

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL
SERVICES COMMITTEE**

24 JULY 2017

PRESENT: Councillors Peat (in the Chair), Mrs Thompson, Miss Blissett, Chatterjee, Child and Hallimond.

Also in attendance: One member of the press.

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

21. ACCEPTANCE, OR OTHERWISE, OF APOLOGIES

None.

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with this Council's adopted Code of Conduct (Minute 12/May/17 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.

23. SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING – 22 MAY 2017 – MINUTES

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

24. ALLOTMENTS

(i) General update

There were no vacant allotment gardens. Since the last meeting, one garden had been re-tenanted and six new applications had been received bringing the waiting list total to fourteen.

Following a routine allotment garden inspection by the Services Officer and Chair of Services Committee at all five sites, first warning letters had been issued to five tenants all relating to non-cultivation of their respective gardens. Formal inspections had been arranged to take place during week commencing 14 August 2017.

Durham County Council had developed their allotment webpage to link to a location map showing all of their allotment sites and contacts. They had invited Local Parish and Town Councils to take advantage of this tool and details of all our sites had been submitted.

(ii) Raby Avenue Bee Keeping

An application had been received from a current tenant to keep bees on The Raby Avenue allotment site. A suitable location within the site had been identified and tenants had been informed of the request. Subject to the terms and conditions of the Bee Keeping Agreement being met (Minute 67(iii)/Feb/17 refers) and that no sustainable objection was received from any tenants, the bees would be in place by the end of August.

(iii) Allotments Improvement Action Plan

There were a number of outstanding allotment improvements to be carried out: Crook Lane hardstanding (Minute 30(iii)/Oct/15), various site path improvements (Minute 30(iii)/Oct/15) and boundary tree pruning at Raby Avenue (Minute 55(iii)/Feb/16). Improvements were normally scheduled to take place in the Autumn.

A revised programme along with costings for improvements would be submitted at the October meeting.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

25. PLAY AREAS

(i) Repairs and Maintenance

It was reported that Park Lane Playgrounds had carried out a quarterly inspection of the town council's five play areas on 28 June. Various issues were identified requiring action at all five sites. Pursuant to Services Committee on 22 May, it was delegated to the Clerk to prioritise recommended actions. Quotations were being sought, works orders had been issued to grounds maintenance contractors and three pieces of equipment had been removed/ disabled for urgent repair.

Resolved – That the actions be noted.

(ii) Gate Licences

Following a survey scheduled to be undertaken by the Deputy Clerk and Services Officer, annual gate licences would be issued granting permission for direct access onto the playing areas/field managed by the town council for a time limited period of 12 months, from 1 August 2017 to 31 July 2018. Pursuant to Minute 68(ii)(b)/Feb/17, this was the first year that no gate licence fee would be collected.

Resolved – (a) That the information be noted;

(b) That Councillors Miss Blissett and Hallimond hand deliver gate licences to residents.

(iii) Dawson Road – Potential Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) lighting & play area fencing

It was reported that pursuant to Minute 58(ii)/Dec/16 and Minute 68(iii)/Feb/17, sixteen residents in Dawson Road, Wilson Street and Richardson Fields responded to the consultation on proposed lighting to Dawson Road Play Area MUGA. The results were circulated. Thirteen residents were in favour of installing lighting to enable the MUGA to be used safely after dusk with lights turned off at 8pm. It was noted that YMCA had offered the possibility of detached youth work and organised sports. There was £1,122.98 remaining in the Dawson Road Play Area Earmarked Reserve, which was resolved at Committee meeting in February to be used towards funding this potential lighting project.

In addition, a request from two residents had been received asking the town council to consider fencing off the Dawson Road play area, which could then be subject to the Public Space Protection Order. A plan was circulated with proposed fenced area equating to 95 metres. Members considered potential funding using the 2017/18 underspend from Floral and Open Spaces, dog fouling budget (item 32, below) or budgetary bid as part of 2018/19 Play Areas budget setting.

