

SEDFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT

Minutes of the proceedings of the **MARCH ENVIRONMENT** of the **Council** held following the Community Development and Engagement committee in the **Council Offices**, Advice & Information Centre, Sedgfield, on **Monday 16th March 2015**.

Present

Cllr. Mel Carr (Chairman) and

Cllrs. Allan Blakemore, Mark Cant, Ian Sutherland, Alf Walton, Dudley Waters, Gloria Wills

Officer

Dr. Jane Ayre (Town Clerk)

1. Apologies

Cllrs. David Brown, Vanessa Carmichael, Lynne Dentith, Rebecca Hagan, Tim Jeanes, Chris Lines, John Robinson, Maxine Robinson

2. Declaration of interest

None.

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 the Town Council's request and are investing this issue. The Town Council have asked for a further update, however, no has been received as yet. The Clerk to keep Cllrs informed of progress in this matter.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information.

3.2. Cemetery Recycling Bays:

The repairs to the vandalized recycling bays in the cemetery are hoped to be

repaired by Mr Brian Pike in late March 2015. The Council's insurers have been informed of this matter. The Clerk to inform Cllrs when this work has been completed.

RESOLVED:

- i) **To receive this information.**
- ii) **The Clerk to liaise with the Gardening Supervisor to determine if the recycling bays need to be emptied before this repair work and if so whether a skip is required.**

3.3. North End Grass Verge:

This matter was considered at the Open Spaces Working Group meeting on 24th February 2015 when Mr Stephen Young presented the findings of his weekly monitoring. Holes are reappearing. A meeting has been requested with DCC Highways Inspector in the first instance so that any future action can be requested on a joint basis. The Clerk to keep Cllrs updated on this matter.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information.

3.4. Sedgefield Cemetery:

DCC are continuing to process the Town Council's request regarding the gifting or asset transfer from DCC to the Town Council of land/footpath running between the cemetery and the allotments which was the former entrance to the College. This letter also requested the same in relation to Butterwick Allotments and the triangular piece of land between the Allotments and Butterwick Lane. The Estates Working Group to consider DCC's response when received and to report back to a future Environment Committee meeting.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information.

3.5. Eden Drive Play Area – Deep Water Sign:

No response has yet been received from DCC regarding their potential financial donation towards the cost of this sign or their availability to install this sign on behalf

of the Town Council.

RESOLVED:

- i) **To request advice from Mr Craig Fowler as to the appropriate location for this sign.**
- ii) **To request Mr Brian Pike to install this sign when undertaking repair work at the recycle bays in the cemetery.**

3.6. Crown Lifting at Mitford Court:

AW Treecare have informed the Clerk that they plan to carry out this work on 24th March 2015 (weather dependent). Letters from the Town Council to residents at Mitford Court are now being prepared informing them of this work. The Clerk to inform Cllrs when this work has been completed.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information.

3.7. Seat on Wykes Close:

Mr Quinn has thanked the Town Council and Livin for the offer of a memorial bench at the wildflower area of the town, however, after much thought he feels a more central location would be a more fitting tribute to his daughter. Mr Quinn's contact details have been placed on the Council's seating waiting list.

This issue will be discussed further under agenda item 6.2.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information and to close this matter.

3.8. Noise Complaints re: Parish Hall:

With regard to exploring options for potentially dealing with noise leakage, the Clerk met with FloorScan on Tuesday 10th March 2015. FloorScan will in turn produce a recommendations report which will be considered by the Estates Working Group.

Cllr Gloria Wills reported that she has given to the Clerk some historical documentation relating to the Parish Hall prior to its refurbishment which may be

useful in any future discussions regarding this matter.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information.

3.9. Parking Outside Hope Inn and Betting Shop:

Investigations relating to the rights of way/village green issues in this area are on-going. Through the Open Spaces Working Group the Clerk is liaising with a DCC Officer with specialism in village green matters in order to investigate this issue. The Clerk to keep Cllrs informed. Cllr Mark Cant commented that these findings may potentially impact upon access to the Hope Inn car park.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information.

3.10. Tenders – Cemetery Lodge:

The internal decorating at Cemetery Lodge has now been completed and work is well underway to complete the exterior. Once the exterior has been finished an appointment will be made with Dowens for them to photograph the property and start the letting process with a clear plan detailing the Town Council's gardening staff buildings, their WC, car park and yard areas.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information and to close this matter.

