

LYDNEY TOWN COUNCIL

AMENITIES COMMITTEE MEETING – 2012/09/17 – 11

MINUTES OF THE AMENITIES COMMITTEE MEETING held in the Council Chamber, Claremont House, Lydney on Monday 17 September 2012 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT: Cllrs B Thomas (Chairman), B Berryman, D Biddle, C Harris, V Hobman and W Osborne

Cllr A Preest

Cllr S Osborne

One member of the public

Mrs J Smailes – Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Miss C Wheeler – Executive Officer (EO)

Cllr Thomas informed all present that no practice fire evacuation had been scheduled for the duration of the meeting. All attendees were then informed of the locations of the nearest fire exits.

Whilst not appointed to the Committee, it was unanimously agreed that Cllrs Preest and S Osborne would be invited to sit at the Council table, but would not be afforded voting rights.

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Matthews and Thompson and duly accepted.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Biddle – agenda item 6 – Allotment provision

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the Amenities meeting held on 16 July 2012 were confirmed as a true record. **Proposed by Cllr Biddle, seconded by Cllr Berryman.** Unanimous.

4. **OPEN FORUM**

No matters were raised by the public.

5. **BUS SHELTER – Allaston Road**

Members were advised that the bus shelter had now been removed and members of the Council's Ground Staff regularly strimmed the surrounding grass to ensure that the area remained presentable.

6. **ALLOTMENT PROVISION**

Having declared an interest in this matter, Cllr Biddle excused himself from the chamber.

Prior to the meeting Councillors were provided with a copy of a letter from Mrs Julia Hall, in which she requested that allotment number 4 (*which had been previously held in her Mother's name but worked by the whole family*) be transferred into her name as her mother had now passed away. Members were also provided with a draft allotment tenancy agreement for consideration.

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During discussion Members noted that the Council had not previously operated an allotment tenancy agreement and **Cllr Thomas proposed** that the Committee agree to transfer the allotment into Mrs Hall's name and impose a 12 month tenancy agreement. **Seconded by Cllr Osborne.**

Action by – the CEO

Attention was then turned to the draft tenancy agreement and during discussion a number of amendments to the document were suggested. The CEO sought confirmation that the tenancy agreement would be sent to the remaining allotment holders in January, with the effective date being 1 April. No objection was raised. Cllr Thomas informed Members that a formal meeting would take place with allotment holders to discuss any concerns they may have regarding the proposed Tenancy Agreement.

Action by – the CEO/Cllr Thomas

Following a suggestion from Cllr Preest, **Cllr Berryman proposed** that a Councillor would be appointed in an unofficial role to liaise with allotment holders and report any issues/concerns to the Committee (including the condition of allotments). **Seconded by Cllr Osborne.** Cllr S Osborne volunteered to take on the said role. The motion was then put to a vote which was carried.

Cllr Hobman stated that she too would be willing to take on the role of allotment liaison. Cllr Biddle returned to the meeting at this point.

7. STREET FURNITURE

It was noted that none of the other Forest Towns wished to join together to purchase additional dog fouling penalty signage.

Members recalled that a resident of Linwood Road had requested that signage be erected due to the problems of dog fouling which had been experienced and the CEO suggested that Members may wish to consider purchasing signage from alternative providers. During discussion questions were raised over the number of penalty notices issued by FODDC relating to dog fouling. Consideration was also given to the provision of dog waste bins in the town and the licensed disposal of dog waste. It was noted that (following consent from FODDC) the Council's litter collection contractor disposed of dog waste which was mixed with general litter, however, the CEO was requested to ascertain costings for the licenced disposal of dog waste.

