

# **SEDGEFIELD TOWN COUNCIL**

## **ENVIRONMENT**

Minutes of the proceedings of the **SEPTEMBER ENVIRONMENT** of the **Council** held following the Community Development and Engagement committee in the **Council Offices**, Advice & Information Centre, Sedgefield, on **Monday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2014**.

### **Present**

**Cllr. Mel Carr (Chairman)**

**Cllr. Mark Cant (Vice-Chairman) and**

Cllrs. David Brown, Lynne Dentith, Tim Jeanes, Chris Lines, Alf Walton, Dudley Waters and Gloria Wills

### **Officer**

Dr. Jane Ayre (Town Clerk)

### **1. Apologies**

Cllrs. Allan Blakemore, Vanessa Carmichael, Rebecca Hagan, John Robinson, Maxine Robinson and Ian Sutherland.

### **2. Declaration of interest**

None.

### **3. Matters of Information**

#### **3.1 Pizza Castle**

Work is continuing to determine ownership of land around the Pizza Castle. A land ownership report is being prepared by the Clerk and Mrs Jane Young for the Estates Working Group.

#### **RESOLVED:**

**To receive the information**

#### **3.2 DCC Response To Proposed Parking Restrictions**

The Clerk had submitted the Town Council's response to the public consultation proposing the introduction of parking Monday – Saturday 9am-6pm 30 minutes and no return within 30 minutes restriction outside numbers 58-62 Front Street, Sedgefield. The Clerk will keep Cllrs informed regarding DCC's public consultation on this matter.

**RESOLVED:**

**To receive the information**

### **3.3 Cemetery Recycling Bays**

The recently installed additional recycle bays in the cemetery are now included on the Council's insurance policy with Zurich. In addition, an insurance claim in relation to the recent vandalism to these bays has now been submitted to Zurich. The Clerk will keep Cllrs informed regarding this insurance claim with Zurich.

**RESOLVED:**

**To receive the information**

### **3.4 Cemetery Hedge**

AW Treecare have been informed that their tender has been successful. Others who submitted tenders have been informed that they were unsuccessful on this occasion. Cllrs will be informed when the work is undertaken.

**RESOLVED:**

**To receive the information**

### **3.5 Winterton Allotment Shed Roof**

Cllr Alf Walton reported that L&L Roofing have now completed this work and the roof is now of a much higher standard than was on the shed originally.

**RESOLVED:**

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

### **3.6 Eden Drive: Drainage Problem**

The Clerk has requested Mr Paul Armin of DCC investigate this matter. The Clerk will keep Cllrs informed of Mr Armin's feedback.

**RESOLVED:**

**To receive the information**

### **3.7 Repairs to St Edmund's Church Wall**

Mrs Angela Simpson had confirmed that Part B of a funding application to complete the final phase of the Church Wall's repair was submitted on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2014. A decision on funding can take up to 12 weeks. Cllrs will be kept informed regarding this funding application's progress.

**RESOLVED:**

**To receive the information**

#### 4. Public Participation

The Chairman, Cllr. Mel Carr closed the meeting whilst the public gave their views and comments.

Mrs Scott reported that she has become aware of problems with the balancing tank on Station Road field and subsequent conversations with different people within the Town suggested that there were serious drainage problems affecting numbers 1-4 Ivy Row whereby man hole covers are opening resulting in raw sewerage flowing into the gardens of these properties and another in Hornby Avenue. It appeared that NWL have built a V shaped wall across the garden of number 1 Ivy Row in order to direct the sewage away from the property and onto Station Road field. Mrs Scott stated she felt this was a potentially serious Environmental Health issue particularly as there is a children's play area on this field and the area is well used by dog walkers. Mrs Scott believed that NWL have made compensation payments to the owners of numbers 1-4 Ivy Row. As the Town Council lease this field from DCC Mrs Scott wanted to know what the Town Council planned to do with regard to this latest news regarding potential Environmental Health issues as she felt the issue regarding this field was now much bigger than the originally known issue of flooding. **With regard to flooding Mrs Scott stated that there was no standing water present on the field at the moment but that certain areas of the field were still spongy.**

The meeting was then re-opened.

