

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL
SERVICES COMMITTEE**

19 FEBRUARY 2018

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

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

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

70. ACCEPTANCE, OR OTHERWISE, OF APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Mrs Thompson.

Resolved – That the apologies be accepted.

71. 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. Cllr Child declared an interest in respect of item 79(ii).

72. SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING – 11 DECEMBER 2017 – MINUTES

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

73. ALLOTMENTS

(i) General update

It was reported that there were no vacant allotment gardens. One would be available in the next few weeks following the successful completion of a garden swap by an existing tenant.

Following an audit of the allotment waiting list and one new application received since the last meeting, the waiting list currently stood at fourteen.

Formal inspections of all sites took place in January; no formal warning letters were issued.

The water supply at all sites was turned off on 20 December 2017 as a precaution against inclement weather. It was anticipated that the supply would be turned back on before the start of the new season.

From 18 January 2018 an Avian Influenza Prevention Zone had been declared across the whole of England. This meant that it was a legal requirement for all bird keepers to follow strict biosecurity measures. Tenants with livestock had been advised of this. The situation would continue to be monitored.

It was agreed that the town council should host the next National Allotment Society Northern Region Officers Forum (Minute 81 (i)/April/17 refers). Whilst arrangements needed to be confirmed, it was likely the forum would take place on 26 April 2018. Cllr Peat was invited to attend.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(ii) Allotments Improvement Action Plan

The last phase of path work improvements at the Raby Avenue site (Min 56(ii)/Dec/17 refers) was due to commence on 1 March. It was anticipated that the work would take two days to complete. Tenants would be advised of the impending work.

The Chairman of the Services Committee and Services Officer met with a tenant from The Demesnes to follow up a complaint regarding various tree issues on the site.

Following the site visit, it was agreed that there were a number of trees which needed to be removed/ pruned. Costs and necessary permissions were now being sought and a report would be put to the April meeting with a view to the work commencing in Autumn 2018. This work would be funded through the Allotment Improvement Fund.

Pursuant to Resources Minute 45(b)/Jan/18, Allotment Management Software had been purchased and installation and training took place on 8 February.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(iii) Town Head Access Lane

The new owner of the former ambulance site on Victoria Road, was keen to clear away the ivy and banked up soil from the wall on the access road to Town Head Allotment. This access road was owned by the town council and was strimmed by the grounds maintenance contractor up to six times per year. The new owner would like to tidy up the access lane and improve it. Under the town council's Constitution, it was for Resources Committee to resolve on any works to assets.

The Clerk reported that the town council had been notified of a planning application for the site on 16 February. Further discussions needed to take place with the landowner surrounding the joint boundary and party wall consideration.

Resolved – (a) That it be recommended that delegated authority be given to the Clerk to give permission, in principle, to the new owner of the former ambulance site on Victoria Road, to clear away ivy and banked up soil in the Town head access lane and to hold any further discussions, for onward referral to Resources Committee on 5 March.

(iv) Annual Review of Tenancy Agreement & Allotment Rules

This report provided members with suggested revisions for the 2018/19 season Allotment Tenancy Agreement and Allotment Rules. There were no proposed changes to the Allotment Rules for 2018/19. Three additions were proposed to the Allotment Tenancy Agreement for 2018/19. There were no changes proposed to the Contravention Procedure.

Resolved – (a) That Tenancy Agreement 5e be amended to include the removal of any self-seeded trees before they become established;
(b) That Tenancy Agreement 5h be amended with respect to the trees;
(c) That a data protection statement be added to the Tenancy Agreement and allotment rental payment slip for 2018/19; and
(d) That the Contravention Procedure be approved for 2018/19.

(v) Dog Agility

The town council licenced the Dog Agility Club to access the water provided to the Demesnes allotment. The licence required the club to ensure the supply was secure and to manage it appropriately. The club provided a stand pipe and maintained this at its own expense. The licence ran for a period of twelve months, from April to March. No changes to the terms of the licence or to the fee (£25) were proposed for 2018/19. A copy of the licence was available in the office, for inspection.

Resolved – That a licence for use of water by the Dog Agility Club be issued for 2018/19.

(vi) Pest Control Policy

The Chair of Services Committee had successfully completed training qualifying him to administer pesticides in the allotments to control rodents. It was strongly recommended by the Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use (CRRU) that an appropriate policy was in place. The CRRU had published 'Best Practice and Guidance for Rodent Control and the Safe Use of Rodenticides' which aimed to manage the risks inherent in the use of anticoagulant rodenticides, especially when these were applied outdoors, and implemented all appropriate risk mitigation measures. The guidance document was designed to promote effective rodent pest management and reduce the risk of accidental exposure of humans and non-target animals. A copy of the guidance was available in the office for reference.

