



Yeovil Town Council

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

The Time... **7.00pm**

The Date... **Monday 6 September 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

31 August 2010

Please contact Sally Bing at the Town House for more information about this meeting

Grounds and General Maintenance Committee

To: All Members of the Grounds and General
Maintenance Committee

J Vincent Chainey

Philip Chandler (Ex-officio)

Clive Davis (Ex-officio)

Dave Gooding

Pete Goodman

John Grana

Steve Hawker (Chairman)

Simon Hester

Andrew Kendall

Tom Parsley

Wes Read

Alan Smith (Vice-Chairman)

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 meeting held on 12 July 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 2.

6. **YEW TREE PARK PLAY AREA**

To consider a report from the Town Clerk (to follow).

7. **NEW INITIATIVE BUDGET**

To consider a report from the Town Clerk attached at pages 3 and 5.

8. **ALLOTMENT RENT REVIEW**

To consider a report of the Town Clerk attached at page 6.

9. **ALLOTMENT TENANTS WORKING GROUP**

To consider the outcomes of the meeting of the Allotment Tenants Working Group held on Monday 2 August 2010. Copies of the minutes circulated separately.

10. **FINANCIAL STATEMENT – JUNE/JULY 2010**

To consider the Financial Statement for the period 1 June to 31 July 2010 attached at pages 7 to 11.

PUBLIC COMMENT (15 Minutes)

5. PLAY AREA REFURBISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE UPDATE

Repairs and Inspection

Grass Royal Play Area – wet pour safety surfacing repaired.

Yew Tree Park – High Swings now back in operation following repairs to surfacing. Two new bins have also been installed in the play area. A new sign will be installed in September. Details of proposed additional work to the feature slide mound will be reported to the meeting along with costings.

Weekly inspections and general maintenance continue to be carried out.

Monksdale Play Area

Following acceptance of the proposed Monksdale play area design by Yeovil Town Council's Grounds and General Maintenance Committee, South Somerset District Council and the Monksdale Play Area Steering Group, all tender documents have been sent out to relevant contractors. The contractors have until Wednesday 1st September 2010 to return the documents.

When the tenders have been returned, Steve Barnes - Play Areas and Youth Facilities Officer (SSDC) and Rob Parr - Senior Play Areas and Youth Facilities Officer (SSDC) will analyse the documents and make recommendations – including the preferred contractor - to the Town Clerk, Cllr Ruth Kendall - Chairman of the Monksdale Play Area Steering Group and Cllr Steve Hawker – Chairman of the Grounds and General Maintenance Committee.

The Monksdale Steering Group will also be informed of the progress being made.

The Committee is **RECOMMENDED**:

- (1) to note these developments; and
- (2) to agree that the above-identified South Somerset District Council Officers, in consultation with the Town Clerk, the Chairman of the Monksdale Play Area Steering Group and the Chairman of the Grounds and General Maintenance Committee be authorised to appoint the preferred contractor to undertake the play area refurbishment works at Monksdale Play Area - provided that the works are in line with the allocated budget and the plans agreed at the last meeting of the Committee.

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

7. **NEW INITIATIVES BUDGET**

Introduction

Mindful of the need to develop the range of services that we deliver to the people of Yeovil Town, the Town Council agreed to include an allocation of £20,000 in the 2010/11 budget towards new initiatives.

It was agreed that all the service committees would be invited to put forward bids for the use of this new fund, and that the Town Council would decide how this new fund will be spent.

Earlier this year, the Policy, Resources and Finance Committee were asked to give guidance on the process to be followed, and they have agreed that all services committees be reminded of the need for this budget to be used for *new* initiatives.

They also agreed that, to allow sufficient time for ideas to be drawn up and developed, the proposals that emerge be considered at the September meeting of the Policy, Resources and Finance Committee and referred to the October meeting of the Town Council for determination.

This will enable all suggestions that were identified during the July cycle of meetings to be investigated and costed by the officers, and for their findings to be reported back to the service committees during the September cycle of meetings, and for each committee's priorities to be agreed and put forward to the Policy, Resources and Finance Committee.

Proposal

At the last meeting of the Committee, Members requested that the possibility of turning the former ski centre into a town (or urban) farm be investigated and the officers' findings be reported to this meeting.