Cllr Mel Carr thanked Mrs Scott for her comments and stated the Station Road field in relation to flooding was to be discussed later in the agenda (item 5.8). However, the issue of sewerage is a separate issue which has not been discussed previously. This issue would be the responsibility of NWL and DCC Environmental Health. For such claims to be progressed evidence would need to be provided. Cllr Chris Lines urged that if such evidence could be provided this matter should be brought to the attention of the relevant authorities as quickly as possible in order to eliminate any Environmental Health hazard should one exist. Cllr Mark Cant suggested that Mrs Scott approach NWL with regard to the alleged sewerage issue under FOI.

#### 5. Reports

##### 5.1 Woodland at Neville Drive: Report of on-site meeting with DCC (Cllr Mel Carr)

Prior to the meeting a report was circulated detailing the findings of a recent on-site meeting held with Mr Jeff Talbot of DCC. Cllr Alf Walton stated that he was also present at this meeting.

**RESOLVED:**

**To receive the information**

**5.2 Tree Issues Update 2 x letters sent to Mr Rodger Lowe, DCC (14<sup>th</sup> August 2014)**

Prior to the meeting 2 letters from Mr Rodger Lowe (DCC Senior Tree Officer) had been circulated to all. Since these letters had been circulated, Mr Rodger Lowe has provided the Council with following advice:

<u>Issue:</u>	<u>Advice:</u>
8 Beacon Avenue, Sedgfield – concerns regarding the tree at the rear of the property.	This tree is not within the Conservation Area or subject to a TPO therefore the Town Council is able to determine themselves what they want to do.
4 South View, Sedgfield – concerns regarding trees overhanging from Ceddesfeld Hall grounds.	Felling of trees would not be looked upon favourably by DCC, however, DCC would expect sympathetic pruning in this location from here on in.
Snapped tree in grounds of Ceddesfeld Hall	This is the Town Council's responsibility and does not require DCC input.
20 Hornby Avenue, Sedgfield – concerns regarding diseased tree near to property on Station Road Playing Field	This tree is not within the Conservation Area or subject to a TPO therefore the Town Council is able to determine themselves what they want to do.
Trees at rear of Mitford Court, Sedgfield	The crown lift to 6m if done sympathetically would be acceptable, as would the decayed stem removal, i.e. not every branch is removed from ground level to 6m up the trunk but rather that the canopy line would be no lower than 6m and only on the residential side.
Large sycamore tree near 42 Mitford Court, Sedgfield	DCC have advised this is their responsibility and they have submitted an application for it to be felled due to decay.

The Council had also offered Mr Rodger Lowe the opportunity to attend either an Environment Committee meeting or Open Spaces Working Group meeting in order to explain his role. Mr Lowe had replied stating that he did not have time to attend meetings but instead had given a written explanation of his role as follows:

*“The Tree Officers are paid by Planning Services and are the arboricultural experts for the County Council. We offer advice to planning officers and any other department internally who require it. Although competent, for insurance reasons, we do not offer formal advice to other*

*parties including Town Councils. We are advice givers rather than operations. We do not have a budget or control staff. The operations are carried out by Street Scene which is another department within DCC. Our work is primarily assessing planning applications and administering the TPO system. This includes 211 Notices (Tree Works in Conservation Areas) and TPO works applications. On occasion we do attend site meetings to try to agree the extent of work proposals which might be acceptable prior to a notice being submitted. The applicant is free to ignore that advice if they wish and seek independent advice”.*

**RESOLVED:**

- i) Mr Alex Walker be asked to look at the trees in question at 8 Beacon Avenue, 4 South View, in the grounds of Ceddesfeld Hall and Hornby Avenue to give an independent tree report containing his advice.**
- ii) Quotes to be sought from 3 contractors for undertaking crown lifting of trees to the rear of Mitford Court.**