Resolved– That the council adopts the CRRU Best Practice and Guidance for Rodent Control and the Safe Use of Rodenticides as its control policy.

74. PLAY AREAS

(i) Repairs and Maintenance

It was reported that Park Lane Playgrounds had carried out the final quarterly inspection of the town council's five play areas on 24 January. There were a number of issues to be addressed as part of ongoing maintenance.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(ii) Play Area Inspections and Maintenance 2018/19

This item was considered in confidence, under item 82.

(iii) Green Lane Playground Improvements

Proposed designs were to be brought to next Committee in April. The cycling track would cost in the region of £25,000 in total. There were also ideas surrounding a fitness trail linking Kalafat with Green Lane.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

75. DELIVERING DIFFERENTLY

It was reported that a first draft lease for the Demesnes had been reviewed and notes passed back to the council's solicitor for discussion with Durham County Council. The key points under discussion were:

- The Western Boundary should follow the edge of the adopted highway;
- The Dog Agility Club was to be included;
- The Rugby Club was to be excluded;

- The street lighting would be included in the boundary and DCC proposed to add a second plan to the lease showing the location of the lighting with a DCC covenant to repair the lighting with an access right reserved for this purpose.

The underlying position on whether the transfer could be facilitated under the Open Spaces Act 1906, or as a transfer under section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972, rather than section 123 of that Act remained to be resolved. That was the only issue to be resolved with respect to the transfer of Woodleigh Grounds, on which, otherwise, terms had been prepared for referral to Council.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

76. MINI GOLF – 2018 SEASON

(i) Pre-season cleaning

A pre-season clean was to be carried out by the town council's grounds maintenance contractor prior to the season opening on Friday 30 March.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(ii) Operating Arrangements

Detailed arrangements were now being made for the 2018 mini golf season. The season would commence on Friday 30 March (Good Friday) and would close on Sunday 28 October 2018. During that period, and weather permitting, the course would be open every weekend, bank holidays and full weeks in line with local school holidays.

Members recalled that it was resolved to reduce the main summer opening (7 days per week) from 8 weeks to 6 weeks, in line with local school holidays (Minute 28(b)/July/refers). Opening times for 2018 low season (30 March to 25 May and 3 September to 28 October) would once again be 10:30 am to 4:30 pm. In 2017, it was resolved that during high season, the course would open between the hours of 10:00 am to 6:00 pm. It was proposed that these hours continued for 2018 high season.

Ticket prices remained the same as 2017 season.

For the 2018 season, two attendants were returning. Interviews were held on 12 February and subject to satisfactory references and DBS checks, three additional attendants had been recruited.

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. Taking into consideration costs associated with the pre-season clean of the course, recruitment, general maintenance, replenishment of equipment and power installation, there would be approximately £2,000 transferred into the holding account at 31 March 2018.

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.

Pursuant to Partnership Committee on 5 February, the idea was mooted of a generic banner advertising the mini golf course, to be hung in the banner frame at the entrance to Scar Top during the season when there were no specific events being advertised. A banner could be produced and designed for approximately £50.

Resolved – (a) That the information be noted; and
(b) That it be delegated to the Clerk, in consultation with Chair of Services Committee, to commission a generic mini golf banner to advertise the service out of mini golf 2017 surplus income.

(iii) Installation of Power

Pursuant to Resources Minute 56/Jan/18, A.A. Thrustboring had been contracted to install an electric cable to the mini golf kiosk prior to commencement of the 2018 season. Works were due to start week beginning 5 March 2018. An electrician was then required to install a distribution panel, power circuit and lighting circuit. As part of the comparative prices presented to Resources Committee in January, estimates were submitted and it was suggested that quotations were obtained from electricians on that basis.

Resolved – (a) That the information be noted; and
(b) That electrical works be approved of costs up to £1,215 out of 2017 season mini golf income.

77. WAR MEMORIALS

Pursuant to Minute 46/Oct/17, the grant application submitted to the War Memorials Trust on 28 September was still under review and an update was expected by end February 2018. A contractor was due to look at repairs needed to the town memorial on 20 February.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

78. WEDNESDAY MARKET

(i) Update

In the nine weeks from 6 December 2017 to 31 January 2018 inclusive, total rental receipts were £532.50, an average of £59 per week. The waiting list stood at four. Two charities had benefitted from the free charity pitch.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

(ii) Subsidised Market Stall

Submitted – a report considering the costs and benefits of purchasing a subsidised market stall for use at the Wednesday Market.

Durham County Council was offering a package of intervention to support and enable business communities, producers, future entrepreneurs and existing independent retail businesses, access to trading opportunities on street markets.