3.11. Unauthorised Encampment on Old Stockton Road:

The Clerk had written to DCC requesting an urgent update on their actions and findings in relation to this site plus their future anticipated actions. Cllr Gloria Wills reported that she has, as an individual, been in discussions with Ms Emma Rothwell of DCC's Gypsy Roma Traveller Service and requested a site meeting at Old Stockton Road. Cllr Wills has also requested that the Town Clerk be invited to attend this meeting as this matter is now being actively discussed by the Council. Ms Rothwell has indicated that such a meeting will be scheduled within the next 2 weeks.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information.

3.12. Sedgefield In Bloom Sponsorship Donation:

The Clerk has informed the Bloom Group the Town Council wishes to accept their donation of £350 and thanked them for this.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information and to close this matter.

3.13. Trees Update:

The Clerk has now actioned all the recommendations agreed in relation to the Yew tree in St Edmund's Churchyard and the trees outside 19 North End.

Tenders for stump grinding in St Edmund's Churchyard and work on the lime tree outside 31/33 Front Street will be discussed later in the meeting.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information.

3.14. Sedgefield In Bloom – 700 Bed:

The Bloom Group have been informed that the Town Council support their proposed 700 Bed design for 2015.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information and to close this matter.

3.15. Timing of Future Meetings:

The meetings calendar for 2015/16 has now been circulated to all Cllrs and reflects the start times of the Environment and Community Development & Engagement meetings will alternate each month with effect from May 2015.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information and to close this matter.

Cllr Mel Carr, Chairman, reminded Cllrs that it had been agreed at the Monthly meeting held on 9th March 2015 to consider the Hartlepool Borough Council consultation exercise in relation to the New Dwellings Outside of Development Limits SPC. It was agreed to consider this after Public Participation.

RESOLVED:

This additional item would be included on the agenda.

4. Public Participation

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

Mr Howard Smith thanked the Town Council, and in particular Cllr Gloria Wills, for all the work in trying to resolve the issues being experienced at Old Stockton Road. Mr Smith felt it was ironic these problems were being experienced whilst DCC are undergoing a substantial anti-fly tipping campaign. Mr Smith felt the fencing in this area should be replaced as currently the site is too accessible. When travellers are in residence in this area it becomes a “no go” area for local residents. Mr Smith said he would be extremely interested to obtain from DCC information regarding the exact costs incurred by the Council during the last two periods of unauthorised encampments. He also expressed annoyance that in the days of vehicle registration identity technology that no prosecutions/recharges could be made/levied to those responsible for such damage. There is very high feeling within the town regarding this matter.

Mr Smith also expressed his increasing concerns regarding the Pizza Castle. He reported that yet another bin has arrived which already adds to the significant eyesore problems caused in this area. In addition, there is evidence of rat holes on the church bank with some rats of a significant size having been seen. Grease is running down the exterior walls of the property from the extractor fan and this is all within the heart of the town's Conservation Area. Mr Smith felt it was important the shop owners took on board their considerable environmental responsibilities.

The meeting was then re-opened.

The Chair thanked Mr Smith for his comments. The Clerk suggested that as the Town Council are not obtaining any response from DCC in relation to complaints previously submitted (see 3.1 above) it would be more appropriate for the Council to submit a formal

complaint directly to Mrs Joanne Waller, DCC Head of Environment, Health and Consumer Protection.

Cllr Gloria Wills reminded Cllrs that in other locations screening equipment is used very successfully to hide eyesore areas, however, this would not overcome the environmental concerns. With regard to Old Stockton Road there are some concerns that people illegally staying at this site are not genuine travellers. In addition, many nearby residents are extremely annoyed that the fencing which has recently been damaged was only installed relatively recently. Cllr Wills expressed the view that this area should be closed and yellow lines put down with appropriately spaced bolders.

Cllr Dudley Waters suggested the Council request DCC place one of their covert CCTV camera in this area to obtain evidence of fly tipping.

RESOLVED:

- i) The Clerk to submit to DCC an official complaint regarding Pizza Castle.**
- ii) The Clerk to submit to DCC a request to have a covert CCTV camera placed on Old Stockton Road to obtain evidence of fly tipping.**

ADDITIONAL ITEM – HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL CONSULTATION EXERCISE:

The Clerk reminded Cllrs that at the last Monthly meeting held on 9th March 2015 Cllrs information had been circulated to all regarding Hartlepool Borough Council's consultation exercise in relation to the New Dwellings Outside of Development Limits SPC. It had been agreed by all Cllrs that time was required to consider this document (which was available on-line) and then discuss at this Environment Committee meeting. The Clerk explained that she had been unable to access the document via Hartlepool Borough Council's website and a follow-up telephone conversation had found the Borough Council was having difficulties with its website which would not be resolved for a week.

