

# LYDNEY TOWN COUNCIL

## AMENITIES COMMITTEE MEETING – 2013/10/21 – 07

MINUTES OF THE AMENITIES COMMITTEE MEETING held in the Council Chamber, Claremont House, Lydney on Monday 21 October 2013 at 7.00 pm.

**PRESENT:** Cllrs B Thomas (Chairman), B Berryman, J Bevan, D Biddle, R Bonser, C Harris, V Hobman, C Matthews and W Osborne

Two members of the public  
Mrs J Smailes – Chief Executive Officer (CEO)  
Miss C Wheeler – Executive Officer (EO)

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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.

1. **APOLOGIES**

None.

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

Cllr Berryman proposed that Cllr Bevan be appointed to the Amenities Committee. **Seconded by Cllr Osborne.** Unanimous.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

4. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the Amenities meeting held on 17 June 2013 were confirmed as a true record. **Proposed by Cllr Matthews, seconded by Cllr Berryman.** Unanimous.

5. **OPEN FORUM**

None.

6. **2014-2015 AMENITIES BUDGET**

Prior to the meeting Councillors were provided with a copy of the proposed budget for 2014-2015 financial year; said budget also enabled Councillors to review the Committee's actual performance against budget for the previous three financial years. The CEO gave an overview of the proposed budget and advised that the budget incorporated the grass cutting contract requirements for 2014 and the litter collection contract (including additional litter collections through the summer holidays). Members were advised to consider utilising the partial reimbursement in 2013-2014 (for the cost of the noticeboard for Lydney East) towards the cost of providing a noticeboard for Lydney North; a small sum had been incorporated into the budget to facilitate the purchase of said noticeboard. It was also suggested that should the housing development at Windsor Drive/Court Road/Augustus Way be granted permission, Councillors may wish to incorporate into their Heads of Terms a bus shelter for Court Road/Allaston Road. Furthermore, Members were reminded that they had already given a commitment to provide an additional fingerpost sign for Walkers are Welcome at the A48 Bypass/Church Road junction.



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Responding to a question which had been raised by Cllr Osborne, the CEO reminded Members that the matter of the omission of Lydney Community Centre from the Town Map had been discussed at Full Council.

During discussion Cllr Osborne suggested that the figure shown for machinery maintenance should be increased to £4,000 in order that the Committee may earmark £500 annually towards future machinery maintenance/purchase costs. Responding to a question which had been raised by Cllr Bonser, the CEO advised of the need to upgrade the trimmers which had been purchased earlier in the year, as it had become apparent that they were not sufficiently robust to cope with the work they were required to undertake. The CEO also advised that she had attempted to investigate if the Council could obtain a “blanket” maintenance contract with a local organisation to cover machinery repair costs, however, the proposal had been declined by the organisation. At this point **Cllr Osborne proposed** that the machinery repair budget be increased to £4,000, with £500 earmarked annually for future machinery purchases. Further discussion then took place on the play area budget, floral displays budget and the “Christmas” budget. Regarding Cllr Osborne’s proposal, the CEO sought clarification as to whether the Committee wished to re-allocate funding from another budgetary heading to cover the additional £500 proposed by Cllr Osborne, or if they wished to increase the overall budget. Cllr Osborne clarified that the overall budget was to be increased. **Seconded by Cllr Harris.** Vote carried with one abstention.

In view of the above the CEO then advised that the total budget for the 2014-2015 financial year would amount to £48,880.00. **Proposed by Cllr Harris, seconded by Cllr Matthews.** Unanimous.

