

SEDGEFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT

Minutes of the proceedings of the **APRIL ENVIRONMENT** of the **Council** held following the Community Development and Engagement committee in the **Council Offices**, Advice & Information Centre, Sedgefield, on **Monday 20th April 2015.**

Present **Cllr. Mel Carr (Chairman)**
Cllr. Mark Cant (Vice Chairman) and
Cllrs. Allan Blakemore, David Brown, Lynne Dentith, Tim Jeanes, Chris Lines, Ian Sutherland, Alf Walton, Dudley Waters, Gloria Wills

Officer Dr Jane Ayre (Town Clerk)

1. Apologies

Cllrs. Vanessa Carmichael, Rebecca Hagan, John Robinson and Maxine Robinson.

2. Declaration of interest

None

Cllr Mel Carr, Chairman, informed Cllrs that it had been agreed at the Monthly Meeting held on 13th April 2015 to consider the latest position with regard to Spring Lane. In addition, DCC have since the last Monthly Meeting supplied amended information relating to the planning application for the erection of 1 no detached dwelling at land and buildings to the West of 1A The Lane, Sedgefield. Finally, an offer has been received from Downen Estate Agents in relation to Cemetery Lodge which also required consideration by the Council.

RESOLVED:

These additional items would be included after the Financial Position (agenda item 7) with the exception of Cemetery Lodge which would be considered after 8.2.

3. Matters of Information

3.1 Pizza Castle:

No response has yet been received to the letter send from the Town Council to Ms Joanne Waller of DCC regarding environmental health concerns in relation to this property as well other environmental concerns. The Clerk to keep Cllrs informed of progress in this matter.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information.

3.2 Cemetery Recycling Bays:

Mr Brian Pike has been requested to inform the Council when he will be commencing work to repair the vandalized recycle bays. Quotations are currently being sought for the cost of emptying the recycle bays at the same time as they are now getting full. Cllr Gloria Wills suggested that permanent appropriate signage is displayed alongside the recycle bays giving clear instruction as to how the bays should and should not be used. Temporary signage had been in existence previously and had proved to be very useful. It was agreed that permanent signage should be installed.

RESOLVED:

- i) To receive this information.**
- ii) The Clerk and Gardening Supervisor to arrange appropriate signage.**

3.3 North End Grass Verge:

Further to the Open Spaces Working Group meeting held on 24th February 2015 a meeting has been requested with a DCC Highways Inspector to progress this matter. A response from DCC is now awaited. 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. The 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:

The Deep Water Sign has now been fitted free of charge by DCC near to the Lake in the grounds of Ceddesfeld Hall.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information and to close this matter.

3.6 Crown Lifting at Mitford Court:

AW Treecare have now completed the crown lifting work at Mitford Court.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information and to close this matter.

3.7 Noise Complaints re: Parish Hall:

The Clerk met with FloorScan on Tuesday 10th March 2015. An options report for dealing with noise leakage is now being prepared for the Parish Hall. The Estates Working Group to consider FloorScan report when received.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information.

3.8 Parking Outside Hope Inn and Betting Shop:

Investigations are on-going in relation to this matter. Through the Open Spaces Working Group the Clerk has written to a DCC Officer with specialism in Village Green matters in order to investigate this issue. The Clerk to keep Cllrs informed.

3.8A Rectory Row/Crispen Court Parking:

Cllr Mel Carr informed the Committee that a Rectory Row resident had asked if the Town Council were aware of a proposal to apply double yellow lines and restrict parking around the Crispen Court/Rectory Row area. As a result the Town Council have contacted DCC who have stated that our enquiry has been allocated to the highways section for a response by 7th May 2015 as it is classed as being of medium priority.

3.8B Parking at Salters Lane/Bolams:

Cllr Allan Blakemore took this opportunity to update the Committee on developments since the circulation of a letter from Mr Joe McKenna the P&R Committee meeting on 13th April 2015. The Sedgefield Neighbourhood Watch Group have had their concerns regarding traffic in and around the Bolams area passed from DCC Highways to a Special No Waiting Team. The Team have explained that the option of a pedestrian crossing for this area has been declined on the grounds of an assessment undertaken in the area prior to Sainsburys having been built. The Team are prepared to look at putting yellow lines down in this area, however, this is to be explored much further as it is not the cost of painting the lines which is expensive but instead the legal costs associated with getting authorization to do this. The Neighbourhood Watch Group will continue to keep the Town Council informed.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information.