The equipment would be the property and responsibility of the town council, to be used by any new trader on Barnard Castle market.

The scheme covered up to 50% of the funding required to enable the purchase of stalls and tarpaulin covers.

There were a number of basic stall packages available from different suppliers. The costs of purchasing a stall were approximately £300, with the DCC scheme providing match funding for 50% of the purchase price. The net cost to the council's markets budget would be £150, as a one-off cost.

The basic pitch fee for a stall of this size was £10. It was reasonable to assume that a pitch including a stall might be offered to a trader for double that fee. In addition, there had been a number of occasions in the past two years when the town council would have benefitted from access to a stall, such as the Poppy Appeal and during the 1940s Event. Members felt that the scheme offered good value for money.

Practically, any trader hiring the stall would need to collect and erect it themselves and dismantle and return it at the end of the day. A bond would be required.

Resolved – (a) That it be delegated to the Clerk to purchase a market stall with walk-in tables under the Durham County Council market scheme; and
(b) That a charge for the stall be £10, together with an additional bond, yet to be determined.

79. FLORAL AND OPEN SPACES

(i) Floral Displays 2018/19

Estimates needed to be sought from competent companies to carry out planting of the town's 2018/19 summer and winter floral displays.

Pursuant to Minute 63(iii)(d)/Dec/17, Lowfield Gardens had confirmed that they could carry out the floral displays watering service 2018/19.

The Market Place toilet bed would be planted out by the Volunteer Workers, led by Cllr Peat.

Resolved – (a) That the office strives to get three estimates for planting of the town's 2018/19 summer and winter floral displays, to be presented for consideration at next Services Committee on 9 April;
(b) That the Gateway Bed by Niche Living be partly used again to create a 'Dig for Victory' vegetable display managed by Veg Out in Barney; and
(c) 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 2018/19 floral displays budget.

(ii) Tree Planting – Upper Demesnes

Trees for Teesdale had offered to plant six trees approx. 3 feet high, along the north wall of the Demesnes allotments, complete with rabbit guards and stakes. It was suggested that crab apple trees be planted at the end of the year when trees in the allotment were removed/ pruned (item 73(ii) refers). There was no cost, however, a donation would enable Trees for Teesdale to continue its work.

Resolved – (a) That approval be given, subject to DCC Tree Officer consent, to Trees for Teesdale planting trees along the north wall of the Demesnes allotments; and
(b) That a £50 donation be given to Trees for Teesdale out of 2017/18 Floral and Open Spaces budget.

80. DURHAM WILDLIFE TRUST

Pursuant to Minute 101/Jan/18, when £1,000 as part of 2018/19 budget was approved to support an environmental project in the town, there was no further update.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

81. BIG SPRING CLEAN

The 2018 campaign run by Litterfree Durham and Darlington Borough Council would take place from Monday 19 February until Sunday 15 April. Litter-pick sticks and bags were provided free of charge and arrangements were made to collect all bagged litter. Barnard Castle Ramblers had once again expressed an interest in joining forces with the town council. Traditionally, the town council organised the litter pick on the Saturday morning before Easter weekend. It was suggested that Marwood Parish Council might wish to join forces to litterpick their areas.

Resolved – (a) That the town council supports the 2018 Big Spring Clean on Saturday 24 March 10am to 12noon; and
(b) That Marwood Parish Council be approached to participate.

82. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (IN RESPECT OF CONTINUATION OF ITEM 74(ii) AND ITEM 83, 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 matters referred to at continuation of item 74(ii) and item 83, below.

74(ii) PLAY AREA INSPECTIONS AND MAINTENANCE 2018/19

Submitted – a report providing the Committee with an update on the position regarding contracted play areas inspections and maintenance; considering the play area inspection estimates received; and seeking to determine which company should be appointed to provide play area inspections for 2018/19.

It was noted that costs of playground equipment maintenance was increasing and that because of specialised health and safety applying to play equipment, the council's existing contractor had found it increasingly difficult to demonstrate appropriate levels of compliance and insurance.

Consideration was given to employing a suitably qualified individual on a limited hours contract, however, it was deemed that this would not significantly reduce the council's costs.

Resolved – (a) That Park Lane Playgrounds be awarded the play areas inspection contract for 2018/19 at a cost of £720; and
(b) That it be delegated to the Clerk to investigate other self-employed, reliable contractors to undertake play area maintenance and repairs.

83. ALLOTMENT TENANCY ISSUE

Submitted – a report seeking the Committee's discretion in the application of allotment rules for an existing tenant.

Resolved – That, in this particular instance, approval be given for the tenant to take over the tenancy of Allotment Garden 26 on The Demesnes, in addition to their current garden.