Resolved – (a) That the results of the residents' consultation on proposed lighting to Dawson Road Play Area MUGA be received;

(b) That the lighting project to Dawson Road Play Area be approved and delegated to the Clerk, in conjunction with Chair of Services Committee, to draw up a specification, seek quotations from appropriate contractors and present recommendations at a future meeting of this Committee; and

(c) That fencing off Dawson Road play area be approved with appropriate funding to be determined.

(iv) Green Lane Playground Improvements

Discussions had been held with potential funders of the identified match funding requirement of £4,000 for these works. The surveyors report, concerning consideration of the easement relating to Tens Field, had been received and forwarded to the Trustees of the National Playing Fields Association on behalf of Barratt Homes. This would be considered at their meeting in September.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(v) Tens Field Lease

Following the resolution of Council, at its meeting on 19 June (Min 40(c)/Jun/17), the lease for Tens Field was advertised and had been completed, on the agreed terms, with Bowes Football Club. The annual rental payment had been made. The town council's grounds maintenance contractor had been instructed to carry out a one off grass cut and tidy of Tens Field playing field week commencing 17 July at an approximate cost of £200.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

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

It was reported that, prior to completion on behalf of the town council, work was still required to complete the repairs to the play area, by Durham County Council, following the tree damage on December 2015. A quote was originally obtained in October 2016 by Regeneration and Local Services within the Clean and Green team of Durham County Council, for replacement panels for Adventure Castle. Confirmation was received by email on 19 July from the responsible officer for DCC that the order had been placed. The delivery and fitting timescale was, however, unknown.

Separately, on 19 July, Northern Dales Richard III Group sent an email to the town council requesting that the carved boar emblem, which until the tree damage in December 2015 had crowned the wooden play fort, be replaced. The Northern Dales Group was writing a tourist guide to "Richard III's North". The request had been forwarded to DCC and a response was awaited, although Northern Dales Richard III Group preferred to wait until freehold transfer was completed to work collaboratively with the town council.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

27. DELIVERING DIFFERENTLY

Further discussions had taken place with the officer representing Durham County Council Assets confirming that outstanding issues relating to Woodleigh Grounds were operation of the power supply and confirmation that all requirements of those bodies funding the 2013 refurbishment had been met. The Woodleigh Grounds lease served as a model for those to be applied to the Demesnes, Scar Top and other areas.

The Clerk was working with DCC Assets to hold a meeting with solicitors for both sides to resolve these issues.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

28. MINI GOLF – 2017 SEASON

The 2017 high season commenced on Saturday 27 May. The course had been open 10.00am to 6.00pm during Whit week and every weekend and bank holiday. Since Saturday 8 July it was open every day in line with Scottish and local school summer holidays until Sunday 3 September.

Since the last meeting, sales for the period 20 May to 16 July totalled £3,359.10.

Pursuant to Services Minute 71 (ii) (b)/Feb/17, for the third season running, the main summer opening (7 days per week) was extended from 6 weeks to 8 weeks, with the course being open 2 weeks earlier, in line with school holidays in Scotland. To date, this had resulted in average takings of £25 per day, despite overall good weather. This was not enough to cover Mini Golf Attendant wages and was therefore not considered economically viable to sustain. It was suggested that the ticket pricing should be reviewed during 2018/19 budget setting process.

Resolved – (a) That the information be noted; and
(b) That for 2018 season, the main summer opening (7 days per week) be reduced to 6 weeks in line with local school holidays.

29. WAR MEMORIALS

It was reported that the annual War Memorial inspections would be carried out by Councillor Blissett and Services Officer during August. An update would be presented to the meeting scheduled for 16 October 2017.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

30. WEDNESDAY MARKET

In the nine weeks from 17 May to 12 July, total rental receipts were £1,355, an average of £150 per week. Two new traders had joined the market. There was currently a waiting list for a pitch, which stood at six. Two charities had benefitted from the free charity pitch – Alzheimer's Society and Dogs Trust.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

31. FLORAL AND OPEN SPACES

(i) Floral Displays 2017/18

Summer planting by Elm Ridge Gardens took place on 15 June. All twelve hanging baskets had now been sponsored on the hanging basket 'tree' outside the post office on Galgate and a plaque acknowledging sponsors and dedications was in-situ.