Action by – the CEO

Gateway Entrances

Prior to the meeting Councillors were provided with an example of replacement entrance signage for the entrances to the town. It was noted that the example also incorporated signage from the Forest of Dean Lions, following a request by one of their members. However, Councillors were reminded that the Council had not agreed to incorporate signage from other organisations; if the Council wished to include such signage Members were asked if they wished to extend the facility to Registered Charities in the Town. Cllr Biddle advised that he had been approached by a member of the Lions who had requested the inclusion of a sign, for which the organisation would be willing to cover the cost. It was noted that the Council would need to cover the cost of its own signage and such expenditure, if agreed, would need to be included in the 2013-2014 budget.

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During discussion Cllr Osborne felt that the Council should concentrate on cleaning the existing signage and perhaps include planted troughs beneath the signs at the entrances. **Cllr Harris proposed** that the matter be deferred to Full Council as she felt Council should consider whether signage for the Forest of Dean Lions or any other organisation should be included as part of the town entrance signage. **Seconded by Cllr Osborne.** Unanimous.

Action by – the CEO

8. CHRISTMAS EVENT/LIGHTS

Prior to the meeting Members were provided with a copy of the 2012 rental prices and designs, plus a plan of the locations used in the 2011 display. Members were reminded that their budget for the Christmas event was £8,250 and that the Town Hall Trust had requested that the Council also arrange for a Christmas tree to be provided for the outside of the Town Hall; the hire of lights for same and the erection of the Hall's Christmas lights on the outside of the building – the cost of which would be reimbursed by the Town Hall.

During discussion Cllr Hobman felt that no decorations should be erected in the area surrounding the Tesco store and this view was supported by Cllr Osborne. Cllr Osborne felt that the Council should concentrate on illuminating a smaller area and should then utilise any potential saving to fund the purchase of Christmas lights in 2013. Accordingly, he requested consideration be given to the formation of a sub-committee to investigate the possibility of the Council purchasing its own supply of Christmas lights. The sub-committee would be active from 2013. Councillors were also reminded that it was not possible to utilise cross road displays, as sufficient height could not be obtained from the buildings in the town.

Action by – the CEO

After a short further discussion it was **proposed by Cllr Berryman** that the Council's illuminations would be placed on lampposts 53 to 68 and it was hoped that higher quality designs could be utilised. **Seconded by Cllr Harris**, with the stipulation that colourful lights would be used. Delegated powers were granted to the CEO and the EO to gain the best display for the budget available. **Proposed by Cllr Biddle, seconded by Cllr Hobman.** It was also suggested that the cross road features owned by the Council could be erected on the front of the businesses in High Street, subject to the building owner's consent.

Action by – the CEO/EO

Consideration was then given to the sub-committee which would take effect in 2013. It was agreed that the sub-committee would comprise of Cllrs Osborne, Harris, Hobman and Thomas and that delegated powers would be bestowed on the sub-committee to address the issue of the Christmas lights for 2013.

Councillors then considered what arrangements they wished to make for this year's event if they wished to organise a parade and whether they also wished to apply for a road closure. Cllr Harris felt that whilst the Council could re-introduce a parade, it would also be necessary to obtain assistance from Lydney Town Hall Management Committee to both marshal and cover the cost of such an activity. Members were advised that at the last Management Committee meeting it was felt that the Committee would prefer to concentrate on their activities at the Town Hall this year and possibly look to develop further in future years. Cllr Harris expressed frustration that as the nominated

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representative on the Town Hall Management Committee, she was not aware of the Town Hall Committee's plans for the event. It was reported that a member of the public was also experiencing problems with obtaining information regarding the hiring of tables, etc, from the Town Hall regarding the Christmas plans. **Cllr Osborne proposed** that the Committee may wish to state that the official "switch on" would take place at the Christmas tree outside the Co-operative Store. At this point Cllr Thomas called for a show of hands to confirm whether or not the Committee wished to organise a parade. Members resolved that they did not wish to organise a parade and Cllr Osborne reiterated his proposal that the switch on should take place outside the Co-operative store. It was noted that the "switch on" would take place on Saturday 1 December 2012 with any Santa's Grotto arrangements now falling to the Town Hall Management Committee.

