

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL
SERVICES COMMITTEE**

16 OCTOBER 2017

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

Also in attendance: Councillor Blissett; one member of the press.

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

37. ACCEPTANCE, OR OTHERWISE, OF APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Mrs Thompson and Chatterjee.

Resolved – That the apologies be accepted.

38. 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.

39. SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING – 24 JULY 2017 – MINUTES

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

40. ALLOTMENTS

(i) General update

It was reported that, as a result of the five first warning letters previously issued to tenants, three tenants had relinquished their gardens, one had made the necessary improvements and one had been issued with a second warning letter.

Two of the relinquished gardens had been re-tenanted and a current tenant was in the process of 'swapping gardens'; a handover date was to be agreed by the Clerk so that the remaining garden could be let.

There had been four new applications on the waiting list, bringing the total to fifteen.

Cllr Peat attended Killgerm rodent control training on 10 October. The town council would need a rodent control policy in place from December.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(iii) Allotments Improvement Action Plan

Estimates were in the process of being sought for the last phase of path work improvements and some perimeter tree pruning at the Raby Avenue site, which would be presented to Services Committee in December.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

41. PLAY AREAS

(i) Green Lane Playground Improvements

There was no progress to report.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

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

It was reported that, following completion of repair works to the play area wooden fort, contracts were exchanged with Durham County Council on 12 October. Once under town council control, the safety surfacing and equipment would be thoroughly cleaned.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

43. DELIVERING DIFFERENTLY

Revised lease terms, incorporating use of the performance area had now been proposed by DCC. Comments were returned via the town council's solicitor at the end of September. There were two areas which required clarification from DCC before the final proposed lease could be submitted for approval by the town council, namely the definition of 'trespass' in relation to public open space. It was hoped that this would be presented to the meeting on 13 November.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

44. DEMESNES CONSULTATION

Submitted – a report examining the collaborative project, convened by Durham County Council, to review potential responses to reported anti-social behaviour on the lower Demesnes and presenting the conclusions of the project, which were subject to consultation in September.

A series of meetings were held to examine landscape solutions to potentially exclude vehicles from those parts of the Demesnes experiencing unacceptable car use and to create greater separation of pedestrians and vehicles on the Lower Demesnes. The Time Limited Project involved Barnard Castle Neighbourhood Policing Team, town council, DCC Assets, DCC anti-social behaviour team, Durham Constabulary Safer Neighbourhood Unit and Durham Constabulary Architectural Liaison.

The existing barrier and height restriction at the end of Gray Lane served a continuing need. In addition, survey work undertaken by DCC's Green and Clean and Highways sections indicated that the construction of ditches would be in excess of £60,000. An alternative proposal comprised an additional gate across the access road to Mill Cottages with 'birds-mouth' fencing, at an estimated cost of £3,800.

Consultation on the proposals was carried out at two events on 23 and 25 September and via town council website.

Members were reminded that as part of the 'Delivering Differently' programme, the town council had been allocated £10,000 in transition funding, to support the service and asset transfers from DCC, including a 30 year lease of the Demesnes to the town council.

Resolved – (a) That the Committee accepts the principle of fencing a corner of the Lower Demesnes as a means of restricting vehicle access and reducing anti-social behaviour;
(b) That specific consultation be undertaken with the owners and occupiers of Mill Cottages about the specification of the proposal and the practicality of its implementation; and
(c) That a recommendation be made to full Council to allocate funding of this project from within the £10,000 awarded as part of the Delivering Differently programme and to devise and implement an affordable solution in line with the preferred scheme.

45. MINI GOLF – 2017 SEASON

Since the start of the season on 8 April, net income to date was £11,032.50. The 2017 season ended on 29 October and a full review would be submitted to next Services Committee in December.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

46. WAR MEMORIALS

It was reported that the annual War Memorial inspections were carried out by Cllr Blissett and Miss Atkinson, Services Officer, on 6 September.