**5.3 Allotment Challenge 2014 Results: Verbal Update (Cllr Alf Walton)**

Cllr Alf Walton reported that judging for the Allotment Challenge 2014 had taken place on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2014. Mr Barrie Stephenson had acted as Judge and the following results were reported:

<u>Winterton Allotments:</u>	<u>Butterwick Allotments:</u>
1 <sup>st</sup> Pat Hull	1 <sup>st</sup> Ken Tiplady
2 <sup>nd</sup> James Keating	2 <sup>nd</sup> Mr MacLennan
Most improved plot: Pam Bennett	Most improved plot: Derek Tiplady

Trophies and prizes have already been purchased and it was agreed that the presentation of these should take place to coincide with a forthcoming Farmers Market.

**RESOLVED:**

**Cllr Alf Walton to liaise with Mr Roger Clubley to arrange the Allotment Challenge 2014 presentation.**

**5.4 RoSPA Play Area Inspection Reports – Eden Drive and Station Road (Report by Clerk)**

Prior to the meeting a report by the Clerk was circulated detailing the findings of the recent RoSPA inspections which included the recommendation to cease undertaking such an inspection of the play equipment on Station Road field as this equipment is owned by DCC.

**RESOLVED:**

- i) To receive the information.**
- ii) To inform RoSPA that the Town Council no longer wishes to undertake an annual inspection on the Station Road field play equipment.**

## **5.5 Church Turning Circle: Latest position (Verbal Update: Cllr Mel Carr) and Potential Funding (Report by Mrs Angela Simpson)**

A report had been circulated to all prior to the meeting regarding possible sources of funding for the refurbishment of the Church Turning Circle. Cllr Dudley Waters recommended that in addition to the funding sources identified consideration is also given to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Cllr Mel Carr stressed the urgency of progressing this work as considerable work had already been undertaken, i.e.

- Researching and devising an appropriate specification to ensure an appropriate surface is sourced;
- Consultations with the Conservation Officers;
- Consultations with Planning Officers;
- Seeking tenders and considering quotes obtained;
- Developing a provisional programme of work.

Councillors had been given regular updates via the Environment Committee and everyone has been given the opportunity to view and comment on the materials being proposed.

Due to the upturn in the construction industry skilled craftsmen are now becoming scarce and building materials are starting to become in short supply with accompanying increases in price. Coupled with this a competitive tender of £25,595 was received in June 2014 which is fixed at the moment for a reasonable length of time.

The final requirement for this project is to agree a pattern for the stone sets. Once this is determined work could commence.

The Clerk reported with this project grant funding is now having to be sought towards the process (a process which began before her appointment), however, with all future projects the Clerk recommended that seeking grant funding start at the outset.

### **RESOLVED:**

- i) To seek funding for this project as a matter of urgency (in either entirety or as match funding).**
- ii) To put the issue of Church Turning Circle Funding onto the P&R Agenda for the October 2014 meeting.**

## **5.6 Electricity Supplies – Village Green, Lychgate and Parish Hall (Report by Clerk)**

Prior to the meeting a report had been circulated detailing the latest position regarding the review being undertaken into the electricity supplies on the Village Green and at the Lychgate and Parish Hall.

The Clerk reported that Mr Hannant had inspected all the electricity supplies requested by the Council. He has recommended that the electricity supply on the Village Green be disconnected as it is unsafe. This will require the Christmas tree being relocated towards the Lychgate in future with a new power source being installed from the Church to the Lychgate. In order to undertake this work a channel will need to be dug from the Church to the Lychgate. Mr Brian Whitehead has been contacted as the Church representative and asked to investigate what permissions are required in order to dig such a channel in consecrated ground. An exact price can be obtained once the issue of the channel digging is known.

Mr Hannant has confirmed that the electrics in the cupboard on the Parish Hall are safe but do require testing annually. Test certificates should have been provided by the original installer. Mr Hannant is able to provide such an annual inspection programme if required.