Street Collection

Councillors were asked if they wished to apply for a street collection licence to collect funds for the purchase of new lights. It was **proposed by Cllr Harris, seconded by Cllr Osborne** that the Council would apply for a collection licence. However, the proposal was then put to a vote and the motion was defeated.

Christmas Window and Mayor's Christmas Card Competitions

It was agreed that both competitions would continue this year (arrangements unchanged); the theme for the Christmas Window Competition to be decided by the Mayor with the display to remain in situ until after the festive period (1 January 2013).

It was **proposed by Cllr Harris, seconded by Cllr Osborne**, that the Committee would write to the Town Hall Trust Management Committee to ascertain what arrangements they proposed to make for the Christmas Lights Switch On. Unanimous.

Action by – the CEO

9. CEMETERY/CHURCHYAR PROVISION

Cllr Thomas advised that a plan had yet to be submitted to Welters.

Prior to the meeting Members were also provided with a copy of a letter from Ms Audrey Phillips, who requested permission to lay a weed suppressing membrane, covered with a layer of fine gravel, on her parents grave.

Cllr Hobman advised that previously the Council had always prohibited the laying of gravel on the surface of grave plots as it tended to get caught in the mowing equipment. After referring to the Cemetery Rules, Cllr Thomas noted that Ms Phillips's request was not permissible under the current regulations. After a short discussion **Cllr Osborne proposed** that at the November meeting the Committee review the current rules for the Cemetery. No objection was raised. Cllr Thomas requested that all Committee Members be provided with a copy of the Rules and Regulations for the Cemetery.

Action by – the CEO

Grass Cutting Complaints

Members were informed that Council staff had received numerous complaints from members of the public regarding the standard of grass cutting by the Council's contractor. Noted.

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Ground Clearance at Cemetery

Councillors were reminded that previously the Council had considered the possibility of clearing the top section of the Cemetery, which was currently overgrown, with a view to using the additional space for burials or providing a Green Burial/reflection area if this was more feasible. The CEO questioned if Members wished to consider using the area as such with possibly a wall erected for remembrance plaques. Cllr Berryman questioned the number of spaces remaining in the Cemetery and gave a commitment to meet with a local Funeral Director to ascertain the number of burial spaces which could be created through the clearance of the area, however, this would also be dependent on clearing tree roots and the water table. **Proposed by Cllr Osborne, seconded by Cllr Hobman.**

Action by – Cllr Berryman

The CEO sought guidance as to whether Councillors wished to be provided with an up to date cost for clearing the area. It was **proposed by Cllr Osborne** that the area would be cleared for use as a green burial site, however, the proposal was not seconded.

Interment of Cremated Remains

Councillors considered a request which had been received from that family of the late Mr George Barnett, former Town Clerk, that the cremated remains of the late Mr Barnett be interred beneath a granite tablet in a prominent position on the main walkway into the Cemetery. Members recalled that the Council had previously granted permission for a memorial tablet to be installed in the area concerned and it was **proposed by Cllr Thomas, seconded by Cllr Harris**, that the request be granted.

Action by – the CEO

Councillors were informed that a local Funeral Director had received an approach from a lady who lived in the USA and wished, when the time came, to have her remains interred in her family plot. Members noted that the Deed of Exclusive Rights of Burial for the plot had been granted to a member of the public whose remains were now interred in the plot. Furthermore, the Council had permitted the remains of another member of the public (believed to be a family member) to be interred in the plot after the Deed holder had been interred.

In view of the above it was unanimously agreed that the Council would permit cremated remains of the lady concerned to be interred, subject to receipt of a letter indemnifying the Council against any future claims.