Bedding plants were purchased and planted out by volunteers in the Gateway Beds, Market Place Toilet Bed and shrubs and perennials in Woodleigh Gardens.

Members were informed that Partnership Committee had resolved to recommend to this Committee, for onward referral to Resources Committee, that as the Christmas Lighting budget would be overspent, and given the significant predicted underspend on Grounds Maintenance, that an appropriate virement be made (Partnership Minute 23(d)/July/17 refers).

(ii) Upper Demesnes Haymeadow

On 8 July, the Friends of the Upper Demesnes held their annual walk round the Hay Meadow led by Dr Margaret Bradshaw; 17 people attended. Neil Diment gave a scything demonstration and recruited volunteers to maintain the haymeadow. The hay was cut last week. Flowers were increasing and manure may need to be applied.

(iii) Lower Demesnes Wildflower Path

Pursuant to Council on 19 June (Min 32(b)/Jun/17) the creation of a wildflower meadow either side of the Lower Demesnes path was to be funded via a £500 donation from Teesdale & District Lions Club. Durham County Council had given permission to harrow and broadcast seeds on a six meter belt either side of the path. Volunteers would weed the area on 26 July. Two kilos of wild flower seeds, including annuals, had been delivered.

Resolved – (a) That the information be noted;

(b) That thanks be given to all the volunteers involved in planting out Gateway beds, Woodleigh Gardens and Market Place Toilet Bed;

(c) That thanks be given to Teesdale & District Lions Club for the donation of £500 to create a wildflower path on the Lower Demesnes; and

(d) That it be recommended to Resources Committee on 4 September that a virement be recommended to Resources Committee of £505.46 from the Floral and Open Spaces budget to the Christmas Lighting budget.

32. DOG FOULING

It was reported that the town council was running low on supplies of dog poop bags. During 2016/17 12,000 poop scoop bags had been purchased at a cost of £254, including carriage. To date, these had been available for free from town council office, mini-golf kiosk and police station, Wilson Street. Members debated whether to purchase further supplies from the 2017/18 budgetary allocation of £300. Members felt that the public needed reminding that dog poop bags could be deposited in any bin and that more stickers were needed on bins.

The funding of fencing Dawson Road play area (item 25(iii), above) was also considered.

Resolved – That stocks of dog poop bags be replenished from the 2017/18 dog fouling budget.

33. PUBLIC SEATS

On 12 July, the Deputy Mayor held a small ceremony to unveil a replacement bench on the island opposite the Three Horseshoes and to publicise the memorial bench scheme. Members of the Inner Wheel had donated the original bench to the town in 1989. Former members of the town's Inner Wheel donated £75 towards the bench and enjoyed a small reception in Dawson Room, Woodleigh following the unveiling.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

34. INFLUENCE CHURCH 'NO STRINGS' – 17 JUNE

On Saturday 17 June, several volunteers from the Influence Church weeded flower beds in Woodleigh Gardens; cut back shrubs, removed ivy and generally tidied around County Bridge; sanded and stained benches; cut down shrubs at Bandstand to create a clear view of the river, strimmed thistles and painted metal benches; weeded flower beds and planters and painted the power box in Remembrance Garden, Galgate Greens; and weeded Gateway beds.

Resolved – (a) That thanks be given to members of the Influence Church; and
(b) That the town council supports the Influence Church's 'No Strings' volunteer project in June 2018.

35. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC IN RESPECT OF ITEM 36, 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 item 36, below.

36. ALLOTMENT TENANCY ISSUE

Submitted – a report seeking the committee's discretion in the application of allotment rules for an existing tenant on Crook Lane site.

Resolved – That, in this particular instance, approval be given for the tenant to retain the allotment garden on Crook Lane site.