**RESOLVED:**

- i) To obtain an exact price for the Church to Lychgate electricity supply once the situation with channel digging is known.**
- ii) To obtain test certificates from original installer of electrics in the Parish Hall.**
- iii) Costings to be reported by the Clerk to the Estates Working Group.**

**5.7 St Edmund's Churchyard footpaths: Verbal Update (Cllr Mel Carr)**

The Clerk reported that Ms Stephenson from the Church had confirmed that her earlier expressed concerns regarding the state of the footpaths in St Edmund's Churchyard related to all areas. Mr Stephen Young has been asked to look at these footpaths and the issue will be discussed at the joint Estates and Open Spaces Working Group meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2014.

**RESOLVED:**

**To receive the information.**

**5.8 Station Road Playing Field: Latest Position (Report by Clerk)**

Prior to the meeting a report detailing the latest position with the Station Road Playing Field with regard to flooding had been circulated to all. Cllr Mel Carr confirmed that Mr Paul Armin had acknowledged receipt of the drainage plans for the field and surrounding area sent to him by the Town Council. However, Mr Armin stated these plans did not provide him with any additional information to that already known. His view remains that the reason for the flooding is the high level of the natural water table over recent years. Mr & Mrs Scott are continuing to monitor the current level of the natural water table. NWL have undertaken some repair work in the nearby area and since this point there has been no further flooding, however, there has also not been any prolonged period of heavy rain.

Cllr Mark Cant proposed the Town Council discuss whether it wants to continue to lease this field from DCC. It was agreed that this should be discussed at the next P&R meeting.

**RESOLVED:**

- i) To receive the information and to continue to monitor this situation.**
- ii) Review of Station Road Playing Field lease with DCC be placed on the P&R October 2014 agenda.**

**5.9 Options for analysis of public participation (Report by Clerk)**

Prior to the meeting a report had been circulated regarding options for analyzing comments made during public participation. Cllr Gloria Wills referred Cllrs to the contents of the current Standing Orders and it was agreed these remained appropriate and existing arrangements for responding to public participation should continue.

**RESOLVED:**

**To receive this information.**

**6. Correspondence**

**6.1 DCC Consultation: Cessation of smoking in playgrounds: Proposal and Questionnaire**

Prior to the meeting information regarding DCC's Cessation of Smoking in Playgrounds consultation had been circulated to all. Included in this was a questionnaire. It was agreed by all that the ceasing of smoking in play areas is important and that the Town Council should complete the questionnaire.

**RESOLVED:**

**The Open Spaces Working Group complete the questionnaire on behalf of the Town Council.**

**6.2 Northumbrian Water response to North End grass verge (15<sup>th</sup> August 2014)**

Prior to the meeting a copy of an email from NWL dated 15<sup>th</sup> August 2014 had been circulated to all. In this NWL had stated their contractors had attended the area and carried out a CCTV survey of the sewers. From this they had confirmed there was a small amount of siltation in the sewer which had been removed. No structural problems had been found therefore the sunken patches in the ground were not related to any of NWL's assets. The Clerk had contacted NWL on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2014 to inform them that the holes in this area were reappearing and that the adjacent tarmac area is also sinking. On 9<sup>th</sup> September 2014 NWL responded stating a further CCTV survey had been conducted and no issues were found with regard to the sewerage network. NWL recommended that DCC be contacted. The Clerk reported that Mr Stephen Young has subsequently filled the holes in with top soil, however, this is only an interim measure.



**RESOLVED:**

- i) To receive this information.
- ii) To report this matter to DCC as per the advice of NWL.

**6.3 Butterwick Road Layby Path: Request to grass cut (26<sup>th</sup> August 2014)**

On 26<sup>th</sup> August 2014 Mrs Pauline Tweddell had requested that the Town Council cut the grass verges along the Butterwick Road as brambles have now overgrown this area. The Clerk reported that this matter has been passed to DCC as their responsibility and Mrs Tweddell informed of this.