Information

The former ski centre site, which is owned by the Town Council, occupies an area of 3.1 acres, with adjoining land (currently let for grazing) also owned by the Town Council occupying 3.4 acres.

The Town Council has drawn up a development brief for its disposal. This states that, given the ongoing costs of developing, maintaining and operating the selected use, it is anticipated that a commercial development focussed on a range of outdoor leisure activities – with ancillary refreshment facilities - is the most likely option to succeed.

The property has been marketed with this brief and has attracted a number of enquiries and bids. However, for reasons beyond the Town Council's control, none of the bidders that met the brief and had the support of the Town Council has been in a position to deliver their proposals.

In May, the Town Council agreed to concentrate on remarketing the property following a review of the current development brief, which will be submitted for Members' consideration following the conclusion of the planned investigation by the

Town Council's Property Agent. This is due to be reported to the October meeting of the Town Council.

There is an extant D2 use class planning permission (with conditions) on the former ski centre site, which enables this site to be used for the following purposes:

- Cinema
- Concert hall
- Bingo hall or casino
- Dance hall
- Swimming bath, skating rink, gymnasium or area for other indoor or outdoor sports or recreations not involving motorised vehicles or firearms

The views of the Planning Authority have been sought on the possible development of an urban farm on the site and will be reported to the meeting.

Urban Farms

To give the Committee an idea of what is involved in running an urban farm, a brief analysis has been carried out of the Windmill Hill City Farm – which occupies a 4.5 acre site in Bedminster, Bristol.

The farm was opened in 1976 on derelict land and it is the oldest city farm in Bristol and is a registered charity.

It is a working farm and the animals on site include pigs, goats, sheep, ducks, geese and chickens. The site also includes community gardens, allotments and wildlife conservation areas.

The farm has annual running costs of £1m and attracts 200,000 visitors per year. Last year it faced closure, but was saved following a public fundraising appeal which raised £50,000.

Fruit and vegetables grown on the site are sold through the farm shop and used in the public café. The site also hosts school educational visits and offers guided tours. Opportunities are also provided for training volunteers in conservation.

Way Forward

Should the Committee support this proposal going forward to the Policy, Resources and Finance Committee and the Town Council, it is anticipated that a feasibility study would need to be carried out into a number of issues, including the following matters:

- Site survey (including drainage) for agricultural use
- Site design
- Accommodation conversion, fixtures and fittings
- Site clearance
- Site management
- Soil treatment and composting
- Site security - including fencing
- DEFRA livestock consents
- Animal husbandry and welfare
- Water supply, storage and irrigation

- Creation of beds, pathways, polytunnels
- Tools and equipment
- Staffing requirements
- Legal costs

The Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens would be able to advise on the appointment of a consultant to undertake the necessary study and anticipated costs. This would need to include options for the management of the facility and the role of the Town Council in its operation. The Federation is a registered charity which supports, represents and promotes community-managed farms, gardens, allotments and other green spaces.

Recommendation

The Committee is **RECOMMENDED** to note the above findings and to consider whether it wishes to support this proposal going forward to the Policy, Resources and Finance Committee and the Town Council for further consideration and possible funding from the New Initiatives budget.

(Alan Tawse, Town Clerk – 01935 382424)

8. ALLOTMENT RENT REVIEW

The last allotment rent review was carried out in 2009 when it was agreed that no action be taken to increase the 2009/10 annual rent charge of 19p/sq metre (£4.98/perch). The Council has previously agreed to review the allotment rents on an annual basis.

In accordance with the terms of the tenancy agreement, all tenants were given 12 months notice of this decision which will take effect from 1 October 2010.

A survey of various local authorities in the Somerset and surrounding areas has been carried out which has shown that the majority of local authorities are planning either no increase or 1p per square metre.

As the allotment rent helps to offset the costs of the maintenance of allotments, which are subject to inflation, it is in the tenants and the Town Council's interests that a realistic level of income is maintained to ensure that the costs of carrying out this work can continue to be met.

At present, the income from allotment rents (£9,782) equates to 38% of the overall costs (£25,643) of maintaining allotments across the Town. The average annual rent of an allotment plot is £27.17, which equates to 52p per week.

In accordance with the Delegation Scheme, any proposals to amend the current charges will need to be referred to the Policy, Resources and Finance Committee for comment and to full Council for approval.

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

(Alan Tawse, Town Clerk - 01935 382424)