



Yeovil Town Council

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

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

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

The Time... **7.00pm**

The Date... **Monday 17 May 2010**

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

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



Alan Tawse

Alan Tawse
Town Clerk

11 May 2010

Please contact Sarah Hunt at the Town House for more information about this meeting

Grounds and General Maintenance Committee

To: All Members of the Town Council :

J Vincent Chainey

Philip Chandler

Clive Davis

Bridget Dollard

Tony Fife

Julian Freke

Dave Gooding

Pete Goodman

John Grana

David Greene

Peter Gubbins

John Hann

Steve Hawker

Simon Hester

Andrew Kendall

Ruth Kendall

Tony Lock

Ian Martin

Pat Martin

Tom Parsley

Wes Read

David Recardo

Alan Smith

Jon Trevett (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 previous meeting held on 8 March 2010.

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

4. **CORRESPONDENCE**

5. **PLAY AREA REFURBISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE UPDATE**

To consider a report from the Play and Youth Facilities Officer on Yeovil's play areas at page X.

6. **SUNNINGDALE ALLOTMENTS – HEDGING WORK UPDATE**

Report to Follow.

7. **ALLOTMENT LETTINGS**

To consider a report from the Town Clerk attached at page x.

8. **BEST VALUE**

To consider a report from the Town Clerk attached at page x.

9. **ALLOTMENT TENANTS WORKING GROUP**

To consider the outcomes of the meeting of the Allotment Tenants Working Group held on Monday 26 April 2010. Copies of the minutes have been separately circulated.

10. **FINANCIAL STATEMENT**

To receive the Financial Statement for the period 1 February to 31 March 2010. See attached Financial Statement at pages X to X.

PUBLIC COMMENT (15 Minutes)

5. PLAY AREA REFURBISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE UPDATE

Yew Tree Park

The new Yew Tree Park play area had a 'soft' opening on Thursday 29th April when all the heras fencing was removed and children were allowed to play on all almost all of the equipment. There is one piece of equipment – the high swings – which need grass to grow a bit more around them. They will be working in time for the formal opening on the morning of Saturday 22nd May (programme attached for information).

Some of the reinstatement works have yet to be completed as the grass seed has yet to fully sprout and there are a few bare areas around the play equipment. It is hoped that a spell of decent rainfall will help to address the issue, otherwise maintenance will continue until grass coverage is satisfactory.

Local residents, young and old, are generally pleased with the play equipment and have been using it in large numbers.

Monks Dale

An open afternoon consultation was held at Preston School on 31 March. Information at the session was collected and collated by the selected design consultant, Swan Paul. The consultation was well attended by local residents and a few school children. The Steering Group continues to meet regularly to progress matters. Swan Paul will produce two sketch designs for the group to consider. A further consultation has taken place at Preston Primary School. Ten children were asked to express their opinions to me and Louise Ball of Swan Paul. This information has also been collated and will help to inform the design of what is generally recognised to be a challenging play area, due to its small size and proximity to residential development.

The Steering Group is continuing to meet with a view to developing proposals for consideration by the local community and by the Town and District Councils, following which arrangements will be made for tenders to be invited for the delivery of the approved design within the overall agreed budget.

Play Area Maintenance

Weekly play area inspections and general maintenance continue to be carried out. The painting programme and play area safety surface maintenance programme is currently being worked on and we are aiming for completion in early Autumn.

The Committee is **RECOMMENDED** to note the matters.

