

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Environment and Amenities Committee held at 7:00pm on Tuesday 16 February 2016, at Ashington Town Hall, 65 Station Road, Ashington, NE63 8RX.

PRESENT:

Councillors: Marjorie Chambers (Vice-Chair) Louis Brown
Vicky Brown Avril Chisholm
Stephen Fenwick Mark Purvis
Pauline Thompson

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mike Slaughter – Town Clerk
Stephen Humphrey – Funding & Projects Officer
Sue Coulthard – Snr. Admin. Officer
Members of the Public – 0

E&A16/297 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Les Alderson, Victor Bridges, Keith Chambers, Glyn Davies, Lawrence Henderson, Maggie Lang, Kris Lavery, Liam Lavery, Wyn Stewart, Ely Turnbull and Bob Walkinshaw.

E&A16/298 2. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Cllrs. Louis Brown and Marjorie Chambers made disclosures of personal and prejudicial interest with regard to any discussions relating to allotments.

E&A16/299 3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2015 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

E&A16/300 4. MATTERS ARISING

E&R15/289 Ashington Neighbourhood Services Partnership:
The Town Clerk reminded members that this matter had been

discussed in detail as part of the Town Council's budget preparation process which had begun in November 2015, Members were reminded that it had been agreed that a new Neighbourhood Services Group be established up to look at the way the Partnership should operate and be monitored in the future.

It was confirmed that the town council representatives on the Neighbourhood Services Group would be Cllrs. Marjorie Chambers, Louis Brown, Keith Chambers and Kris Lavery.

E&R15/291 Ashington Memorial Garden: Cllr. L Brown stated that the Memorial Garden Project was seen as a success story in the town and reported that he had often seen people walking in the garden, looking at the memorial and taking the time to read the new interpretation panels.

The Town Clerk reported that the two new additional memorial seats had been delivered and were now in place in the memorial Garden (Ashington Town Council and Royal Hussars). Members were informed that work had been commenced on two new interpretation panels for the entrance to the garden, one giving general background information on the project with a list of funders and the other providing information on the history of Ashington's War Memorials.

The Town Clerk added that once the outstanding elements of the project were completed, including the dedicated web page and video of the re-dedication service, a full project evaluation report would be completed and the final contribution from the Heritage Lottery would be requested. The Town Clerk informed members that there would be a six-month assessment of the capital works with the principal contractor Brambledown Landscape Services to identify and correct any agreed remedial work before the final contract payment (release of retention).

E&R15/294 Review of Public Convenience Provision: The Town Clerk reported that nothing had yet been received from Northumberland County Council following the Town Council's response to the flawed proposal to look to close the Milburn Road public conveniences.

E&R16/301 5. ALLOTMENTS

The Town Clerk reported on the following matters:-

- (i) **Nursery Park Allotments:** Members were informed that since inheriting the 17 plots on this allotment site in 2010, the Town Council had kept the annual rent at £65 per plot. The Town Clerk reported that this resulted in a gross annual income of £900 (after discounts) with the Town Council meeting the cost of water rates, revenue maintenance and provision of skips for gardening waste. Members were reminded that capital works had been funded from the overall allotment capital programme provision. The Town Clerk recommended to members that allotment rent for 2016/17 remain at the same level, with the current 25% discount for plot-holders over 65 years of age.

- (i) **Allotment Capital Programme 2015-17:** The Town Clerk circulated the Summary of Capital Works carried out on allotments sites from April 2015 to January 2016. Members attention was drawn to the fact that since April 2013, in excess of £102k had been spent on capital works within the town's allotments sites with 55% of that total cost secured from external funding sources and approx 9% being provided by individual allotments associations.

- (ii) **Establishment of an Allotments Appeals Panel:** The Town Clerk explained that in 2011, when new Tenancy Agreements (Devolved Management Agreements) had been drawn up between the Town Council and each of the Allotment Associations, nothing in those agreements gave the Town Council the specified right as the landlord to have the final say or to mediate in disputes between the associations and individual plot-holders. Members were informed however that on two previous occasions the Town Council had specifically been asked to arrange and hear appeals and to make recommendations in relation to disputes between an Allotment Association and individual plot-holders.

The Town Clerk reported that he was currently in lengthy correspondence with two separate allotments associations regarding disputes involving four individual plot-holders; two at High Market Allotments Site and two at Seaton Hirst Allotments Site. Members were informed that the Allotment

Associations and the plot-holders concerned had been unable to reach satisfactory agreement and the Town Council had been requested to intervene to resolve the ongoing issues.

The Town Clerk recommended that the Town Council establish a formal Allotments Appeal Panel for such events and appoint three nominated representatives to hear any appeals. The Town Clerk reported that he would also review the position after the current appeals had been resolved with a view to informing the Allotment Associations that in circumstances where the Town Council was formally asked to intervene, the recommendations made would be binding decisions.

Resolved:

That:-

- (i) The 2016/17 rental charge for allotments on the Nursery Park Allotment Site be agreed at £65 per annum,**
- (ii) A 25% discount on the rental charge be made for a plot-holder over 65 years of age; and that**
- (iii) A formal Allotments Appeal Panel be established the membership to be Cllrs. Mark Purvis, Avril Chisholm and Vicky Brown.**

E&R16/302 6. HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND – HIRST PARK REVIVAL PROJECT

The Town Clerk reported on the progress of the County Council's "Hirst Park Revival" Project. Members were informed that a first round application to the Heritage Lottery Fund had been successful in securing £138,300 in order to help further develop the full detailed project to a second round application in autumn 2016.

The Town Clerk explained that at present both he and the Funding & Project Officer attended meetings of the Project Steering Group and it was clear that the work would involve considerable officer time commitment leading up to the submission of the full application. Members were informed that it was likely that the Town

Council would be asked to undertake much of the consultation and communication work that would entail writing and circulating newsletters/flyers throughout the town, a key part of the project development stage.

The Town Clerk stated that the Town Council had been asked to formally nominate a representative to be part of the Project Steering Group. Members were asked to consider the request.

Resolved:

That Cllr. Marjorie Chambers represent Ashington Town Council on the Hirst Park Revival Project Steering Group.

E&R16/303 7. BUS SHELTER CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Town Clerk reminded members that capital works had been carried out to provide new and/or replacement bus shelters at the Elephant, Briardene, Canterbury Close (NCC funded) and the Northern Social Club during 2015. Members were informed that there was not at present a lengthy existing programme of replacements, refurbishments or new requests for bus shelters as much remedial and maintenance work had been carried out by the town council's Neighbourhood Services Officer.

Members were advised that, a site visit was to be arranged shortly with the contractor for the agreed replacement shelter opposite Bothal Cottages. Members were also informed that requests had also been received for a new shelter on Morpeth Road at Home Farm Close.

Cllr. L Brown requested that consideration be given to improvements on Alexandra Road adjacent to the Canterbury Close junction (opposite the former Coulson Park School site) as this was a recognised waiting area for the bus stop, but there was currently no hard-standing or shelter.

Resolved:

That:

- (i) The Town Clerk be authorised and delegated to arrange site visits with the contractor and to**

complete work for new shelters at:

- **Morpeth Road (High Farm Close)**
- **High Market (Opposite Bothal Cottages)**

(ii) The cost of the capital works be met from the Bus Shelters budget provision in 2015/16.

E&R16/304 8. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There were no other items of urgent business.

E&R16/305 9. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Environment and Amenities Committee was arranged for Tuesday, 12 April 2016, at 6:00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Ashington.

The meeting closed at 8.15pm.