3.9 Unauthorised Encampment on Old Stockton Road:

The Clerk reported that she and Cllr Gloria Wills would be meeting with Ms Louise Stokoe of DCC's Gypsy Roma Traveller Service on 21st April 2015 to discuss this matter and report back to the May 2015 P&R Committee.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information and to close this matter.

3.10 Hartlepool Borough Council Consultation:

This matter was considered at the P&R Committee meeting on 13th April 2015.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information and to close this matter.

3.11 Cemetery Update

To be considered under Agenda 5.1.

3.12 Parking In Sedgefield:

The Clerk has obtained from the Sedgefield Plan Steering Group the information produced by its Car Park Group. A future Open Spaces Working Group meeting to consider this information and bring a recommendation back to a future Environment

Committee meeting.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information and to close this matter.

3.13 Delivering Differently In Neighbourhoods:

No further information has yet been received from DCC regarding this potential funding opportunity. The Clerk to keep Cllrs informed.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information.

3.14 Request For Memorial Bench:

The Clerk had met on 31st March 2015 met on-site with members of the Swales family to progress their request for a memorial bench. The Swales family were delighted to be offered the opportunity to have a memorial bench on Wykes Close and expressed their thanks to Livin, the Town Council and the Bloom Group. The family have now purchased a brass plaque which will be collected by Livin this week and taken to Bishop Auckland College for attachment to the memorial bench prior to it being installed at Wykes Close in the very near future.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information and to close this matter.

3.15 Willow Tree, Malton Terrace:

The Clerk has informed the Bloom Group of the Council's approval to remove the existing willow tree and thanked Mrs Barbara Smith for donating and planting a replacement.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information and to close this matter.

3.16 List of Goods For Sale – Sedgefield Community College:

The Clerk had circulated amongst all Cllrs, the Bloom Group, the Sowers & Growers Group and Mr Stephen Young the list of goods for sale by Sedgefield Community College as part of their former farm dispersal sale.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information and to close this matter.

3.17 Stump Grinding:

AW Treecare have been informed their quote has been successful and arrangements are in place to schedule this work. Unsuccessful contractors have been notified. The Clerk to inform Cllrs when this work has been undertaken.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information.

3.18 Cutting Back Lime Tree outside 31/33 Front Street:

AW Treecare have been informed their quote has been successful and work is now to be scheduled. Unsuccessful contractors have been notified. The Clerk has written to Ms Sue Dobson informing her that this work will be undertaken soon. The Clerk to inform Cllrs when this work has been undertaken.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information.

3.19 Drain Investigation at Sedgefield Cemetery:

Darnton and Young have been informed their quote has been successful and this work is due to commence on 21st April 2015. The Clerk to inform Cllrs when the work has been undertaken.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information.

Cllr David Brown expressed his increasing dissatisfaction with the service the Town Council receives from DCC. He believed that DCC response times to all Town Council requests were abysmal and this in turn was then affecting the work of the Town Council and ultimately the residents of Sedgefield in being able to progress matters or get the answers they require. Other Cllrs agreed with Cllr Brown's comment. Cllr Mark Cant suggested that the Town Council should try to keep a record of what issues and requests made to DCC along with a timescale for how long it is taking to get a response/answer and how many reminder emails/letters/telephone calls the Town Council is having to make in order to ultimately prompt a response. It was agreed that this information would be extremely useful. Cllrs felt that delays currently being experienced in relation to estates issues and environmental issues are the most problematic.

RESOLVED:

The Clerk to devise and implement an appropriate monitoring system.

4. Public Participation

The Chairman closed the meeting whilst the public gave their views and comments.

Mr Howard Smith reported that sightings of rats continue within the Town but he had witnessed earlier that day a DCC Pest Control vehicle in the Rectory Row area. Mr Smith then re-iterated his on-going concerns regarding the state of the Pizza Castle which is not only an eyesore within the Town's Conservation Area but also an environmental concern. On behalf of the Bloom Group Mr Smith informed the Council that picnic tables from the nearby licensed premises are now appearing on the Village Green. Whilst this in itself is not an issue it would be appreciated if the owners of those premises could litter pick and move tables/benches back after each weekend. Finally, Mr Smith commented that he had attended the recent P&R Committee meeting on 13th April 2015 at which the issue of the alcohol licence review relating to the Taah Convenience Stores was referenced. Whilst Mr Smith understood that it was important to ensure that such licences were being used correctly he did express his concerns that if these Stores lost such a licence it was likely that neither store would be viable and potentially go out of business. This would have massive implications upon the Town if such stores were empty.

