. Taking into consideration costs associated with the pre-season clean of the course, general maintenance and replenishment of equipment and signage, there would be approximately £4,000 transferred into the holding account at 31 March 2017.

The mini golf kiosk would continue 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 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** – (a) That the information be noted;
(b) That the opening hours during high season (27 May to 3 September) 10:00am to 6:00pm be approved; and
(c) That two exterior signs be produced by William Smith at a cost of £70.

72. WEDNESDAY MARKET

(i) Update

In the ten weeks from 7 December to 8 February, total rental receipts had been £945.50, an average of £94.55 per week. During this period, there were three exceptionally poor trading days due to snow, rain and high winds, and the majority of traders took a week's holiday during Christmas and New Year. One new trader had joined the Market as a regular attendee.

On 10 February, the town council was notified by Durham County Council (DCC) Environmental Health department of a complaint by a resident about noise created by a trader setting up prior to the market on a Wednesday. Environmental Health would be investigating the frequency, timing and noise level, with the outcome reported to the town council in due course. The trader had been informed.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(ii) Rules & Regulations

Pursuant to Resources Committee, it was recommended by the town council's internal auditor that the town council determined its own procedures and charges for the running of the Wednesday Market (Minute 51 (b)/Jan/17 refers). Draft Rules & Regulations were presented for consideration. It was suggested that the maximum acceptable decibel level relating to generators should also be included.

Currently, the Market charges per pitch were variable; most traders paid £10 or £15 per pitch. Two traders had historically paid £12. It was proposed that the charging schedule be amended as follows:

Standard Pitch (trading frontage up to 6m)	£10
Large Pitch (trading frontage 6m to 10m)	£15
Additional metre (or part) beyond 10m	£2
Charity Pitch	£0

Resolved– That the draft town council's Wednesday Market Rules & Regulations and Charging Schedule 2017 as amended be recommended to Council on 20 March for approval and adoption on 1 April.

73. FLORAL AND OPEN SPACES

(i) Floral Displays 2017/18

Members were reminded that estimates needed to be sought from competent companies to carry out planting of the town's 2017/18 summer and winter floral displays.

Pursuant to Minute 48(iv)/Oct/16, Lowfield Gardens had confirmed that they could carry out the floral displays watering service for 2017/18.

The bedding plants in the three existing black round tubs in Woodleigh Grounds were being eaten by rabbits. It was proposed that these be removed and not included in the 2017/18 floral displays.

There was currently £572 left in the Floral and Open Spaces Earmarked Reserve. It was proposed that this be used for perennial planting of the Market Place toilet beds for 2017/18, which would further reduce the cost of the summer and winter floral displays planting contract.

Resolved – (a) That the office strives to get three estimates for planting of the town's 2017/18 summer and winter floral displays, to be presented for consideration at next Services Committee on 3 April;

(b) That the Gateway Bed by Niche Living (former Mondrian Dress) be used again to create a 'Dig for Victory' vegetable display managed by Veg out in Barney and YMCA for 2017;

(c) That the three black round tubs in Woodleigh Grounds be removed and not included in the 2017/18 floral displays;

(d) That it be delegated to the Clerk, in consultation with Chair of Services Committee, to spend up to £500 on perennial planting of the Market Place toilet bed for 2017/18, including professional advice, out of Floral and Open Spaces Earmarked Reserve;

(e) That 12 planted hanging baskets be purchased for the hanging basket tree in front of the Post Office in Galgate at a cost of £300 out of 2017/18 floral displays budget; and

(f) That extra bedding plants be purchased in July for the Gateway beds, Woodleigh beds and Market Place toilet bed, out of 2017/18 floral displays budget.

(ii) Interpretation Board – Roman Way Picnic Site

A press launch was held on Thursday 19 January, attended by Neil Diment (Heritage Interpretation Services), Charles Lilley (gasworks engineer and amateur historian) and Graham Young (former HoT Chairman). DCC was looking at installing a fingerpost on the lamppost on Scar Top to point down towards the former Gas Works and to say 'Roman Way Picnic Site'.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(iii) Operation 'Spruce-Up'

Pursuant to Minute 53/Dec/16, the town council registered interest in being involved in Operation 'Spruce-Up'. DCC Civic Pride Officer confirmed that the area chosen for Teesdale AAP was Evenwood, scheduled for May 2017. The project was to run over 14 months from November 2016 to December 2017. If the project was a success and there was sufficient interest, it would roll over in 2017 and Barnard Castle could be one of the areas covered in the next project.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(iv) Teesdale & District Lions – Demesnes Wild Flowers

This year marked the centenary of The Lions. As part of the celebrations and to ensure a lasting legacy, Teesdale & District Lions Club proposed, subject to permission from DCC, to supply wild flower seeds and provide a team of volunteers to help sow the seeds.

Resolved– That the information be noted.

74. DOG FOULING

(i) Dogs Trust Community Event – 16 May

It was reported that Durham County Council was planning a community event in the town on Tuesday 16 May in conjunction with the Dogs Trust to promote information about Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO) and microchipping. They were looking for a suitable indoor venue and had approached the town council. The Dawson Room was available and provided an opportunity for the town council to promote its concurrent dog fouling services.

(ii) Poop Scoop Bags

Pursuant to Minute 33/July/16, another 6,000 poop scoop bags were to be purchased to replenish the town council's stock at a net cost of £120.

Resolved– (a) That the information be noted; and
(b) That the Dawson Room be offered for hire at no cost for the Dogs Trust community event on 16 May, subject to DCC providing suitable floor covering.

75. BIG SPRING CLEAN

Members were reminded that the popular community litter-pick campaign ran every spring in partnership with LitterFree Durham and Darlington Borough Council. This year, the Big Spring Clean would run from 27 February until 16 April.

Resolved – That the town council participates in the 2017 Big Spring Clean on 11 March 10am to 12noon and that this be promoted.

76. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (IN RESPECT OF CONTINUATION OF ITEM 68 (v) AND ITEM 77.

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 at continuation of item 68(v) and item 77.

68(v) PLAY AREA INSPECTIONS 2017/18 (CONFIDENTIAL)

Received – a report providing an update on the position regarding contracted 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 2017/18. Four estimates had been received. It was noted that DCC had not been invited to provide an estimate as there were concerns about the delay in getting inspection reports to the town council and the inadequate nature of these reports. Members were reminded that the town council currently managed five play areas and was due to take over management of two additional sites.

Resolved – That Park Lane Playgrounds be awarded the play area inspection contract for 2017/18 at a total cost of £700.

77. ALLOTMENT TENANCY ISSUE (CONFIDENTIAL)

Members were informed that the town council had recently received notification from a long-standing allotment garden tenant who had moved out of the Barnard Castle Parish into the Parish of Startforth. Members considered the case based on length of tenancy, conduct and distance from the administrative boundary.

Resolved – That, in this particular instance, approval be given for the tenant to retain the allotment garden on Harmire Road Site.