

Droitwich Spa Town Council

MINUTES of the meeting of the COMMUNITY AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE held in the Council Chamber at St Richard's House, Victoria Square, Droitwich Spa on Monday 10 June 2019 at 7.10pm.

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs C Bowden (Chairman)
Councillor RJ Morris (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor E Bowden
Councillor DM Craigie
Councillor Mrs K Fellows
Councillor NR Griffiths
Councillor AH Laird
Councillor CM Murray
Councillor WT Moy (Ex- officio)

NON-MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors RG Beale, GR Brookes, Mrs JM Chaudry, G Duffy, J Grady, RP Hopkins, A Humphries, DJ Morris, AM Sinton.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: None.

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were none.

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24 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest made.

25 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY & AMENITIES COMMITTEE HELD ON 4 MARCH 2019

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Community & Amenities Committee held on 4 March 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

26 TO NOTE THE MEMBERSHIP AND CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE AS DETERMINED AT THE ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING ON 13TH MAY 2019

RESOLVED That the Membership and Chairmanship of the Committee was noted.

27 TO NOTE THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE GRANTS APPRAISAL PANEL AS DETERMINED AT THE ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING ON 13 MAY 2019

RESOLVED That the Membership and Chairmanship of the Grants Appraisal Panel was noted.

28 TO RECEIVE THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GRANTS APPRAISAL PANEL ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 3 JUNE 2019

The Assistant Town Clerk – Community & Amenities had prepared a summary of the recommendations made at the Grants Appraisal sub- committee meeting which took place on the 3 June 2019 [*circulated as part of the agenda for this meeting dated 4 June 2019*]. The Chairman referred to the report including the recommendations, beneficiary groups and remaining fund available.

RESOLVED That the recommendations arising from the Grants Appraisal meeting held on 3 June 2019 be accepted and authorised for payment.

29 TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON THE PRELIMINARY INSURANCE CLAIM REGISTERED BY THE INNOVATIVE GROUP LTD FOR THE SPRING MEADOW/DOORSTEP GREEN PUBLIC OPEN SPACE.

The Town Clerk updated that an approach had been received on 20 March 2019 from the Innovative Group – Environmental Services on behalf of the owners of an adjacent property (23 Arkle Close) to the Town Council land holding. This provisional claim made reference to possible damage liabilities of approximately £55,000.00 from nearby vegetation root ingress following the detection of cracks to an exterior integral garage wall. Three sections comprising perimeter hedge and a hawthorn tree were highlighted as contributory factors under Town Council ownership (plan attached).

Professional advice & guidance was sought from the Town Council insurer and our appointed grounds maintenance contractor. The recommendation was made to remove the aforementioned sections subject to the usual checks being undertaken including ownership, conservation and tree preservation order status and an ecology survey. At this point the ownership and responsibility for the section designated as “H2” was disputed with the innovative Group and Claimant.

An agreement was made to proceed with the removal of sections H1 & T1 which was 80% completed on 23 May 2019. The remaining 20% removal was halted following discovery of nesting birds from the ecology survey. The work will be finished after a further period has elapsed and secondary ecology checks undertaken. During the course of telephone discussions with the claimant on 23 May 2019 the Town Clerk received an admittance that the property owners did originally plant and continued to maintain the contested section of hedge described as H2. The Innovative Group have subsequently expressed appreciation that the Town Council have complied with their recommendation to remove sections H1 & T1 as well as fully acknowledging the position of no DSTC liability for H2. The provisional claim is now satisfactorily resolved. Councillor AM Sinton thanked the Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk (Community & Amenities) for their approach in satisfactorily dealing with this difficult and time consuming matter. The Town Clerk confirmed that the total expenditure incurred for the remedial hedge removal work is approximately £750.00.

RESOLVED That the report and outcome were noted.

30 TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON THE DISCOVERY OF JAPANESE KNOT WEED GROWING AT WESTWOOD LODGE ALLOTMENTS, ORIGINATING FROM 20 MAY 2019.

The Town Clerk updated that following inspection and referral to specialist Contractors – “Environet” on 20th May, outbreaks of Japanese Knot Weed have been confirmed at the

Westwood Lodge Allotments site. To date approximately 5 individual allotment plots are affected together with the large communal area. The cane based weed is not a native species, is highly invasive and prolific in growth rate to the extent that whole areas can become infested and ultimately decimated if left unchecked.

