

# **SEDGEFIELD TOWN COUNCIL**

## **ENVIRONMENT**

Minutes of the proceedings of the **FEBRUARY ENVIRONMENT** of the **Council** held following the Community Development and Engagement committee in the **Council Offices**, Advice & Information Centre, Sedgefield, on **Monday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2015**.

**Present**                      **Cllr. Mel Carr (Chairman) and**  
Cllrs. David Brown, Mark Cant, Lynne Dentith, Chris Lines, Ian Sutherland, Alf Walton, Dudley Waters

**Officer**                      Dr. Jane Ayre (Town Clerk)

**1. Apologies**

Cllrs Vanessa Carmichael, Tim Jeanes, John Robinson, Maxine Robinson and Gloria Wills

**2. Declaration of interest**

Cllr Ian Sutherland declared an interest in Item 5.4 as a member of Sedgefield In Bloom.

Cllr Mel Carr, Chairman, proposed that two Emergency Items be added to the agenda for consideration after Public Participation:

- The Hope Inn planning application;
- The unauthorized encampment on Old Stockton Road

**RESOLVED:**

**These Emergency Items would be included on the agenda.**

**3. Matters of Information**

**3.1. Pizza Castle:**

DCC own this land. The Clerk has again contacted DCC requesting this area be kept tidy and highlighted Environmental Health concerns. DCC have now acknowledged receipt of STC's request and are investigating this issue. The Clerk to keep Cllrs informed of progress in this matter.

**RESOLVED:**

**To receive this information.**

**3.2. Cemetery Recycling Bays:**

Following discussions with the Gardening Supervisor, and when considering the Council's required work to start to consider the development of the new area of the cemetery, it is more effective to leave the recycling bays in their existing location and over time consider the addition of other bays at the rear, i.e. between the current bays and the newly installed fence.

Repairs to the vandalized bays is anticipated to take place the last week in March 2015. The Council's insurers have been informed of this matter. The Clerk to inform Cllrs when this work has been completed.

**RESOLVED:**

**To receive this information.**

**3.3. Electricity Supplies – Village Green and Lychgate:**

Cllr Alf Walton and Mrs Angela Simpson have prepared an Options Report detailing all possible options to supply electricity to the Village Green and Lychgate. This Report will be considered at the Estates Working Group meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2015 when it will be determined which options can be rejected outright and which should be developed further to a detailed specification and quotations obtained. This will ensure an appropriate recommendation is brought back to a future P&R Committee in order to address this matter.

**RESOLVED:**

**To receive this information and to close this matter.**

**3.4. Northumbrian Water / North End Grass Verge:**

There has been no change to that reported previously, i.e. a summary of the history of this issue has been sent to County Cllr John Robinson for further investigation with DCC. The Council's Gardening Supervisor continues to monitor the area on a weekly basis and his findings will be considered at the next Open Spaces Working Group meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2015. Cllrs confirmed that the holes have not re-

appeared, however, it was felt this was perhaps due to the recent cold spell and the ground being frozen.

**RESOLVED:**

**To receive this information.**

**3.5. Sedgefield Cemetery:**

No response has yet been received to the letter of enquiry submitted to Mr Gerard Darby regarding the gifting or asset transfer of land/footpath running between the cemetery and allotments plus the actual Butterwick Allotments and triangular piece of land nearby. The Estates Working Group to consider Mr Darby's response when received and to report back to a future Environment Committee meeting.

**RESOLVED:**

**To receive this information.**

**3.6. Eden Drive Play Area – Deep Water Sign:**

The Clerk has submitted a request to DCC (via Mr Craig Fowler) for a financial donation towards the cost of this sign. No response has yet been received. The Clerk has issued a follow-up request. The Clerk to keep Cllrs informed regarding this matter.

**RESOLVED:**

**To receive this information.**

**3.7. Crown Lifting at Mitford Court:**

The Clerk is awaiting confirmation from AW Treecare as to when they will be able to undertake this work. Once known the Clerk will write to residents informing them of the current situation. The Clerk to keep Cllrs informed regarding this matter.

**RESOLVED:**

**To receive this information.**

**3.8. Trees Outside 19 North End:**

This matter was discussed under Item 5.5.

**3.9. Seat on Wykes Close:**

The Clerk and Mr Paul Todd of Livin have drafted and sent a letter to Mr & Mrs Barron regarding their recent concerns about noise and anti-social behavior coming from this area. The Clerk reported that further correspondence from Mr & Mrs Barron would be discussed under Item 6.2.

The Clerk has written to Mr Quinn to arrange a meeting to discuss options for a memorial bench in this area. The Clerk reported that the Bloom Group, Bishop Auckland College and Livin had met on-site earlier that day to agree a re-design for this area of the Town. The Clerk to keep Cllrs informed regarding this matter.

**RESOLVED:**

**To receive this information.**

**3.10. Noise Complaints re: Parish Hall:**

The Estates Working Group met on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2015 to consider the recent health check reports commissioned for the Parish Hall. Due to the findings priority had been given to plumbing and heating matters. Investigations are now underway regarding noise, sound and soundproofing. The Clerk to keep Cllrs informed regarding this matter.