Stephen Barnes, Play and Youth Facilities Officer (01935 462408)

YEW TREE PARK OPENING
Plantagenet Chase, Yeovil

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS - SATURDAY 22 MAY 2010

Parking is available at Holy Trinity Church

- 10.30 a.m.** Guests arrive.
- 10.45 a.m.** Holy Trinity School performs a country dance to welcome guests.
- 11.00 a.m.** Formal opening of the Park by the Head Boy and Head Girl of Holy Trinity School. Short speeches by Chairman of the District Council and the Chairman of the Town Council's Grounds and General Maintenance Committee, followed by photos (including aerial photo) and refreshments in the Scout Headquarters.
(Compere : Yeovil Town Crier Bruce Trigger)
- 11.30 a.m.** In-line skate and scooter demo at the skate park sponsored by Sports of Bond Street, Yeovil.
- Various activities and demonstrations by local sporting groups
- Shield making activity hosted by SSDC Play Rangers.
- Appearance by Terry Skiverton, manager of Yeovil Town FC
- c. 12 noon** Tug of War (between teams of adults and children).
- c. 12.15 p.m.** End of formal event

(Note : in case of bad weather, the opening ceremony will either take place in the Scout HQ or the event will be rescheduled if in doubt please check the day before by ringing 01935 382424).

7. ALLOTMENT LETTINGS

There are currently 52 persons on the waiting list for an allotment plot, 96% of whom have expressed a preference for a particular site(s). The number has reduced from the previously reported figure of 70 following completion of a check of all those on the list as to their ongoing wish to be considered for a plot in the future, and plots becoming available since the last meeting.

The Council has 326 allotment plots on 11 sites - all of which are currently let. The total number of plots is in excess of the minimum provision advocated by the Thorpe Report of 1969, which suggested that the "irreducible minimum provision" should be 15 plots to 1,000 households. In the case of Yeovil Town, this would equate to 204 plots.

The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG) currently considers the irreducible minimum to be 20 plots to 1,000 households, which in the case of Yeovil Town, would equate to 272 plots. Again, the number of plots provided by the Town Council exceeds this figure.

A national survey carried out last year in conjunction with the NSALG, which was recently updated, found that the average number of people waiting for an allotment plot was 58 per 100 plots. In Yeovil Town, the current figure is significantly below this figure at 16 per 100 plots.

At the last meeting of the Committee, Members asked for a further breakdown of the current waiting list to help the Committee review the present allotment lettings policy and to consider whether there is a case for the policy to be amended.

The following table summarises the site preferences of those persons on the existing waiting list. It should be noted that a number of tenants express a preference for one of several sites.

Allotment Site	Number of Plots	Preferences
Elizabeth Flats	26	2
Goar Knap	40	1
Hillcrest	7	0
Larkhill	29	1
Milford Dip	38	0
Monks Dale	19	2
Newtown	35	2
Rustywell	24	6
St George's	29	2
Sunningdale	56	3
Turner's Barn Lane	23	13
Two or more sites	-	18
No Preference	-	2
Total	326	52

Under the current policy, residents or former residents of the Town of Yeovil and those who have a connection with the Town through their employment are eligible to apply for an allotment tenancy.

The Committee is **RECOMMENDED** to note the matter and to consider whether any change needs to be made to the current lettings policy.

(Alan Tawse, Town Clerk – 01935 382424)

8. **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 100%.

There is no doubt that the Council's pro-active and flexible approach to allotment management and ongoing support 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 identifying potential improvements. A fresh round of elections was carried out during the year.

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
- Completion of the upgrade of the water supply at Hillcrest Allotment Site
- The invitation of bids from tenant representatives to re-allocate the unspent non-corporate allotment maintenance budget
- Hedging improvements at Sunningdale Allotment Site
- Practical advice on composting and recycling
- Publication of the "Greenfingers" tenant's newsletter

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, work has continued on the design and implementation of a major planned upgrade to the play area at Yew Tree Park.

This follows an extensive consultation exercise 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.

Earlier in the year the final designs were agreed and put out to tender and, despite the severe winter weather that we experienced earlier this year, the works are now completed and the site will be officially opened later this month.

The next planned upgrade is the play area at Monks Dale and again the local community is being consulted on the design and layout of the site to make sure that it meets their needs and aspirations.

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

(Alan Tawse, Town Clerk - 01935 382424)