### 7. ALLOTMENT/ALLOTMENT PROVISION

During the meeting Councillors were provided with photographs of the replacement fencing and improvements to the footpaths which had been undertaken. Members were delighted with the improvements which had been conducted. It was noted that it had been necessary to erect a small fence over part of the footpath which skirted an allotment tenant’s greenhouse for health and safety purposes. The CEO advised that the grass pathways within the site would be strimmed by Ground Staff on a sporadic basis; that allotment number 8 had been divided into three allotments following requests by prospective tenants for smaller allotment gardens; that an area had been created for the placement of IBCs and hardcore surface laid accordingly. It was **proposed by Cllr Osborne, seconded by Cllr Matthews**, that confirmation be obtained from Forest of Dean District Council Planning Department that planning consent would not be required for the erection of the replacement fencing. Unanimous.

**Action by – the CEO**

Councillors felt that it may be advantageous to hold a further meeting with current allotment tenants, once the opinion of Forest of Dean District Council had been obtained in order to discuss the bottom area still to be allocated and whether this could instead be utilised as a hard standing and potting sheds reallocated.

Members were also asked to consider the request which had been received from a current tenant for the provision of a bore hole on site, as said tenant did not feel that the three IBCs provided by the Council would satisfy the demand for water. It was felt that the situation should be reviewed after one year, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the IBCs.



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### 8. PROPOSED CYCLE PATH

Prior to the meeting Councillors were provided with a copy of an e-mail which had been sent to Cllr Biddle by Ms Paula Burrows, Commercial Manager, Forest of Dean District Council (FODDC), regarding a proposed cycle path from Lydney to Parkend.

It was noted that FODDC were looking at ways of moving forward without having to fund a £9k feasibility study, as there was no funding available. Whilst Ms Burrows provided an update on work undertaken to date, she also welcomed funding from the Town Council or Lydney Area in Partnership which could be used as match funding towards the project.

Cllr Biddle felt that the success of the project lay with gaining support from Sustrans, however, he felt that it may be possible for Lydney Area in Partnership to obtain funding of up to £50,000 from SITA. Cllr Bonser called for both FODDC, Lydney Area in Partnership and the Forestry Commission to work together on the project.

During discussion it was agreed that a Working Party would be formed, comprising of Cllrs Biddle, Bonser, Bevan and Matthews, in order to investigate the proposed cycle path; Working Party to report back to Committee.

**Action by – Cllrs Biddle, Bonser, Bevan and Matthews**

### 9. GRASS VERGES/GATEWAY ENTRANCES

Prior to the meeting Councillors were provided with a copy of the advice which had been obtained from Dean Meadows Group (DMG) regarding the possibility of managing the grass verges between Taurus Crafts and the Town as wild flower meadows.

Whilst he noted that DMG had not provided any costings with their suggestions, Cllr Osborne suggested that the Council may wish to consider planting daffodils, bluebells, wood anemones, sowing wild flower seed, etc and felt that the cost of purchasing a quantity of said flowers/seed would amount to £335. Furthermore, Cllr Osborne advised that he had received an offer of voluntary assistance to plant the bulbs, however, he stressed that the Committee would need to decide the distance from the footpath which the Grass Cutting Contractor would be requested to cut. Responding to a question which had been raised by Cllr Thomas, Cllr Osborne felt that the total distance to be utilised as a wild flower meadow would amount to approximately 10', on both sides of the carriageway and he suggested that the Council may wish to spend £385 if they wished to sow wild flower seed at three Gateways to the Town.

Members were reminded that the Council already had a grass cutting contract in place and were advised that the wild flower meadows would need to be sculptured in order to look visually appealing. Discussion took place as to whether the Council wished to plant bulbs or sow wild flower seed, for which it was felt that a maximum of £500 would need to be allocated from the Council's budget. Cllr Thomas advised his fellow Councillors that his daughter was a trained Horticulturist and offered to obtain her views for consideration at the next meeting as to how wild flower meadows could be created at the Gateways.

