

LYDNEY TOWN COUNCIL

AMENITIES COMMITTEE MEETING – 2012/11/19 – 18

MINUTES OF THE AMENITIES COMMITTEE MEETING held in the Council Chamber, Clarendon House, Lydney on Monday 19 November 2012 at 7.00 pm.

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

Cllr S Osborne

Cllr B Pearman

Mrs J Smailes – Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Miss C Wheeler – Executive Officer (EO)

Cllr Hobman 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.

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Berryman and Thomas and duly accepted.

2. **TO CONSIDER INCREASING THE MEMBERSHIP COUNCILLOR NUMBER OF THE AMENITIES COMMITTEE**

Cllrs were asked to consider appointing Cllr S Osborne to the Committee. **Proposed by Cllr Harris, seconded by Cllr Biddle.**

Cllr S Osborne was then invited to sit at the Council table, however, she was not afforded voting rights at the meeting. Members noted that ratification for Cllr S Osborne's appointment would be sought at the December Full Council meeting.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

4. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the Amenities meeting held on 17 September 2012 were confirmed as a true record. **Proposed by Cllr W Osborne, seconded by Cllr Harris.** Unanimous.

5. **OPEN FORUM**

No public were in attendance.

6. **ALLOTMENT PROVISION**

Prior to the meeting Councillors were provided with copies of a report detailing the Management of Allotment Provision (outlining the obligations placed on the Council), a copy of a presentation produced by the CEO to promote allotment gardening, together with a copy of the Allotment Agreement. **Cllr Harris proposed** that the Management of Allotment Provision in Lydney be adopted as an official Council document. **Seconded by Cllr W Osborne.** Unanimous.

Allotment Agreement

The CEO advised that whilst the Management of Allotment Provision document suggested that it was acceptable for certain livestock to be kept on an allotment, it was recommended

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that this be reviewed on a site-by-site basis in order that the Council may assess each areas suitability. It was **proposed by Cllr W Osborne, seconded by Cllr Harris**, that the document be accepted as a basis, in order that it may be tailored to each site. Unanimous.

It was noted that a meeting would take place with current allotments tenants on 21 November 2012 at 7.30 pm in order to inform said tenants of the agreement, which will come into effect in April 2013. It was also noted that the next allotment meeting would take place on 24 January 2013 to which representatives of Aylburton Allotment Association would be invited.

Members were also made aware that the Council had written to all parties which had registered an interest in taking on an allotment tenancy, to which a response was currently awaited. It was also noted that the Amenities Committee's proposed budget for 2013-14 had included limited financial provision for increased allotment provision in the town.

Allotment Provision

Cllr S Osborne informed Members of the investigations which had been undertaken to regarding the availability of suitable land. During her report Cllr S Osborne advised that she had evaluated a number of sites around the Parish (e.g. land owned by Lydney Park Estate, land off Lydney By-Pass, Cambourne Meadow, land leased by Lydney Recreation Trust). As a result of her evaluation Cllr S Osborne recommended Cambourne Meadow as the most suitable site for allotments, due to adequate car parking, availability, secure compound area for sheds, etc. It was felt that the allotments could be restricted to part of the site, which would then enable dwarfing stock fruit trees to be planted in the area which Severn Trent classed as "sterile" across the top of the new sewer pipe. Cllr S Osborne also suggested that this area could be used as a dog walking area, which would satisfy the current users.

During discussion Councillors further explored the possibility of utilising Cambourne Meadow as allotment space and noted that it would be required to enter into a lease agreement with Lydney Recreation Trust for the land. Cllr S Osborne suggested that the Council may wish to consider mole ploughing the area to assist drainage and mooted the possibility of purchasing a quantity of top soil from the new housing developments which were scheduled for the town. The CEO advised that earlier in the day she had attended a site meeting to discuss a number of matters with representatives from Severn Trent. Severn Trent had agreed to investigate an issue on site surrounding sewerage from a manhole cover. Furthermore, the CEO advised Councillors that the previous Clerk had contacted the Environment Agency to obtain their views on the possibility of using the land as allotment space, however, their response had not been favourable. It was **proposed by Cllr Matthews, seconded by Cllr Harris**, that the CEO would once again contact the Environment Agency to obtain their views on using the site for allotment purposes.

Action by – the CEO

It was also agreed that the Committee would wait to receive a response from the Environment Agency before considering the need to test the soil to determine its suitability for allotment use. Members did not object to Cllrs Hobman and S Osborne announcing at the allotment meeting that the Committee was considering the use of Cambourne Meadow.


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7. STREET FURNITURE/SIGNAGE

Members were informed that funding for new signage/improvements had been incorporated into the 2013-2014 budget, details of which had been reported during the budget briefing session.