The meeting was then re-opened. The Chair thanked Mr Smith for his comments. The Clerk confirmed that in the correspondence sent to DCC in relation to Pizza Castle clear reference was made to both the environmental concerns in relation to the Conservation Area as well as the actual environmental health concerns regarding the current status of the property. The Clerk also commented that an additional piece of correspondence had been received that day in relation to rats and would be considered under agenda item 6.3. Cllrs Dudley Waters and Ian Sutherland reported that several years ago there was a written agreement between the Town Council and owners of the Crosshills detailing the agreed use of the Village Green and its upkeep. Cllr Mel Carr confirmed that the area is in a poor state due to glasses and cigarette ends but also reported that it is likely that ownership of the Crosshills will have changed since that agreement. Cllr David Brown commented that it was important the Town Council ensures that areas of land for which it is responsible are well maintained. He highlighted the area of paths and lanes opposite the Dunn Cow which are currently in a poor state of repair and suggested the Town Council determine who actually owns this area.

RESOLVED:

- i) The Clerk to locate a copy of any previous agreement between the Town Council and the Crosshill to be considered at a future Environment Committee meeting.**
- ii) The Clerk to determine ownership of the lane/paths opposite the Dunn Cow in order that consideration can be given to the state of the kerbs and pot holes.**

5. Reports

5.1 Cemetery Update Report by Town Clerk and Gardening Supervisor (to be circulated at the meeting)

The Clerk circulated a report jointly produced by herself and the Gardening Supervisor providing Cllrs with an update on the number of headstones which remain unsafe and gives recommendation as to how these should now be dealt with. The Clerk reported that up to this point in time no member of the public has complained regarding the findings of the headstone safety testing, however, it is possible that once the process of laying headstones flat commences this may change and the Environment Committee will be kept informed.

RESOLVED:

- i) To receive the information contained in this report.**
- ii) To seek quotations from specialist memorial masons for the cost of laying down 5 Category 1 headstones.**
- iii) The Gardening Supervisor to be given authorization to commence the laying down of those Category 1 headstones which he and his Assistant are able to move.**

5.2 DCC Eden Drive Play Area Inspection Report (February 2015)

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

RESOLVED:

To receive this information.

6. Correspondence

6.1 Sedgefield In Bloom (minutes of meeting held 1st April 2015):

The Clerk circulated to all copies of the minutes of the Sedgefield In Bloom meeting

held on 1st April 2015.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information.

6.2 Winter Bedding Request (email from Mr Howard Smith dated 19th April 2015):

The Clerk read out an email from Mr Howard Smith of the Bloom Group requesting the Town Council's permission for the Bloom to use the winter bedding soon to be removed from beds and tubs by the Council's Gardening Supervisor prior to the 2015 Mediaeval Fayre.

RESOLVED:

The Clerk to inform Mr Howard Smith and the Gardening Supervisor of the Town Council's decision to give previous winter bedding stocks to the Bloom Group.

6.3 Request for Rat Boxes from SCA (letter from Mr John Robinson, SCA Secretary dated 9th April 2015):

The Clerk read out a letter from Mr John Robinson, SCA Secretary reporting sightings of rats in the grounds of Ceddesfeld Hall. The letter stated that in the past as owners and landlords the Town Council have provided rat boxes around the building via DCC in order to catch the rat. The SCA were requesting a similar action again from the Town Council. Cllr Ian Sutherland confirmed that the Town Council have provided such boxes in the past via DCC and that the boxes are still sited in the grounds of Ceddesfeld Hall. Cllr Tim Jeanes confirmed that are an issue in and around this area. Cllr Alf Walton expressed concerns that if rat boxes are to be used it is vital to ensure that no other wildlife can get in.

RESOLVED:

The Clerk to liaise with DCC to determine if the existing rat boxes can be still be used and if so how this would work and the associated costings. At this point additional options can also be considered if felt necessary with a recommendation being brought back to the next Environment Committee meeting.

6.4 Overhanging Tree – 4 Hasledon Grove, Sedgefield (email from Mr David Kime dated 1st April 2015):

Cllr Mel Carr informed the Committee that Mr David Kime of 4 Hasledon Grove had reported concerns regarding a medium size tree on Station Road Playing Field overhanging his garden. Cllr Carr had visited the area and had shared with the Clerk photographs of the tree which does have some 2-3 foot branches overhanging his fence. This situation is exactly the same as experienced last year with a resident at Hornby Avenue which was resolved by the Council permitting the property owners to cut down the branches which overhung their property themselves. It was agreed that a consistent approach was required by the Town Council and that a letter should be sent to allow Mr Kime to cut down the branches which overhang his garden.