Consideration was then given as to where £500 could be found within the 2014-2015 budget which had been agreed earlier in the meeting and Members were asked if they wished to re-allocate the sum of £500 from the Christmas Lights budget. At this point Cllr Osborne advised that he had been approached by three members of the public who had expressed interest in purchasing a Christmas light for the Town's display which would be placed on perpetual loan to the Council, providing the Council would cover the relevant

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VAT charge and would agree to placing a notice on the Council's noticeboard advising of their sponsorship. Accordingly, it was **proposed by Cllr Bevan, seconded by Cllr Matthews** that the Committee would re-allocate £500 from its Christmas Lights budget towards the purchase of wild meadow seed.

**Action by – the CEO**

Cllr Matthews requested the matter of Christmas Lights sponsorship appear as an agenda item for the next meeting and Cllr Osborne was requested to provide the names of members of the public interested in sponsoring Christmas Lights to the next meeting.

**Action by – Cllr Osborne/the CEO**

### 10. WEED SPRAYING

Prior to the meeting Councillors were provided with a copy of an e-mail which had been received from Mr B Watkins, Local Highways Manager (West) advising that Gloucestershire County Council would no longer carry out weed spraying, other than for the treatment of noxious weeds or where there was a highway safety concern.

Whilst the contents of the e-mail were noted, a number of Councillors expressed concern over the withdrawal of the spraying, the CEO advised that two members of the Town Council's Ground Staff were now qualified to undertake weed spraying. However, Cllr Bonser urged the Council to join with fellow Councils to put pressure on Gloucestershire County Council to provide a monetary sum to Town/Parish Councils if they were being expected to undertake work previously performed by the County Council. Cllr Bonser also stressed the work which had been undertaken to date by the Town Council to improve the appearance of the Town.

### 11. LYDNEY IN BLOOM

Prior to the meeting Members were provided with advice which had been obtained from Newent In Bloom, detailing how the organisation operated together with an overview of their role/duties. Cllr Matthews voiced her desire to encourage the formation of an "In Bloom" organisation for Lydney, with the Council providing the plant for the displays which would then be planted by the organisation.

During discussion it was agreed that a Working Party could be formed to investigate the level of interest locally in such an organisation. Cllrs Osborne, Harris and Thomas agreed to form a Working Party. Cllr Thomas requested that a representative from Newent In Bloom be requested to provide a presentation to the Committee.

**Action by – the CEO**

### 12. RAILWAY STATION

Prior to the meeting Councillors were provided with a copy of the response which had been received from Mr Frank Slater, Arriva Trains Wales (ATW), regarding the possibility of working with the Council to improve the appearance of the train station.

It was noted that ATW stated that a mobile cleaning crew visited Lydney twice per week, however, this was disputed by a number of Councillors. Furthermore, that ATW operated an "Adopt a Station" scheme with Dean Forest Railway's application to "adopt" Lydney station only recently receiving acceptance. Whilst Mr Slater was unable to advise the extent of the work which would be undertaken at the Station by Dean Forest Railway, it was noted that some "quick wins" had already been identified, these being:

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- All new signage to be installed
- Painting of all lighting columns
- Painting of white picket fence

Members noted that concern over the appearance of the station and its car park had been raised by a number of Councillors, however, the CEO stressed that the Council was not responsible for maintaining the station or its car park, neither did it possess a budget for such work.

During discussion the CEO was requested to contact Richard Cole Contracting to obtain a cost for cutting back the vegetation in the car park. Furthermore, to highlight the overgrown vegetation to Mr Slater.

**Action by – the CEO**

It was **proposed by Cllr Osborne** that the matter would then be deferred to Full Council for consideration. Unanimous.

**Action by – the CEO**

### 13. PLAY AREAS

#### Fallers Field

Councillors were asked to consider the purchase of a replacement seat for the cradle swing from Monmouthshire County Council at a cost of £130.00 plus VAT. **Proposed by Cllr Berryman, seconded by Cllr Biddle.** Vote carried.

