

Yeovil Town Council



**Town House
19 Union Street
Yeovil
Somerset
BA20 1PQ**

Phone 01935 382424
Fax 01935 382429
E-mail alan.tawse@southsomerset.gov.uk

Grounds and General Maintenance Committee

The Meeting... **Grounds and General Maintenance Committee**

The Time... **7.00pm**

The Date... **Monday 3 March 2008**

The Place... **Town House, 19 Union Street, Yeovil**

The Committee will be discussing all the items listed overleaf

If you need this information in large print, Braille, audio or another language, please ring 01935 382424



Alan Tawse

Alan Tawse

Town Clerk

26 February 2008

To: All Members of the Grounds and General
Maintenance Committee

J Vincent Chainey (Vice Chairman)

Philip Chandler (Chairman)

Pete Goodman

John Grana

Dave Greene

Simon Hester

Ruth Kendall

Tony Lock (Ex-officio)

Wes Read (Ex-officio)

David Recardo

Alan Smith

Vacancy (co-opted non-voting)

A G E N D A

PUBLIC COMMENT (15 Minutes)

1. **MINUTES**

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 January 2008.

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

4. **CORRESPONDENCE**

5. **PLAY AND YOUTH FACILITIES UPDATE**

To consider an update by the Play and Youth Facilities Officer (attached at page 3) on maintenance and improvements of sites managed by the Town Council.

6. **YEW TREE PARK - KICK ABOUT WALL/SPORTS WALL**

To consider a report of the Play and Youth Facilities Officer (attached at page 4) with costings for the provision of a Kick About Wall/Sports Wall.

7. **ALLOTMENT EQUIPMENT**

To consider the report by the Assistant Town Clerk (attached at pages 5 to 6).

8. **WATER REFURBISHMENT AT ST GEORGE'S ALLOTMENT SITE**

To consider the report of the Assistant Town Clerk (attached at page 7)

9. **MEMBERS' TOURS OF ALLOTMENT SITES AND OPEN SPACES**

At the September 2007 meeting of the Grounds and General Maintenance Committee it was agreed that the tours would take place immediately preceding the Mayor and July meetings of the Committee.

It is suggested therefore that the tour commences at 5.00pm on 12 May to tour open spaces, and at 5.00pm on 7 July to tour the allotment sites.

It is suggested that Yew Tree Park, Milford Park and Doorstep Green sites are visited in May and the Committee is requested to decide which allotment sites to visit in July – Milford Dip, Sunningdale, Newtown, Goar Knapp and Hillcrest have been suggested as the first allotment sites to visit.

10. ALLOTMENT TENANTS WORKING GROUP

To consider the outcome of the Allotment Tenants Working Group held on 11 February 2008 (copies of the Minutes have been previously circulated).

11. BEST VALUE

To consider the report of the Town Clerk (attached at pages 8 to 10).

12. FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR PERIOD DECEMBER 2007/JANUARY 2008

To receive the Financial Statement for the period 1 December 2007 to 31 January 2008. See attached Financial Statement at pages 11 to 18.

5. **PLAY AREAS AND YOUTH FACILITIES UPDATE**

The following works have been carried out or are being planned for 2008.

- Several sites have had surfaces cleaned of moss and other debris
- 3 broken bars have been repaired at Yew Tree Park
- Routine maintenance tasks continue
- Weekly inspections ongoing

- Safety Surface programme of repairs for 2008, tender sent out to relevant companies to obtain prices. Safety surface repairs will be completed during May, June and July subject to satisfactory prices being obtained

- Painting programme for 2008 is being worked on, prices for preparing and painting several play areas and the skate parks will be sought during March and April, with a view to painting works being completed during the Summer and Autumn of 2008.

An update on the proposed funding arrangements for the upgrading of the Yew Tree Park Play area in 2008/09 will be given at the meeting.

(Steve Barnes - Play Areas and Youth Facilities Officer, 01935 462408)

6. YEW TREE PARK - KICK ABOUT WALL / SPORTS WALL

At the last meeting of the Grounds and General Maintenance Committee it was agreed to look into the costs of a kick about wall as a solution to problems experienced by footballers kicking footballs against the scout hut wall at the above location. Prices are detailed below. It was also agreed that the problems with the perimeter fence of the site would be investigated – this is ongoing and will be reported to a future meeting of the Committee.

Prices for above as requested by Yeovil Town Council.