The recommended treatment is through herbicide spraying twice yearly over a three year term to eradicate the growths. The treatment is not harmful to wildlife, animals or humans and does not contaminate allotment produce or crops. The detected growths originate from two stays of more established Japanese Knot Weed which are rooted on the adjacent Westwood Public Open Space which is land owned by Wychavon District Council. The recommended treatment is expensive and will also necessitate payment of the initial survey and diagnosis cost of an additional £240.00. Full estimate, recommendation and site plans are attached for information. At this stage the Environet estimate has not been accepted pending an approach made to Wychavon District Council (Mr Peter Head – Facilities Manager & Mr Jonathan Hulbert- Parks & Green Spaces). A response has been received on 29th May 2019 that WDC wish to inspect the growth stands before reporting back further. The advice received from Environet does emphasise the time critical nature of the recommended treatment to reduce further contamination risks. A programme start date of mid- June was suggested as being most effective to combat the spread of weeds during the most prolific growth period of the year.

There is a legal responsibility to ensure that Japanese Knot Weed is managed on land holdings so as not to contaminate adjacent land and property. In this case the specialist has confirmed the source of the contamination of DSTC allotment land as originating from two separate cane stands of approximately 10 years growth rooted on the nearby Wychavon land and spread by spores. To this effect the approach made to WDC has requested consideration towards the following options

- Full recourse for the estimate of £2760.00 for the Environet professionally recommended treatment + £240.00 Inspection, diagnosis and survey costs.
- Full treatment including removal of dead canes and spore eradication at cost to Wychavon District Council using their own preferred specialist contractors.
- A full survey of the WDC owned Westwood Public Open Space to ensure all Japanese Knot Weed is detected and eradicated as part of the treatment work. This point is important given the undetected established source growths rooted on WDC land and the Environet Survey only having covered DSTC land holdings and the fence line perimeter of the adjacent WDC land so far.

The Town Clerk reported that WDC had acknowledged the approach and agreed to inspect the land before formally responding in due course. A further update will be provided once received from WDC.

RESOLVED That the report and course of suggested action be accepted.

31 TO RECEIVE A REPORT AND CONSIDER ISSUES & OPTIONS REGARDING THE HONEYMANS GARDENS TRAFFIC ISLAND AT THE INTERSECTION OF SALWARPE ROAD & KIDDERMINSTER ROAD

The Town Clerk reported that The Honeymans Gardens traffic island forms the intersection of Kidderminster Road, Salwarpe Way and the cul-de-sac which is Vines Lane. The roundabout is a busy intersection and the base is angled on a camber due to the road elevations. The roundabout is not owned by the Town Council and forms part of the WCC Highways infrastructure. The roundabout has been maintained by the Town

Council using the Parish Lengthsman scheme which accords with other similar smaller scale maintenance tasks.

The roundabout is subject to constraining factors given the physical layout, traffic and visibility splays for lines of sight for merging vehicles. To this effect ornamental planting and grasses are not possible options for the surface area. Weed suppressant fabric topped with approximately 12 tonnes of gravel was originally placed as the surface dressing. With time this has become less effective and vigorous unsightly weed growth now blights the roundabout through the growing season. This is combatted with costly and manually intensive weed spraying at regular intervals which has limited impact due to the uneven surface and wash out from rainfall and traffic spray. In turn numerous complaints are received on a regular basis from the residents of Honeyman's Gardens expressing strong opinion that the roundabout degrades the visual approach to their homes and the Town Centre.

A more practical solution is sought and collaboration with the Highways Officer is ongoing to investigate other options. Of these only one proposal looks practical due to the constraining factors of the site.

A planting licence has been granted by WCC Highways for surface vegetation planting up to 50 cms maximum height. The only suitable plant species is Erica Carnea which is an alpine derived evergreen shrub with high tolerances. It is anticipated that the plants will spread inwards from the curb line to cover the existing gravel and weed infested area. Ongoing maintenance would be minimal apart from some periodic height reduction to maintain lines of sight for vehicles. This solution has been used in other areas with reasonable effect.

Costs- The proposal is expensive and is out of scope for the Lengthsman Scheme. Similarly there is no budget provision or contingency set aside for the current Municipal Year. Estimated costs are outlined below for consideration and possible future provision. A collaborative approach through allocation of some WCC Divisional funding may be appropriate if available, given the infrastructure is not owned by the Town Council.

- Supply Planting of sufficient coverage of the recommended Erica Carnea anticipated to be approximately £1200.00
- Planting labour and material (compost etc) approximately £1500.00
- Mandatory Traffic Management for working on Highway- "Chapter 8 regulation" permit and notice for cordon including temporary traffic lights hire provision and operation. Costed at approximately £1600.00 to cover one working day duration.
- Indicative Total for Scheme = £ 4300.00

The Town Clerk recommended to Members to consider that the actual asset was not owned by the Town Council and a collaborative approach with the partner Agency – Worcestershire County Council Highways may be a suitable way forward. Options to investigate may include possible Local WCC Ward Members Divisional Funding contribution and/or match funding. Councillor RJ Morris agreed with this suggested way forward for further consideration in due course.