An application had been made to the War Memorial Trust for a grant in order to carry out repairs to the Town War Memorial (repairs to cracks). The grant was submitted on 28 September and a response should take six weeks.

In general, all memorials were in a good state of repair upon inspection. Spraying was needed to all memorials to remove the moss, subsequently undertaken by Cllr Peat.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

47. WEDNESDAY MARKET

In the twelve weeks from 19 July to 4 October, total rental receipts were £1,750, an average of £145 per week. Three new traders had joined the market. The waiting list stood at five. Five charities had benefitted from the free charity pitch. A six monthly inspection by Durham County Council's Markets Inspector was carried out on 11 October with no issues reported.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

48. FLORAL AND OPEN SPACES

(i) Floral Displays 2017/18

Winter planting was carried out by Elm Ridge Gardens Ltd on 9 October. Winter bedding plants were still to be purchased for the Gateway bed (outside Niche Living).

(ii) Upper Demesnes Haymeadow

The Haymeadow was mowed and hay baled in July. 64 bales were sold at £3 per bale, resulting in total income of £192. Sheep were now grazing on the Haymeadow. It was apparent that the number of hay bales were decreasing year on year and manure was now possibly needed.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

49. DURHAM WILDLIFE TRUST

Received – a report presented by Cllr Child, outlining small projects that had been identified for collaborative conservation work between Durham Wildlife Trust and the town council. The following actions were reported:

- **Redundant gas regulator building** – DWT would approach Northern Gas Networks to discuss its use.
- **Path from Lower Demesnes to Demesnes Mill** – Town Council and DWT volunteers could cut vegetation in the area from the picnic site down to the river and improve the footpath.

- **Poorly maintained grass (near the weir)** – Town Council and DWT volunteers to spray, scarify and sow with a meadow mixture as per the Lower Demesnes.
- **Percy Beck/ Flatts Wood** – There was potential to collaborate with Marwood Parish Council and Marwood Estates to improve the area for native species and plants.

Resolved – That the information and the actions undertaken by Durham Wildlife Trust and volunteers working with the town council be noted.

50. THE SKILL MILL

Received – information about The County Durham Skill Mill, providing young people who had offended, opportunities to undertake environmental work and projects within the local community. The programme was supported by the regional Youth Justice Board, Ministry of Justice and National Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

The project was due to be presented to CDALC Smaller Local Councils' Forum in November.

Several potential small projects were suggested, with possible links to DWT. Clarity was needed on costings.

Resolved – That, subject to clarification on costings, the town council commission small scale environmental projects for Skill Mill in the town.

51. DOG FOULING

It was reported that a concerned resident had emailed the town council in August lamenting the state of dog fouling in the town.

Members were reminded that during the consideration of the 2014/15 dog fouling budget, investigations were made into the town council providing a dedicated Neighbourhood Warden for the town. However, at that time, the impact that costs of such an initiative would have had on this council's precept, and ultimately the town's residents, was considered unjustifiable. In October 2016, as part of the 2017/18 Wednesday Market budgetary bid, Services Committee recommended employing a part-time Market Supervisor and dedicated Dog Warden (Minute 49/Oct/16 refers). Subsequently, Resources Committee and Council resolved not to include this in the final approved budget. Members considered revisiting this recommendation for inclusion in the 2018/19 budget setting process, particularly with regard to the recent Public Space Protection Order and free training for town council staff to issue fines.

Resolved – That a costed proposal for a part-time Market Supervisor and dedicated Dog Warden be submitted for consideration as part of the budgetary bid process for 2018/19.

52. CHRISTMAS TREE RECYCLING

Pursuant to Council Minute 67/Sept/17, the town council asked Durham County Council to allow Christmas Trees to be dropped off in the town's main car park and taken away for one last year, due to the delay in opening the new waste recycling centre at Stainton Grove. Agreement had now been given for central pick up of Christmas trees from the carpark next to Morrisons in January 2018 only.

Resolved – That the information be noted.