S.M.P. Playgrounds

UTAH Goal Section

Price of Goal Section	£ 5,064
Installation cost into tarmac	£ 1,229
Total	£ 6,293

Wicksteed Leisure

Chevron Goal Module	£ 7,112
Installation Cost into tarmac	£ 2,305
Total	£ 9,417

In recent years, approved play area upgrades have been funded jointly by the Town and District Councils on an equal basis.

The Committee is **RECOMMENDED** to consider the matter.

(Steve Barnes - Play Areas and Youth Facilities Officer, 01935 462408)

7. ALLOTMENT EQUIPMENT

Current Arrangements

The Town Council currently holds nine items of equipment which have been purchased from the relevant site's share of the Non-Corporate Allotment Maintenance budget. The equipment for each site is:

Site	Purchase Date	Equipment	Stored
Goar Knap	24 June 2003	Strimmer	Goar Knap compound
Goar Knap	30 September 2002	Shredder	Goar Knap compound
Goar Knap	18 August 2006	Shredder	Goar Knap compound
Larkhill	12 November 2003	Brushcutter	Goar Knap compound
Monksdale	24 March 2003	Rotovator	Goar Knap compound
Rustywell	03 December 2001	Atco Shredder	Goar Knap compound
Sunningdale	19 March 2003	Sprayer	Ships Container
Sunningdale	18 June 2002	Brushcutter	Ships Container
Sunningdale	14 February 2002	Cultivator	Ships Container

The tenants of the relevant site are able to use the equipment. Safety equipment is provided, however no formal training is given as there is no capacity to do so.

In researching relevant terms and conditions of use of the equipment, advice has been sought from the District Council's Health and Safety Adviser. His advice is as follows:

If the Town Council owns the equipment they have a duty under Health and Safety law to ensure the machinery is maintained, repaired as necessary and safe to use. The users should also be trained and competent to use the equipment and be aware of the limit of any repairs or adjustments the operator can undertake. This is applicable regardless of whether the equipment being free to use or a fee is charged.

Whilst the current arrangements have enabled tenants to carry out a range of maintenance works, the recent advice received from the Health and Safety Adviser requires a new approach to be taken.

One way of continuing to provide financial support towards this initiative would be to use the funding available to tenants for them to hire the same equipment direct from reputable tool and equipment hire suppliers in the Yeovil area.

The obligation would then be placed on the hiring organisation to ensure that the equipment was maintained correctly, and that training/safety equipment was provided to hirers on each occasion.

Such an approach would avoid the Town Council having to purchase such equipment – with the attendant capital costs and depreciation and, in the case of heavier equipment, would facilitate its delivery/collection by the supplier to and from the relevant allotment sites.

Assuming this alternative approach is supported, it is proposed that a hire equipment specification be drawn up by officers in consultation with the Allotment Tenants Working Group.

It is proposed that the existing equipment – the majority of which is over four years old – be sold following invitations of expressions of interest – with the proceeds being added to the Non-Corporate Allotment Maintenance budget in 2008/09. Given the recent purchase of the shredder used at Goar Knap, it is proposed that this particular piece of equipment be retained for use by the Council's Maintenance Operative.

Discussions on the proposals have taken place with the Secretary of the Allotment Tenants Working Group, who has expressed his willingness to seek the views of the Working Group on the matter. A verbal update on their views will be given at the meeting.

The Committee is **RECOMMENDED** to note the developments in this matter and consider the best way forward.

(Sally Bing – Assistant Town Clerk 01935 382424)

8. WATER REFURBISHMENT WORKS

At the last meeting of the Grounds and General Maintenance Committee consideration was given to the allocation of funds to enable the refurbishment of water supplies at allotment sites.

The cost of refurbishing St George's was estimated at £4,350 (including provision of 3 additional standpipes) and it was agreed to fund this estimated amount as follows:

Water Refurbishment Budget (2007/08)	£1,550
Anticipated underspend in Fence Repairs Budget	£ 350
Underspend in Non-Corporate Allotment Maintenance Budget	£ 885
Water Refurbishment Budget (2008/09)	£1,600
Total	£4,385

Following receipt of tenders, the actual cost of the water refurbishment at St George's is £4,650. The additional £265 required will therefore also be met from underspend in the Fence Repairs Budget. The work is due to commence on Tuesday 4 March.

The Committee is **RECOMMENDED** to note the further developments in this matter.

(Sally Bing – Assistant Town Clerk, 01935 382424)

11. **BEST VALUE**

Unlike their county and district counterparts, town councils are free to choose their own performance indicators as part of the Best Value process. These play an important part in the Best Value regime, as they are the yardsticks by which the targets set are measured.