**RESOLVED:**

**To receive this information.**

**6.4 Trees overhanging Squash Club building in Ceddesfeld Grounds (28<sup>th</sup> August 2014)**

On 28<sup>th</sup> August 2014 Mrs Julia Rowsby, on behalf of the Squash Club, requested that tree branches overhanging the Squash Club roof be pruned to avoid incidents in the past whereby children have climbed the trees and gained access to the Club roof. Several Cllrs confirmed that this work has been undertaken previously by the Council.

**RESOLVED:**

- i) Mr Alex Walker be asked to look at this issue and make a recommendation to the Council.
- ii) Mrs Rowsby to be notified of this resolution.

**6.5 Tree in Churchyard at St Edmund's:**

The Clerk reported that DCC have informed the Council that the tree currently blocking the street lamp in the churchyard is not theirs and that it is the Town Council's responsibility to resolve this matter.

**RESOLVED:**

**Mr Alex Walker be asked to look at this issue and make a recommendation to the Council.**

**6.6 Trees Overhanging From Cemetery to Community College Tennis Courts:**

The Clerk reported that Mr Ian Fenwick from Carillion has reported trees from the cemetery are overhanging the tennis courts and impeding on the floodlights at the Community College.

**RESOLVED:**

**The Clerk to inform Mr Fenwick that Carillion are allowed to prune the trees as they require.**

#### **6.7 Tree Outside 19 North End**

The Clerk reported that Mr Paul Weatherall had reported concerns regarding the size of a large tree on the green outside his mother's property at 19 North End. Mrs Weatherall was concerned the tree has grown so large that its roots system may affect the foundations of her property. She was also concerned at the size of the boughs and believes that it would benefit from some severe tree surgery. Cllrs believed this tree was subject to a TPO.

**RESOLVED:**

**To report this matter to Mr Rodger Lowe (Senior Tree Officer, DCC) and request his advice.**

#### **6.8 Trees and Hedges in Butterwick Allotments**

The Clerk reported that Mr Peter Simcock had requested that the hedges and trees in the Butterwick allotments be looked at with a view to cutting and pruning.

**RESOLVED:**

**The Open Spaces Working Group to consider this request as part of its meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2014.**

#### **6.9 Sedgfield In Bloom Hanging Baskets**

The Clerk circulated copies of an email from Mr Howard Smith of the Sedgfield In Bloom dated 6<sup>th</sup> September 2014. The Bloom Group currently purchase 8 hanging baskets to be displayed around the Town during the summer months which are in addition to those purchased by the Town Council. Mr Smith asked if the Bloom could purchase its hanging baskets for 2015 as part of the Town Council's order in order to ensure they are of a similar design and delivered at the same time. The Bloom will pay for these 8 hanging baskets. It was agreed that this was a sensible approach.

**RESOLVED:**

- i) The Town Council to include the Bloom Group's hanging baskets in its order and to recharge the Bloom Group accordingly.**
- ii) Mr Stephen Young and Mr Howard Smith to liaise in order to complete the order.**

#### **6.10 Sedgfield In Bloom Meeting 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2014**

The Clerk circulated copies of the minutes from the last Sedgfield In Bloom meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2014. The next Bloom meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> October 2014.

**RESOLVED:**

**To receive this information.**

**7. Financial Position: Environment committee**

**RESOLVED:**

**The Environment Committee Financial Position had been circulated and was approved.**

**8. Tenders**

**8.1 Potholes at The Square and Hardwick Arms, North End, Sedgefield (Report by Clerk)**

Prior to the meeting the Clerk had circulated a report to all which detailed costings that had been provided by DCC in order to repair the current potholes in the Hardwick Arms at North End and Square areas.

It was agreed that alternative tenders should be sought for temporary patching in these areas and at the same time to write to nearby businesses to determine if they would be willing in principle to make a contribution towards the cost of any future patching work. Cllr Dudley Waters also suggested that in the interim period fluorescent spray should be put around the potholes to mark them as a hazard.

**RESOLVED:**

- i) The Clerk and Cllr Mel Carr to identify and approach alternative contractors.**
- ii) The Clerk to write to nearby businesses once costings are known.**
- iii) Mr Stephen Young to mark potholes with fluorescent spray.**

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 9.02p.m.