

YEOVIL TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **GROUND AND GENERAL MAINTENANCE COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Town House, 19 Union Street, Yeovil on Monday 8 September 2008

(7.00pm – 8.40pm)

Present:

Alan Smith - Chairman
John Grana
John Hann
Steve Hawker
Jon Trevett – co-opted non-voting

Also present:

Steve Barnes – Play and Youth Facilities Officer, SSDC
Rich Davy – Street Scene Services Co-Ordinator, SSDC
Jay Lewin – Young Peoples Officer, SSDC
Alan Tawse – Town Clerk
Sally Bing – Assistant Town Clerk

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no comments from members of the public.

7/107 MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 July 2008, copies of which had been circulated were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

7/108 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Dave Gooding, Pete Goodman, Dave Greene, Wes Read.

7/109 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

7/110 CORRESPONDENCE

There were no items of correspondence.

7/111 **PLAY AND YOUTH FACILITIES UPDATE**

The Committee considered the report by the Play and Youth Facilities Officer (agenda item 5 refers) and Steve Barnes added that weekly inspections of play areas and general repairs are ongoing which continue to identify future maintenance requirements of the sites. Concern was raised regarding the apparent removal of safety surfacing at Oak Tree play area on Abbey Manor Park. Whilst it was recognised that this was in the Brympton Parish area Steve Barnes was able to assure the Committee that the damaged safety surface had been removed and new wet pour was restored within approximately four days.

RESOLVED

that the matters be noted.

7/112 **YEW TREE PARK PLAY AREA**

The Committee considered the report by the Play and Youth Facilities Officer (agenda item 6 refers) and Steve Barnes updated the Committee on the current situation with regard to progression on the re-development of the play area at Yew Tree Park.

He informed the Committee that members of the steering group, which included the Chairman of the Committee, had visited play areas in London with a view to appointing a chosen company to work on the design for the new play area with £4000 additionally agreed for support work during the procurement and installation of their anticipated designs. Unfortunately on acceptance of the quote for design and support work by the Town and District Council the company stated that they would only be able to continue with the programme by providing design, support work and on-site management of the installation at a premium increased by £7000 from their original quote.

The Steering Group, SSDC and Yeovil Town Council therefore had to re-examine the options available to continue with the project and concluded that the preferred route would be for the design element of the re-development of the play area to be taken in house at SSDC with the assistance of Nicola Drew, Assistant Architect. A design brief had therefore been presented to the steering group on 8 September and support was given for the design and implementation of the play area to be carried out by Rob Parr, Steve Fox and the Assistant Architect.

It was still anticipated that the play area would be completed by July 2009 and the option supported by the steering group would also allow allocation of funds for play equipment similar to the draft set out in the project brief presented to the Grounds and General Maintenance Committee in May 2008. The Committee discussed the merits of the proposal and felt that providing that the Senior Play and Youth Facilities Officer, the Play and Youth Facilities Officer and the Assistant Architect had sufficient capacity within their workloads to accommodate the project it would be the preferred course of action.

RESOLVED

- (1) that the developments on the project and the matters be noted; and
- (2) that support be given to the design and implementation of the re-development of the play area at Yew Tree Park by SSDC's Senior Play and Youth Facilities Officer, Play and Youth Facilities Officer and Assistant Architect.

7/113 OPEN ACCESS HOLIDAY ACTIVITY PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the report of the Senior Play and Youth Facilities Officer (agenda item 7 refers). Jay Lewin, Young People's Officer, outlined the extensive work she had carried out with young people in Westfield, Birchfield and Milford areas commencing with research of existing facilities and continuing through to the programmes of activities outlined in the report.

She explained that one of her greatest successes had been encouraging the parents and guardians of the young people to become involved in the activities in the evening which resulted in quality family time during activities such as healthy cooking on a budget. Jay stated that funding for the activity programmes had not been available at commencement of her work. However, the report detailed the amounts secured from various funding sources totalling £22,400. Jay anticipated that the total cost for the activity programme in the three areas would be £30,000 and that consequently there would be an anticipated shortfall of £7,600 to be able to complete the 2008/2009 holiday activities programme in full. However, Jay confirmed that further confirmation of funding and expenditure would be sought over forthcoming months.

She added a further report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Grounds and General Maintenance Committee outlining financial support requested for the open access holiday activity programme for 2009/2010. The Committee congratulated Jay on the excellent report and hard work carried out throughout the year.

RESOLVED

that the matters be noted and the open access holiday activity programme be supported.

7/114 CORPORATE ALLOTMENT MAINTENANCE

The Committee considered the report and table by the Streetscene Services Co-Ordinator, (agenda item 8 refers). Concerns were raised regarding dissatisfaction of frequency of grass cutting on the allotment sites and the use of a strimmer to cut the grass which resulted in distribution of clippings on allotment plots. The Streetscene Services Co-Ordinator informed the Committee that a strimmer is required as paths are sometimes narrower than a mower. He added that grass cutting had not taken place in June as it had not been required at that time.