Action by – the CEO

10. PLAY AREAS Primrose Hill Meend

Zip Wire

Members were very disappointed to note that the equipment had suffered further vandalism (*attempts had been made to separate one of the supporting timber poles from the main upright*) and that the spring brake unit had failed for the third time. Whilst the manufacturer had immediately repaired the vandalised timber pole (as they had been concerned that further vandalism to the pole may result in the collapse of said pole), they had also recommended that the Council consider threading 2-3 tyres over the cable to act as a braking mechanism at a cost of £ 148.00 excluding VAT (despite previously ruling out this option after the brake had failed for the second time). Members were made aware that

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the funding pot which had been provided by FODDC to cover future maintenance had now been exhausted, due to the amount of vandalism the equipment had suffered. Accordingly, maintenance work would now need to be funded by the Council itself.

During discussion it was noted that if the Committee decided that it no longer wished the equipment to be located on site it would face a decommissioning charge of £795.00 plus VAT; if the equipment was to be relocated to another site the Committee would face a charge of £5,869.00 plus VAT. In view of the amount of vandalism experienced at the site **Cllr Osborne proposed** that the equipment could be relocated to Bathurst Park, should Bathurst Park and Recreation Trust accept. **Seconded by Cllr Biddle.**

Action by – the CEO

It was noted that the zip wire would remain decommissioned until a decision had been reached.

Rope Swing

Members noted that the former swinging log equipment had been converted into a rope swing, following a discussion with the equipment manufacturer. However, whilst the rope had been attached with temporary fixings on 14 September 2012, by 17 September 2012 the fixings had been pulled through the rope. As a result the equipment manufacturer was attempting to manufacture a more robust method of fixing. Cllr Thomas requested that the matter be deferred until the next meeting.

Under 5s Play Equipment (Local Area of Play)

Prior to the meeting Councillors were provided with an overview of the quotations which had been obtained. However, consideration of the matter was deferred until the next meeting due to Cllr Matthews's absence and the Committee's request.

Cllr Osborne questioned if members of the Council's Ground Staff would be able to construct a log train for the area and he called for Councillors to be provided with costings for said construction.

Action by – the CEO

Wood Bark/Wet Pour

Deferred until next meeting.

11. GRIT BINS/SNOW CODE

Councillors noted that Gloucestershire Council had now approved the two locations suggested by the Council for the placement of additional grit bins. Attention was drawn to the fact that the decision to purchase two additional grit bins had resulted in an overspend against the relevant budgetary heading and it was **proposed by Cllr Osborne, seconded by Cllr Harris, that** the CEO would vire funding to address the overspend from one of the Committee's other budgetary headings. Unanimous.

Action by – the CEO

12. GRASS CUTTING CONTRACT

Members' attention was drawn to the fact that the current contract for grass cutting would expire on 31 March 2013. Councillors were provided with an overview document detailing the equipment/manpower that would be required should the Council decide to undertake grass cutting in-house. Councillors were also advised that the Friends of

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Bathurst Pool had been informed that the Committee would need to decide if the grass cutting currently undertaken at the pool by the Council was construed as an “in kind” act, in lieu of receiving grant funding. Cllr Osborne disagreed with the additional number of staff recommended in the report (*which had also included the requirement to cut grass on the Recreation Trust land*) and he called on Councillors to discuss the matter at the next meeting, together with the standard of cutting required. Furthermore, Cllr Osborne felt that consideration should also be given towards the re-introduction of a wild flower area.

During discussion Cllr Berryman advised that the Council had previously agreed to undertake grass cutting at the pool in lieu of a contribution towards the cost of running the pool. Accordingly, Cllr Thomas felt that the arrangement would continue for the remainder of the grass cutting contract; the matter would then be fully discussed when considering the arrangements for the following year. Noted.

14. **COUNCILLORS REPORTS**

It was agreed that flower tubs would be included in the agenda for the next meeting, plus deferred items.

15. **MEETING DATES**

Members noted that the next Amenities Committee meeting would take place on 19 November 2012 at 7.00 pm.

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm.

Chairman *T. M. Hillman*

Date *19/11/12*