RESOLVED:

This matter to be placed on the April 2015 P&R Committee agenda when copies of the documentation had been obtained.

5. Reports

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

This matter had already been discussed and resolved at the earlier Special P&R

Committee meeting held that evening.

5.2 Cemetery Update Report by Town Clerk and Gardening Supervisor

The Clerk circulated to all a Cemetery Update Report prepared by herself and the Gardening Supervisor. This gave the latest position with regard to the headstone safety testing, the on-going levelling work, the cemetery hedging and the bier. Cllr Mel Carr reported that with regard to the cemetery hedging work he had been approached by a member of the public who had thanked the Council for this work and the considerable improvement it had made to the cemetery.

RESOLVED:

- i) To receive this information.**
- ii) The Clerk and Gardening Supervisor to bring a detailed report regarding headstone safety testing to the April 2015 Environment Committee meeting.**

5.3 Parking in Sedgefield – Verbal Report by Cllr Ian Sutherland

Cllr Ian Sutherland expressed his concerns regarding the problem of parking in Sedgefield. He felt this problem was particularly prevalent in the mornings and he considered there was not enough parking in the centre of the town. Cllr Sutherland stated he did not want to see any further parking restrictions in the town but would instead like to see some of the current restrictions lifted. He went on to summarise a recent newspaper article detailing Mr Eric Pickles current work to review rules on parking restrictions so that penalties are not issued so quickly. Cllr Mel Carr added that powers will be handed to residents and businesses allowing them to request a review of parking arrangements. This would force local authorities to make a safety case for reviewing measures such as double yellow lines or remove them. This is expected to gain Royal Assent very soon and that councils cannot be seen to be making a profit from parking enforcement.

Cllr Gloria Wills stated that the Draft Sedgefield Plan contains a policy to time limit parking within the Parish Hall Car Park. She also pointed out that during the early stages of developing the Plan the Steering Group did have a Car Parking Group which was tasked to consider the issue of parking within the town. They gathered some consideration information and this would provide a very good starting point from which to consider this matter further.

Cllr Allan Blakemore stated that in his opinion no-one has yet researched the real

problem underpinning parking in the town. Cars appear to be parked all over the town and yet certain areas such as the Co-op car park are standing empty. This suggests that people park next to where is most convenient for them. He suggested the Open Spaces Working Group considers what facilities are already available in the town but which are not being utilized. This work should also focus beyond the town centre area and consider Bolams, Sainsburys etc.

RESOLVED:

- i) **The Clerk to obtain from the Sedgefield Plan Steering Group information produced by its Car Parking Group.**
- ii) **This matter to be considered at a future Open Spaces Working Group with a report being brought back to a future Environment Committee meeting detailing options for how to improve the current situation.**

5.4. DCC Eden Drive Play Area Inspection Report (January 2015)

Prior to the meeting a copy of DCC's Eden Drive Play Area Inspection Report for January 2015 had been circulated to all Cllrs.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information.

5.5. Delivering Differently in Neighbourhoods – Verbal Report by Town Clerk

The Clerk reported that she had recently attended the Local Councils Working Group (LCWG) meeting at Seaham at which Mr Oliver Sheratt, DCC Head of Direct Services had given a presentation regarding the “Delivering Differently In Neighbourhoods” project. In late 2014 DCC and CDALC submitted a joint bid to DCLG to obtain £90,000 for Clean and Green Services. The rationale for this bid was that DCC and the Local Parish Councils in County Durham already have a good track record of working together. This project aims to further boost the amount of collaboration in order to reduce costs, improve the environment and raise resident satisfaction. It may involve better co-ordination on services such as grounds maintenance and winter footpath clearance or involve the transfer of land to more local control. The project will also aim to promote the good practice already going on, both locally and nationally. This bid was successful and awarded the full £90,00 which will be allocated as follows:

- Large Urban Council Category – available £20,000
- Large Rural Council Category – available £20,000

- Cluster of Smaller Councils Category – available £20,000
- CDALC Administration and Promotion costs £10,000
- Independent baseline assessment work to promote good practice regionally/nationally £20,000

The next steps are:

- DCC to prepare a draft offer document to be shared with CDALC which sets out the three pilots and invites proposals from Town and Parish Councils;
- Send out the agreed offer document to all CDALC members;
- Small task group made up of LCWG members to meet and assess proposals received;
- Proposed pilot Town and Parish Councils formally agreed by LCWG;
- In parallel to this Mr Gordon Elliott (DCC) will liaise with the Institute for Local Governance regarding the Best Value evaluation work.