The following matters were discussed:-

Scenic Maps

Prior to the meeting Councillors were provided with a copy of the letter which had been received from Scenic Maps. It was **proposed by Cllr Matthews, seconded by Cllr Biddle** that the Council would make an offer for the street furniture between £50-100. (Refurbishment cost was also likely).

Action by – the CEO

Dog Fouling Signage

Members were reminded that the Council had received requests from residents for signage and that they had already been provided with a quotation from Brisco Signs. The CEO advised that none of the other Forest towns were interested in placing a joint order. It was **proposed by Cllr Osborne, seconded by Cllr Matthews**, that the Council would approach Merlin Waste to ascertain if they would be able to supply signage at a lower cost and that delegated powers would be granted to the CEO to purchase a supply of signs for a maximum price of £235.00.

Action by – the CEO

It was also suggested that the CEO contact Merlin Waste to gain a quotation for the cost of disposal of dog waste by a Licenced Contractor. Agenda item for next meeting.

Action by – the CEO

Cultivation Licence

Members noted that Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) had now given consent for the Council to place floral planters beneath the entrance signage and that GCC had not stipulated how the floral planters should be constructed. It was noted that Cllr Biddle would gain quotes and that once approved a site meeting could then be arranged with a representative from GCC in order to discuss and agree the Council's plans. GCC had no objections to the Council purchasing replacement signage for the gateways.

The CEO advised that Cllr Biddle was already in the process of obtaining prices for the replacement signage and planters. Furthermore, the cost of planting the planters would be advised to the Forest of Dean Lions, to ascertain if they were still interested in sponsoring them, however, sufficient money would be included in the budget in order that Council could address if need be. In order to provide a good display in the Spring it was **proposed by Cllr Osborne, seconded by Cllr Matthews**, that the Committee would look to purchase the signage this financial year through utilising General Reserves, with the expenditure then repaid once the 2013-2014 budget had been received. It was also noted that bulbs would be planted on the approaches.

Action by – Cllr Biddle/the CEO

Cllr Biddle advised that it may be necessary to reposition the gateway signage on the Gloucester side, as its current location was felt to be rather narrow. Members also noted that they would need to agree a colour scheme for the floral display in future years

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(0214/15 onwards). The CEO also reminded Members that the Aylburton signage location would need to be confirmed.

8. CHRISTMAS EVENT 2012/LIGHTS (2012 & 2013)

Members noted that the Christmas Window Competition would be judged during W/C 26 November 2012 and that entrants had been made aware that the winning designs should remain in place until 1 January 2013. Members were reminded that the Council had not sanctioned Officer attendance for the event; that any hospitality provided would be purchased out of the Mayor's allowance and Cllr Biddle stated that Councillors would "man" the hospitality.

2013/2014 Budget Provision

Cllr Osborne reported on the costs which had been incurred through hiring the Christmas lights on a contract period and he felt that the Council would receive better value for money if it agreed to purchase a quantity of lights, rather than hire units for the 2013 display. During his report Cllr Osborne felt that the Committee would need to include an amount of approximately £24,500 in its budget for 2013-2014 to ensure that it purchased sufficient lights to provide a good display for the town. It was noted that the matter had yet to be discussed by the Christmas Lights Sub-Committee as to whether to purchase or enter a further contract.

During discussion Cllr Harris felt that it may be possible to hold fundraising events during the year to contribute towards the cost of the electricity and also approach local businesses for contributions, rather than include such a large figure in the Amenities budget. The CEO advised members to defer their discussions to the Finance and Scrutiny Committee, as £8,000 had already been incorporated into the Committee's budget for 2013-2014 and the Finance and Scrutiny Committee would need to evaluate the impact of any further increase. Concern was expressed by a number of Councillors that £8,000 would not be sufficient to purchase lights and Cllr Osborne informed Members of the poor response which he had previously received when attempting to attract sponsorship for the lights from local businesses.

After a further short discussion Cllr Osborne proposed that in principle, the Committee would increase its 2013-2014 budget to reflect an expenditure of approximately £24,500 on Christmas lights. Cllr Harris suggested that the Christmas Lights Sub Committee should meet with the Coleford lights volunteers to establish how they raised funds, etc. However, Cllr Matthews agreed to second Cllr Osborne's motion at this point. After being granted permission to address the Committee, Cllr Pearman spoke in support of approaching local traders and the possibility of gaining sponsorship for the lights. Cllr Hobman elected to put the motion to a vote at this point which was carried dependent upon the additional amount remaining under the 5% Precept.

Members were reminded that if they wished to consider the erection of lights next year by volunteers they would need to consider insurance, risk and method statements. Cllr Hobman advised that a Christmas Lights Sub Committee meeting would take place after Christmas.

9. CEMETERY/CHURCHYARD PROVISION

Prior to the meeting Members were provided with a copy of the revised rule for the Cemetery. Adoption proposed by Cllr Biddle, seconded by Cllr Harris. Unanimous.