RESOLVED That the report and course of action to investigate shared funding options be noted for further consideration and available options.

32. TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON MAINTENANCE COSTS & REQUESTS RECEIVED FOR ADDITIONAL BUS SHELTER INFRASTRUCTURE

The Town Clerk updated that The Town Council currently owns and maintains 19 bus shelters at various locations in and around the Town. These form part coverage of the 40 designated bus stops in the Town Council area of responsibility. The costs of maintenance are a combination of regular cleaning contract overheads and essential repairs due to collision damage, wear and tear and vandalism.

A recent example of a single cost implication is the substantial repair of the Westwood Road bus shelter at the terminus lay bye adjacent Willow Court & Park Way. The essential repairs following fire damage and vandalism necessitated four and a half days work and a cost of £2177.82.

The Town Council have received several requests for additional bus shelters in various locations partly due to the expanding population and ongoing new housing developments. A common concern is that children commuting to school by bus have inadequate shelter provision from the prevailing weather especially during the winter months. Examples of the requested locations are Pulley Lane, Yew Tree Hill, Jackdaw Lane and Tagwell, as well as neighbouring Parish areas including Copcut Rise, Copcut Bank and Squirrel Bank.

There is no budget provision allocated this Municipal Year for additional shelters although the emerging issue may require consideration towards a strategy to review provision of these amenities going forwards. In the past a working party within the Community & Amenities Committee have taken feasibility study options forward on a location basis lead by local ward members. The Town Clerk suggested to members that further and future provision could be considered and reviewed as part of the budget provision and estimate setting for the next Municipal Year when undertaken in November & December 2019. This would also be ratified by Full Council for setting the precept values during late January 2020.

Councillor RJ Morris agreed with this suggested approach and added that Hindlip, Martin Hussingtree & Salwarpe Parish Council have a responsibility for some of the areas reported on. To this effect Councillor Morris mentioned that the aforementioned Parish Council had benefitted recently as the recipient of considerable New Homes Bonus funding through Wychavon District Council originating from occupancy of many of the new housing stock in the area.

RESOLVED That the report be noted and consideration given as part of the estimates and budget setting for 2020/2021 Municipal year which is set for November & December 2019.

33. HERITAGE CENTRE & MUSEUM DISPLAY CABINETS

The Town Clerk confirmed the successful acquisition of museum display equipment for the Heritage and Tourist Centre at St Richards House. Thanks to the diligence of the Heritage Managers and Town Council Officers a successful expression of interest submitted to the Royal Academy of Arts in London has enabled a quantity of surplus specialist cabinets to be secured on a permanent gift basis. These bespoke units are high quality and in pristine condition. The new acquisition will provide desperately needed equipment to help showcase and expand our local Museum collection. The component quantity is also conducive towards helping to fit out the proposed redesign and improved configuration of the Heritage Centre which it is hoped to consider and progress further later in the year. The overall St Richards House project legacy will coincide with the tentative May Flower 400 celebrations being planned for June 2020. The display equipment was successfully collected, transported and delivered during

Friday and Saturday 7 & 8 June 2019. The Town Clerk confirmed that the Royal Academy have been thanked for their generosity and support. It is hoped to maintain a good working relationship with the Royal Academy for the future including an invitation for their representatives to visit our Centre to coincide with the tentative May Flower 400 anniversary plans.

RESOLVED That the display equipment acquisition be noted and appreciation is conveyed to the Royal Academy of Arts for their generous support.

34. CHRISTMAS LIGHTS SWITCH ON – 23 NOVEMBER 2019.

The Town Clerk updated that Pursuant to minute no. 183 of the Community and Amenities meeting held on 14 January 2019 a delegation comprising the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Officers of the Town Council will meet during August to confirm the event arrangements. This will include entertainment and the details of the festive lighting contract. Full details of the programme will be provided at the Community and Amenities meeting on 9th September 2019. It was also noted that the lights were being turned on 1 week earlier in 2019 due to the calendar of the last Saturday of the month falling later and to enable full value for money during the Festive period build up.

Councillor RJ Morris requested that a media advert be arranged to encourage ideas and participation from interested Community Groups with regard to the arrangements being planned for the Christmas Lights Switch On event.

RESOLVED That the arrangements for the annual Christmas Lights Switch On event to be held on 23 November 2019 be delegated to the Chairman & Vice Chairman of the Community & Amenities Committee supported by DSTC Officers to accord with previous years. To include a media advert to encourage community ideas, involvement and feedback.

The meeting concluded at 7.35 pm

Chairman of Committee
1 July 2019

Chairman of Council
17 June 2019