**Action by – the CEO**

#### Primrose Hill

The CEO provided Members with an update of the action which had been taken since the last meeting. It was noted that in the opinion of the Council's legal advisor, the cost of pursuing legal action would outweigh the cost of removing the three pieces of equipment from site. Members were also advised that a site meeting had taken place with the equipment provider during which the provider had been informed that following the report commissioned by Forest of Dean District Council the zip wire, rope log and the basket swing had been classed as not fit for purpose. It was noted that the equipment provider had been invited to provide a quote for rectifying the equipment and had been asked to provide a guarantee that the equipment would be underwritten by their new Company/Insurer, however, they had expressed a reluctance to provide such information, preferring instead to concentrate on the report which had been commissioned.

In view of the above the CEO advised that two quotations had been obtained for the removal of the equipment; it was suggested that the Committee may wish to remove the equipment and then concentrate on obtaining grant funding to obtain replacement equipment. It was **proposed by Cllr Biddle, seconded by Cllr Harris** that the equipment would be removed. The motion was put to a vote which was carried.

**Cllr Bonser** expressed her disappointment over the removal of the equipment and **proposed** that a press statement be released in order to explain the circumstances around the decision taken by the Committee. **Seconded by Cllr Matthews.** Unanimous.

**Action by – the CEO**



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Due to the removal of the three pieces of play equipment, Cllr Bonser expressed concern over the potential vandalism of the under 5s play equipment which was due to be considered by the Committee.

### Under 5s Play Equipment

Prior to the meeting Members were provided with a précis of the quotations which had been received from six suppliers. It was **proposed by Cllr Osborne, seconded by Cllr Bonser** that the matter be placed in abeyance until the next meeting, due to the concerns voiced by Cllr Bonser. Vote carried.

**Action by – the CEO**

During discussion Members were reminded that £8,000 was currently held in Earmarked Reserves in respect of the replacement equipment for under 5s. It was **proposed by Cllr Osborne, seconded by Cllr Bonser**, that Full Council be asked to re-allocate the aforementioned £8,000 to general play equipment. No vote taken.

Cllr Matthews stated that Gloucestershire County Council had allocated £1,136.00 to District Councillors for a Youth Fund and she called on District Councillors to obtain further information on said provision.

### 14. SIGNAGE/NOTICEBOARDS

Members were asked to consider purchasing a noticeboard to be sited at Primrose Hill in respect of Lydney North Ward. Further to the discussion which had taken place earlier in the evening, Cllr Thomas requested that the matter be placed in abeyance until the new financial year.

### 15. MEMORIAL BENCH

Prior to the meeting Members were provided with a copy of a letter which had been received from Mrs J Green who requested permission to place a memorial bench at Primrose Hill Mesne in respect of her late son, Ben.

Members noted that Mrs Green was mindful of the possibility of vandalism occurring to the bench, should permission be given for its placement, and therefore requested that consideration be given to the placement of a metal bench.

After a short discussion, it was **proposed by Cllr Bonser, seconded by Cllr Harris**, that Council would grant permission for the placement of a wooden bench, as it was more in keeping with the surroundings. Unanimous.

**Action by – the CEO**

### 16. GRASS CUTTING CONTRACT

The CEO advised that the Council had now received its contracted grass cuts for the 2013 season and were asked to consider if they wished to authorise any additional cuts.

Members noted the CEO's statement. No decision was taken as to whether to address an additional cut.



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17. **GRIT BINS**

Members noted that all 15 bins purchased in the 2013-2014 budget had been placed in requested/agreed areas. Members noted that a few complaints had been received regarding the placement of the bins.

The CEO advised that it had also been necessary to issue a number of temporary bins to specific areas, following requests by members of the public. Furthermore, that the Council awaited its delivery of rock salt from Gloucestershire County Council.

Members were made aware of the Winter Maintenance Agreement and that Gloucestershire County Council would resume responsibility during the two week office closure period.

18. **COUNCILLORS REPORTS**

None.

19. **MEETING DATES**

Members noted that the next Amenities Committee meeting would take place on 9 December 2013 at 7.00 pm.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm.

Chairman ..... 

Date ..... 9th December 2013