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Clearance of area in Cemetery

Members were advised that a site meeting had taken place between a contractor and the Mayor in order to consider the clearance of the top area of the Cemetery to enable its future use as an area for reflection. It was noted that “key” features would be retained (i.e. the large cherry tree) and the area would be enhanced with seating/plants, etc. The CEO advised that Abbey Tree Services had quoted £1,725.00 to undertake the tree work in the area (inc. grinding of cherry tree stumps in entrance walkway which would then enable the Council to replace the cherry trees). Furthermore, that Mr Clive Perrot had quoted £876.00 to landscape the area once the tree work had been completed. Members noted that sufficient provision remained in the Cemetery budget and recalled that Full Council had previously agreed that the work should be undertaken by February. Accordingly, it was **proposed by Cllr Matthews, seconded by Cllr Harris**, that the work would be undertaken during the winter months. Unanimous.

Action by – the CEO

Members noted that from April 2013 the maintenance of the Cemetery and St Mary’s Churchyard would be undertaken by Ground Staff. Furthermore, that Aylburton Parish Council’s contribution towards the maintenance of the Cemetery would be increased from £150.00 per annum to £165.00 per annum.

10. PLAY AREAS

Primrose Hill

Zipwire

Members were provided with a report itemising expenditure relating to the Playbuilder budget heading and noted that the budget heading had already been exceeded by £28.00. Members were reminded that a quotation had already been obtained to resite/decommission the equipment. Members noted that the Bathurst Park and Recreation Trust had been approached to establish if they would be willing to relocate the equipment to the Park and the Trust had been asked to submit a grant to the Council to cover relocation costs, however, no grant application had been submitted.

Members discussed the future of the equipment. Cllr Matthews spoke in support of retaining the equipment on site and she felt that the equipment should be repaired for the last time. However, Cllr Osborne felt that the equipment should only be repaired if a CCTV camera could be sited in the area. The CEO advised Members that Monmouthshire County Council would be willing to repair the equipment and ensure its compliancy and estimated that the work may cost £500.00.

After a further short discussion it was agreed that the CEO would obtain a quotation from Monmouthshire County Council and Touchwood for the work required and to bring the equipment to a recognised standard. An approach would also be made to Ms Kate Wyatt, Forest of Dean District Council, to establish if it would be possible to obtain a further grant towards the cost of the work. Once the aforementioned information had been received the Committee would consider the future of the equipment.

Action by – the CEO

Under 5s Play Area

Cllr Matthews highlighted that the Council would only be able to purchase a few small items of play equipment if the current budget (£8,000) for the project was not increased.

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Members noted that Monmouthshire County Council had also highlighted that the existing fencing on site was not sufficient and Cllr Matthews requested that the matter be deferred until such time as she had been able to identify a source of funding. No objection to the request was raised.

Play Bark

Members were reminded of the costs which had previously been provided to them regarding the purchase of play bark. The CEO advised that whilst a quotation had been obtained for replacing the “barked” areas with wetpour, the cost was beyond the Committee’s reach. It was therefore **proposed by Cllr Biddle, seconded by Cllr Harris**, that the Council would purchase a supply of play bark.

Action by – the CEO

11. GRASS CUTTING CONTRACT

Members noted that the current contract expired at the end of March 2012, however, no cutting would now be undertaken until the start of the new financial year. Members recalled that the Council had engaged the services of Forest Equipment Services to collect litter on Council/Trust land which would enable the Council’s Ground Staff to undertake the grass cutting in the Cemetery and St Mary’s Churchyard.

Whilst a tender process would be operated for grass cutting the remaining Council/Trust areas, Members were asked that they also take into consideration not only the cost of the work, but the complimentary services that some contractors would provide (i.e. overhanging tree maintenance). The CEO also advised that the tender would include 11 routine cuts, with the option for two flexible cuts which would be invoked by the CEO. Cllr Osborne requested that the tender also include the restriction to cut selective areas to within 1 metre of the footpath to create a habitat for nature and he called for a site meeting to be arranged with the successful contractor. Members were also asked to consider awarding the contract for the Town and Lydney Recreation Trust to the same contractor in order to streamline the administration of the contracts

12. COUNCILLORS REPORTS

None.

13. MEETING DATES

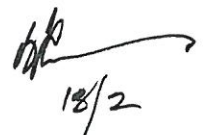
Members noted that the next Amenities Committee meeting would take place on 18 February 2013 at 7.00 pm.

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC & PRESS

Page 24 (Inclusive) - CLOSED SESSION

Standing orders suspended in order that the council may continue in “closed session” under the provisions of The Public (Admission to Meetings Act 1960) as the business to be discussed is considered to be of a confidential nature

The meeting closed at 8.27 pm.

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