Rich confirmed that weedkiller was still applied to hard surfaces to suppress weed growth. The Town Clerk informed the Committee that reports on

allotment maintenance were submitted to the Grounds and General Maintenance Committee three times a year to enable the Committee to monitor and review the work undertaken, and the Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk had met with the Secretary and Chairman of the Allotment Tenants Working Group to produce an acceptable allotment site maintenance schedule.

RESOLVED

that the matter be noted.

7/115 ALLOTMENT MAINTENANCE

The Committee considered the report by the Assistant Town Clerk (agenda item 9 refers). Discussion took place regarding the impact of the advice from SSDC's Health and Safety Officer and Jon Trevett voiced the views of the Allotment Tenant Working Group that allotment tenants felt that the decision to prohibit tenants from using machinery on areas within allotment sites that do not form the plots let to tenants could be construed as implying that the tenants are not skilled operators and do not know what they are doing, despite the fact that some tenants have been using such equipment for many years.

The Town Clerk reiterated the fact that the health and safety obligation fell to the Town Council for areas of the allotment site which did not form part of a tenancy agreement. It was also stated that all allotment maintenance work involving the use of machinery in such areas needed to be undertaken by suitably qualified and experienced contractors only. He added that, in light of the proposed changes to the maintenance arrangements, he intended convening a further meeting with the contractors and representatives of the Tenants Working Group to discuss the maintenance specification across all allotment sites.

Concern was further raised regarding the level of maintenance on allotment sites particularly those previously worked by the tenant representatives at Goar Knapp and Milford Dip. The Town Clerk stated that immediately following the August Town Council meeting, arrangements had been made for these two sites to be maintained by the District Council. He added that if work was not being carried out, tenant representatives should inform the Town Council as soon as possible.

During the ensuing discussion it was generally agreed that the work carried out by the District Council or an alternative contractor to the areas of allotment sites which do not form part of tenancy agreements should be carried out to a satisfactory standard.

Turning to the disposal of the existing equipment, discussion took place regarding the possibility of donating the equipment to the Allotment Tenants Working Group. The Town Clerk reminded the Committee of the obligation on the Town Council to obtain the best price when selling equipment and ascertain the lowest for purchasing or procurement. The Committee discussed the disposal of the equipment and felt that it was not necessary to restrict the disposal of the machinery to horticultural machinery dealers.

RESOLVED

- (1) that the matter, the decision of the Town Council, and the further advice received from the Health and Safety Officer on this matter be noted;
- (2) that the intention of the Town Clerk to convene a further meeting to discuss the corporate allotment maintenance schedule between Town Council Officers, District Council Officers and relevant members of the Allotment Tenant Working Group be noted;
- (3) that support be given to the adoption of the following deferred recommendations of the Policy, Resources and Finance Committee subject to recommendation 4 being re-worded (by adding the suggested bold text) to distinguish between the areas for which tenants are individually responsible for maintaining (the let plots) and the areas that the Town Council is responsible for maintaining (the unlet plots and those areas not forming the let plots) and subject to recommendation 5 being re-worded by the removal of the words "from horticultural machinery dealers";
 - (4) *that subject to the approval of the Town Council all allotment maintenance work **to areas within allotment sites that do not form the plots let to tenants** involving the use of machinery to be undertaken by suitably qualified and experienced contractors only, and the Town Clerk be requested to explore the options available with a view to putting the necessary additional maintenance arrangements into effect; and*
 - (5) *that, in the event of (4) above being supported, the Town Clerk seek early expressions of interest ~~from horticultural machinery dealers~~ for the disposal of the existing equipment at best consideration.*

7/116 FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR 1 JUNE TO 31 JULY 2008

The Committee considered the report of the Finance Administrator (agenda item 10 refers).

RESOLVED

that the financial statement for June and July 2008 be noted.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Paul Saunders addressed the Committee explaining that as far as he was aware the Non-Corporate Allotment Maintenance Budget was originally set up as a portion from the Corporate Allotment Maintenance Budget because the tenants were unhappy with the corporate works. This allocation of funds to each site allowed allotment tenants to carry out work to keep the sites tidy. The equipment purchased was always in the custody of the Town Council and it was only because the tenants requested use of the equipment that the maintenance by allotment tenants has become an issue. The Allotment Tenant Working Group feels that they are back to square one and the best resolution would be a satisfactory level of allotment maintenance on all sites. Paul added that the two sites which have been given awards have been maintained by tenant representatives of the site and allotment tenants.

The Town Clerk responded, informing the Committee that the Non-Corporate Allotment Maintenance Budget was a portion of the Corporate Maintenance Budget which had been top sliced to allow tenants at their request to carry out minor maintenance and tidying up work on allotment sites in support of work carried out by the appointed contractor. The Town Clerk explained that there was no reason why the individual allotment sites could not continue to hire skips to help with clearance of rubbish on sites. However, due to the advice from the Health and Safety Officer the use of equipment by tenants and tenant representatives on areas of allotment sites not forming let plots could not continue as such work came under the Health and Safety at Work Act and placed a legal obligation on the Town Council concerning its method of execution.

Chairman

SB/HD
25/09/08