**RESOLVED:**

**To receive this information.**

**3.11. Planning Applications:**

A formal letter of complaint has been issued to DCC regarding the on-going situation at Spring Lane.

A letter of objection to the current Spring Lane planning application has been submitted to DCC. Spring Lane residents have been made aware of this application.

DCC Planners have been informed the Town Council has no objections to the installation of artwork at Thurlow Grange.

Cllr David Brown expressed his dissatisfaction with the length of time which DCC take to respond to, and action, requests from the Town Council and felt this service was inadequate.

**RESOLVED:**

**To receive this information.**

**3.12. Headstone Safety Testing:**

This matter was discussed under Item 5.3.

**3.13. Parking Outside Hope Inn and Betting Shop:**

Investigations are on-going in this matter. The Clerk to keep Cllrs informed.

**RESOLVED:**

**To receive this information.**

**3.14. Letter from Ms Dobson:**

Specialist tree advice has been sought. This matter was discussed under Item 5.5.

**3.15. Sedgefield In Bloom:**

The Bloom Group have been informed they can install a plaque at the front of the Parish Hall.

**RESOLVED:**

**To receive this information and close this matter.**

**3.16. Tenders – Cemetery Lodge:**

The unsuccessful tenders have been informed. The successful tender has been appointed and work has now commenced in the Lodge. The Clerk will now liaise with Dowens to start arrangements to re-let the property. The Clerk to keep Cllrs informed regarding this matter.

**RESOLVED:**

**To receive this information.**

#### **4. Public Participation**

The Chairman, Cllr Mel Carr, closed the meeting for the public to give their views and comments.

Mr John Merrington expressed his concerns regarding the current traveller encampment on Old Stockton Road. In his opinion this site is costing money as toilets are being provided and there will be clean-up costs. Mr Merrington has been monitoring the site and as a result felt that DCC had prior knowledge of this encampment because DCC's Liaison Officer was seen on-site prior to the travellers arrival.

Mrs Julia Bowles stated that many years ago when Beacon Lane was blocked off the Residents Forum had asked DCC to be more vigilant in Sedgefield in order to stop encampments being established in other areas. She felt DCC had not done this.

The meeting was then re-opened.

#### **Emergency Additional Item: The unauthorized encampment on Old Stockton Road:**

Cllr Mel Carr referred to an email forwarded to the Town Council by County Cllr Rachel Lumsdon (which had been circulated electronically by the Clerk to all Cllrs). This email was from Ms Emma Rothwell, Gypsy, Roma and Travellers Officer for DCC sent at 07:47 on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2015. This email details that Gypsy, Roma and Travellers Service (GRTS) have been advised that day of an Unauthorised Encampment at the Old Stockton Road. The GRTS had arranged to make a joint visit with Neighbourhood Wardens that week to make initial enquiries, take trailer details and commence welfare enquiries. No further update has been received since this initial message, however, Mr John Merrington has forwarded to Cllr Mel Carr photographic evidence of criminal damage to the wooden fence in this location when travellers were last present at the site which indicates that the fence was cut through as a means of exiting the site. Mr Merrington confirmed that he had kept a list of dates and information in relation to travellers visiting this area recently and had shared this with Cllr Gloria Wills.

Cllr David Brown suggested that a request be made to DCC Highways to have double yellow lines painted on both sides of the road in this area (in full consultation with residents in the nearby area).

#### **RESOLVED:**

- i) The Clerk to liaise with Cllr Gloria Wills to write to DCC's GRTS requesting what**

**action they have undertaken in relation to this particular Unauthorised Encampment, the findings from their recent enquiries and their future actions for this area of the Town. A copy of this letter will also be submitted to the GRTS ultimate Corporate Director.**

**ii) The Clerk to write to DCC Highways.**

***Emergency Additional Item: The Hope Inn Planning Application:***

Cllr Mel Carr reported that at the Council's Monthly Meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2015 planning application DM/15/00233/FPA had been considered. This related to the erection of extension to rear of Public House, including demolition of existing extensions and refurbishment of property and the erection of two dwellings to rear (resubmission), Hope Inn, Front Street. The Council had identified a number of material considerations upon which they wished to object to the two dwellings, however, no specific request had been made to call this application in for consideration by Full Planning Committee.

**RESOLVED:**

- i) A request be made to County Councillor John Robinson to call this planning application in for consideration by Full Planning Committee.**
- ii) The Clerk to submit to DCC Planners a letter of objection detailing the Town Council's material considerations and the request application to be called in.**

**5. Reports**

**5.1 Church Turning Circle Refurbishment Update – Verbal Report by Cllr Mel Carr**

Cllr Mel Carr reported the Church Turning Circle Refurbishment contractor has been informed of two minor points which require attention, i.e. a small hole at the left hand side at the entrance which requires filling and the need for some more fine sand to be applied to fill some of the gaps between the blocks. The contractor has confirmed that this work will be done as soon as possible, however, the paving will need to be totally dry to allow further sanding. Cllrs confirmed they were happy with this update and felt that it would be appropriate to continue to monitor the area over the coming months.