RESOLVED:

The Clerk to write to Mr Kime informing him that the Town Council are happy for him to cut down the tree branches which overhang his garden.

ADDITIONAL ITEMS:

Spring Lane:

As requested at the Monthly Meeting held on 13th April 2015 the Clerk had again contacted Ms Susan Porter to seek the latest position with regards to the concerns submitted to DCC in relation to Spring Lane which had been in the form of a Stage 1 Official Complaint. Ms Susan Porter had verbally informed the Town Council on 20th April 2015 that the 4 week deadline was not a strict timeframe but instead a guideline. Ms Porter anticipated being able to give the Town Council a further update this week and she has had an interim update from the owners of the site but there is information which cannot yet be shared with the Town Council. DCC staffing issues, and other work taking priority, were having an impact. Cllr David Brown expressed dissatisfaction about the state of the site and the length of time being taken by DCC to tackle this matter. Cllrs Alf Walton and Tim Jeanes believed that when a deadline was stated by an organization that it must be adhered to and that planning application systems were in place for a reason and should be applied consistently to all.

RESOLVED:

A formal Stage 2 Official Complaint be submitted to DCC in relation to Spring Lane.

Planning Application West of 1A The Lane, Sedgefield:

The Clerk circulated to all copies of a letter from Mr Stuart Timmiss, DCC dated 20th April 2015 which an accompanying amended plan showing a new access for the proposed dwelling. Cllrs considered this amendment but ultimately still had the same highways concerns regarding the close proximity to a busy T junction.

RESOLVED:

The Clerk to write to Mr Steve Pilkington, DCC Planning Officer informing him that Councillors had considered this amendment, however, their objections submitted to him in a letter dated 16th April 2015 remained valid as Councillors did not feel the amendment offered a satisfactory solution to the highways concerns raised.

7. Financial Position: Environment committee

RESOLVED:

To approve the Environment Committee Financial Position.

8. Tenders

8.1 Tree work at 8 Beacon Avenue, Sedgefield

Three quotations had been requested, however, only one had been submitted to undertake work to remove a weak branch and full crown clean, crown raise to approximately 2.5metres and remove Sycamore suckers from the wall at 8 Beacon Avenue. The quotation had been worked to the specification provided by the Town Council. It was agreed to appoint AW Treecare.

RESOLVED:

- i) The Clerk to inform AW Treecare they have the successful quotation and to determine a time when this work can commence.**
- ii) The Clerk to liaise with DCC to determine whether this tree is covered under TPO/Conservation restrictions and if so to complete the necessary paperwork seeking approval.**
- iii) The Clerk to provide an update to Mr Colin Wears of 8 Beacon Avenue.**

8.2 Tree work at 4 South View, Sedgefield

Three quotations had been requested, however, only one had been submitted to undertake work to clear 2 Sycamore trees from the above property by 2.5-3 metres

and a 30% crown reduction on the East site but keeping the crown shape balanced. Cllr Ian Sutherland reported that previously there have been some properties which have been impacted by trees from the grounds of Ceddesfeld Hall which the Town Council have cleared overhanging branches with a financial contribution having been sought from the home owner. Cllrs felt that in the first instance advice should be sought from DCC as to whether this work would be allowed as the trees would be covered by TPOs.

RESOLVED:

- i) **The Clerk to liaise with DCC to determine whether this tree is covered under TPO/Conservation restrictions and if so to complete the necessary paperwork seeking approval.**
- i) **The Clerk to write to the home owner to inform them the Town Council are looking into this matter with DCC and will be in contact again as soon as possible.**

ADDITIONAL ITEM:

Cemetery Lodge:

The Clerk informed Cllrs that Downen Estate Agents have been trying to let Cemetery Lodge for several weeks now. Whilst there has been interest in the property and viewings have taken place the property has either been too big for people or pets have been an issue. Downen have now submitted to the Town Council an offer on behalf of a married couple with a teenager daughter who are in the process of selling their house in Sedgefield in order to move to America at the end of the year. They wish to lease Cemetery Lodge for 6 months paying £600 per calendar month with the total rent being paid in advance as a lump sum. They are all non-smokers and have 2 cars. Cllrs agreed to accept this offer so long as there is a fixed exit date.

RESOLVED:

The Clerk to now work with Downen, and subject to a fixed exit date, agree to this let.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.25pm.