The Clerk had already outlined this project to Mrs Angela Simpson and Mr Stephen Young. Mr Young had suggested that when the exact criteria is known it could be useful for the Council to consider the issue of self-watering equipment.

RESOLVED:

- i) **To receive this information.**
- ii) **The Clerk to keep Cllrs updated as more information is received.**

6. Correspondence

6.1. Operation Stop It – DCC Anti-Fly Tipping Campaign (emails Mr Steve Ragg and Mr Oliver Sherratt dated 20th February 2015)

Prior to the meeting copies of emails from Mr Steve Ragg (CDALC) and Mr Oliver Sherratt (DCC) detailing DCC's anti-fly tipping campaign "Operation Stop It" had been circulated to all.

Cllr Allan Blakemore expressed his concern that this represents in effect a third level of taxation being imposed upon Town and Parish Councils.

Cllrs agreed that it would be extremely useful to request DCC place such a camera, at their own expense, at Old Stockton Road (as per the suggestion by Cllr Dudley Waters in 4 above.

RESOLVED:

i) **To receive this information.**

ii) **Cllr Gloria Wills and the Clerk to submit a verbal request to DCC to have a covert CCTV camera placed on Old Stockton Road to obtain evidence of fly tipping (this request to be made during the on-site meeting with DCC Officers).**

6.2 Request for Memorial Bench (letter from Swales family received 23rd February 2015)

Prior to the meeting copies of a letter from the Swales family (received 23rd February 2015) requesting a memorial bench in the Town for their parents had been circulated to all. The Clerk reported that following her conversation with Mr Quinn (discussed earlier in item 3.7.) the wild flower location had been offered to the Swales family and a site meeting is to be arranged with them later this month. The Clerk to keep Cllrs updated on this matter.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information.

6.3. Brett Landscaping Press Release

Cllr Mel Carr reported that the PR Manager from Brett Landscaping would like the Town Council's approval to put out a press release regarding the materials supplied and advice given in relation to the recent Church Turning Circle work. The release would focus on the issues of improving mobility for wheelchair and pushchair users. In addition, reference will also be made to the suitability of products used when considering the location of the Church and the Conservation Area. Such a press release would be distributed to relevant trade titles and would not be issued without prior comment and approval from the Town Council.

RESOLVED:

To give approval to Brett Landscaping for such a press release and the wording to be approved by the Clerk and Chair of the Environment Committee.

6.4. Willow Tree at Malton Terrace (request from Sedgefield In Bloom Group)

The Clerk informed Cllrs that Mr Howard Smith had reported concerns regarding a Kilmarnock Willow in the centre of the grassed area at Malton Terrace where the Herb Garden is located (on land owned by the Town Council). This tree is leaning over at an angle and concerns were expressed by Bloom Judges last year regarding it being unsightly and past its best. The Bloom Group would like to remove the tree and

replace it with a new one. There would be no cost to the Town Council as the Bloom Group would provide the labour and Mrs Barbara Smith would donate a new tree. The Bloom Group would like the Town Council's approval for this in order to carry out the work before the tree growing season starts.

RESOLVED:

The Clerk to inform the Bloom Group of the Town Council's approval for the removal of the existing willow tree and to thank them and Mrs Barbara Smith for the donation and planting of a replacement tree.

6.5. List of Goods for Sale from Sedgefield Community College

Cllr Mel Carr informed Committee members that Sedgefield Community College are currently selling off goods and chattels from the former farm site. A list of items has been produced.

RESOLVED:

The Clerk to circulate amongst Cllrs, the Gardening Supervisor, the Sedgefield In Bloom Group and the Sedgefield Sowers & Growers Group the list of items available for sale.

7. Financial Position: Environment Committee

RESOLVED:

To approve the Environment Committee Financial Position.

Cllr Carr explained that due to the confidential nature of the following items these would be discussed under Exempt Information and as such members of the press and public were requested to leave the meeting (Section 1 Sub Section (2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to meetings) Act 1960).

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.32pm.