**RESOLVED:**

**To receive this information.**

**5.2 Grass Cutting – Verbal Report by Cllr Mel Carr and Town Clerk**

Cllr Mel Carr reported that the 2015/16 grass cutting season is due to start. Discussions between the Chair of the Environment Committee, the Town Clerk and the Gardening Supervisor had found the Town Council currently do not have a clear

specification as to grass cutting requirements. It is recommended that as a competitive tendering process was undertaken in 2014/15, and CE & CM Walker Ltd, were not only the most competitive but also have been used for many years by the Town Council providing a high quality service that their services should be retained for 2015/16. The Clerk is to request a revised quotation from CE & CM Walker Ltd in relation to Sedgefield Cemetery to determine the potential additional costs for:

- a) increasing the frequency of cuts in Sedgefield Cemetery to weekly with the contractor using the same equipment as in 2014/15;
- b) keeping the same frequency of cuts in Sedgefield Cemetery as in 2014/15 but using smaller machinery with collection boxes to retain the grass cuttings;

A further competitive tendering process should be undertaken for the 2016/17 grass cutting season which will be based upon the Town Council providing a detailed specification of its needs and an accompanying map. The Clerk confirmed that work is already underway to collate this map which will feature both Town Council and DCC information. The Clerk also confirmed that with her experience of grass cutting costs in much smaller Parish Councils the charges by CE & CM Walker Ltd were extremely competitive.

**RESOLVED:**

- i) To appoint CE & CM Walker Ltd as the Council's Grass Cutting Contractor for 2015/16.**
- ii) The Estates Working Group to consider the revised quotation from CE & CM Walker Ltd and bring a recommendation to the next Environment Committee meeting.**

**5.3 Cemetery Update Report by Town Clerk and Gardening Supervisor**

Prior to the meeting a "Cemetery Update Report" by the Town Clerk and Gardening Supervisor had been circulated to all. This report provided Cllrs with an update on the latest position regarding Headstone Safety Testing, the Cemetery drain, levelling work, grass cutting, hedging, fencing and the recycle bays.

**RESOLVED:**

**To receive this information.**

**5.4. Sedgefield In Bloom Sponsorship Donation (Report by Clerk):**

The Clerk circulated to all Cllrs a report detailing the amount of sponsorship money collected by the Sedgefield In Bloom Group in 2014/15. As per previous years, the



Bloom Group wanted to make a donation towards the Town Council in recognition of the support they receive from the Council.

**RESOLVED:**

- i) To accept the Bloom Group's sponsorship donation of £350.**
- ii) The Clerk to liaise with Mr Howard Smith and send a letter of thanks.**

**5.5. Trees Update:**

The Clerk circulated to all Cllrs a report providing an update in relation to the following on-going tree matters:

- Yew tree in St Edmund's Churchyard;
- Lime, London Plane and Sycamore outside 19 North End;
- Stump grinding in St Edmund's Churchyard;
- Lime outside 31/33 Front Street

**RESOLVED:**

- i) To accept all the recommendations contained in the Report.**
- ii) The Clerk to now action these recommendations.**

**6. Correspondence**

**6.1. Sedgefield In Bloom – Proposed 700 Bed Design 2015:**

The Clerk circulated amongst Cllrs the design which the Sedgefield In Bloom Group are proposing for the 700 Bed in 2015.

**RESOLVED:**

- i) To approve this design.**
- ii) The Clerk to inform Mr Howard Smith of this decision.**

**6.2. Letters from Mr & Mrs Barron, Wykes Close (3<sup>rd</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> February 2015):**

The Clerk circulated amongst Cllrs copies of letters received from Mr & Mrs Barron of Wykes Close. Their letter of 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2015 acknowledged receipt of the Town Council's letter and confirmed they are already in contact with both Livin and the Police. In their letter of 9<sup>th</sup> February 2015 Mr & Mrs Barron have forwarded a recent Northern Echo article regarding the Police seizing alcohol from under-age drinkers in the Town. The Clerk confirmed that copies of both these letters had been sent to Mr

Paul Todd of Livin and Sgt Alex Clarke of Durham Constabulary. Both Mr Todd and Sgt Clarke confirmed they are already aware of Mr & Mrs Barron's concerns and are monitoring this situation.

**RESOLVED:**

**To receive this information and to close this matter.**

**6.3. Reviewing Timings of Future Environment Committee Meetings (request from member of the public):**

The Clerk reported that a member of the public has requested the Town Council consider switching the starting times of the Environment Committee and the Community Development & Engagement Committee.

**RESOLVED:**

**From May 2015 the starting times of the Environment Committee and the Community Development & Engagement Committee would alternate on a monthly basis and this would be clearly displayed on the 2015/16 Dates and Times of Meeting Calendar.**

**7. Financial Position: Environment Committee**

**RESOLVED:**

**To approve the Environment Committee Financial Position.**

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.41p.m.