To make sure indicators chosen give a balanced view of performance, the Government has suggested using five dimensions of performance:

- Strategic Objectives
- Cost/Efficiency
- Service Delivery Outcomes
- Quality
- Fair Access

The Council has set corporate health performance indicators as well as setting additional ones for each service. The Policy, Resources and Finance Committee has adopted a list of corporate performance indicators compiled from the mandatory list that all principal councils must adopt. Achievements against targets set will be reported to that Committee later this month.

Service related indicators are just as important. The Council has agreed that these are best chosen by the Service Committees - who are already responsible for monitoring and reviewing the services within their purview. Last year, all the Service Committees were asked to put forward a performance indicator for each of the major services/functions under their control.

As far as this Committee is concerned, the major services are the management of allotments and open spaces. It is suggested that, as far as possible, performance indicators should be chosen which measure activities/services within the control of the Council.

Allotments

The Council manages a total of 12 allotment sites (including the redundant Goldcroft Site for which disposal has been granted by the Secretary of State and the Town Council has accordingly agreed to sell). Vacant allotment plots fall to the Council to maintain and, until they are re-let, do not yield any rental. Clearly, it is in everyone's interest that plots becoming available should be re-allocated as quickly as possible. This ensures that those seeking plots have speedy access to a desirable leisure facility, and that rental income is maximised - to help offset the cost of service provision.

The Committee agreed that an appropriate yardstick for continuous improvement is to seek an increase each year in the overall number of lettings.

Last year, the Committee set itself a target of maintaining the letting rate at 80%. In actual fact, the letting rate has been maintained well above this figure - at a highly creditable rate of 97%.

There is no doubt that the Council's pro-active and flexible approach to allotment management has helped achieve this commendable result.

The Committee will recall the substantial in-depth review of allotment maintenance previously undertaken by the former Allotments Working Party, which was aimed at making allotments more appealing in the future. The Working Party recognised that preparing plots for re-letting and the future general maintenance of sites played a key role in attracting new tenants, and they spent a considerable amount of time looking at ways of improving take-up.

To ensure that the views of ploholders were taken into account, each site has been invited to elect a representative to serve on the successor Allotment Tenants' Working Group, and these representatives work hard, with elected members of the Council, to come up with a range of flexible and responsive ways of carrying out future maintenance work.

These include giving ploholders a bigger say in deciding *what* work is carried out on their site, *when* it will be done and the *standard* to which it will be undertaken. To help secure improvements, additional funds were included in the allotment maintenance budget. All of these proposals were introduced in April 2001 and have been successfully implemented.

Although the Working Party now operates independently of the Town Council, it is still pursuing these aims and objectives, and the Council is providing ongoing support to ensure that this continues to be the case.

Examples of initiatives put in place during the current year include

- The hiring of skips by tenants themselves to clear rubbish
- The upgrade of the water supply at St George's Allotment Site
- Ways of giving tenants free access to the right tools and equipment to help them carry out identified maintenance work
- The invitation of bids from tenant representatives to re-allocate the unspent non-corporate allotment maintenance budget

Clearly all of these efforts have paid dividends, and it is pleasing that the letting rate has continued to be maintained at well over 80%.

Given the fact that the transfer of allotment tenancies and the time involved in their re-letting will always be a factor in measuring lettings, it is suggested that next year we continue to aim to consolidate the substantial increase in lettings achieved in recent years.

It is **RECOMMENDED** that the Committee notes this year's achievement, and sets a target of maintaining *next* year's lettings at 80% occupancy rate.

Open Spaces

The Committee manages 16 play areas on behalf of the District Council. The quality of service provision is important in this area of activity, and the public's perception of the level of cleanliness and maintenance of these sites is a key way of measuring whether these facilities are being managed in an effective manner.

To evaluate this, the Committee has agreed that a customer satisfaction survey be carried out, and that a satisfaction rate of 80% be set. This survey will be carried out over the coming months as the weather improves, and the results will be reported to the next meeting.

Over the past year, interim improvements have been carried out to play equipment and surfacing at Yew Tree Park - in partnership with South Somerset District Council - pending a planned major upgrade.

In addition, an extensive consultation exercise has been undertaken with the assistance of local residents in the Yew Tree Park area - to find out what long-term improvements and enhancements local people would like to see put in place when the proposed major upgrade is implemented.

It is **RECOMMENDED** that the matter be noted and the outcome of the planned survey be awaited.

(Alan Tawse, Town Clerk - 01935 382424)