

Minutes Amenities (Including Cemetery) Committee

Amenities Committee

Date 05/12/2023
Time 18:00 - 19:25
Location King's House; Council Chamber
Present Mike Brindle, David Evans, Chris Harvey, Terry Jermy (Chair), Mac Macdonald, Hazel McCambridge (Vice Chair), Ann Blackbourn, David Blackbourn, Terry Land, Adam Mitchell, Victor Peters, and Matthew Stirrup.

Officers Alan Yorke (Deputy Town Clerk and Finance Officer)
Nick Thompson (Town Team Manger)

Members of the public There were no members of the public in attendance.

MINUTES

492/23 DECLARATIONS OF ANY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

None.

493/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies Councillors Carla Barreto and Stuart Terry.

494/23 MINUTES

RESOLVED: The minutes of the Amenities Committee meeting held on 7th November 2023, which were received by Council on 28th November 2023 are a true record and signed/initialled by the Committee Chairman.

495/23 TOWN TEAM MANAGER'S REPORT

The Committee discussed the report from the Town Team Manager which had been circulated prior to the meeting:

- The Committee noted that positive steps being made regarding the appointment and assistance of graziers.
- The Committee noted would be good if feedback on the Speed Awareness Monitor (SAM2 is received from Highways and Norfolk Police), so that the camera can be fixed in the correct position.
- Norfolk County Council (NCC) is not looking after their own property and appears to be ignoring the declining quality of bridgework on the Nun's Bridges, which is a vital river crossing for Thetford. Severe bad weather or vehicles could bring the wall down. The Committee requested that NCC be approached to address these maintenance matters.
- The Committee noted that the Town Team had also assisted with the preparations for the Christmas Lights Switch On during November and thanked the Town Team for their hard work.
- The Committee noted the difficulties of getting consents from Historic England to get consents to address the excess vegetation on Castle Mound.

Action Points:

1. The Chair of the Amenities Committee to write to Norfolk County Council (NCC) to request that necessary maintenance is undertaken.
2. The Chair of the Amenities to write to Historic England regarding consent to clear the excess vegetation for next season on the Castle Mound and Ramparts.

The report was noted.

496/23 REVIEW OF THE MANAGEMENT OF WILDFLOWER MEADOWS

The Committee received a presentation from Mr Ian Woodward on managing the Council's wildflower meadows, which information was also detailed in a document circulated prior to the meeting:

- Three locations in Thetford to create wildflower meadows, following a public consultation (Barnham Cross Common, School Plain, and Lady Gentle Meadow), has been successful and different species have appeared.
- Signage and information panels containing QR Codes are important to inform members of the public of the Council's aims in nurturing wildflower meadows.
- Breckland Flora Group (Ian Woodward) and Plantlife.org.uk are useful resources to access as and when required.
- On those pieces of land owned by Thetford Town Council which are left as wildflower meadows, pathways need to be cut in and litter picking needs to be enhanced and monitored.

RESOLVED: The Town Team Manager to liaise with Councillor Hazel McCambridge and Ian Woodward to develop a Wildflower Meadow Action Plan, to include enhanced litter picking and monitoring.

(this resolution to also be noted as an action point).

497/23 BURIAL ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

The Committee discussed the report prepared by the Burial Administrator, which had been circulated prior to the meeting:

- The Committee noted that there is a capacity issue regarding the Cemetery and further investigations need to be done to enable changes to be made to the Cemetery operation.

The report was noted.

498/23 PRELIMINARY FINANCIAL REPORT (AMENITIES)

The Committee discussed the preliminary Amenities Financial Report for the eight months ended 30 November 2023:

- Rural Payments income will only be £15,000 this year so this will need to be considered when budgeting in future years.
- Trees surveying costs will be exceeded by £1,000 noting that additional costs may be incurred from possible tree works in Sir Frederick's Wood
- Overall, net expenditure is lower than budget.

The financial report was noted.

499/23 PRELIMINARY FINANCIAL REPORT (CEMETERY)

The Committee discussed the preliminary Cemetery Financial Report for the eight months ended 30 November 2023:

- Income has been billed and is up to date but is below budget due to cremations being pursued more than burials.
- In respect of grass cutting, the flailing/mechanical cutting has been done, but the hand cutting is still to be completed at the cemetery, but this is scheduled.

The financial report was noted.

500/23 UPDATE ON THE AMENITIES BUDGET FOR 2024/25

The Committee discussed an update on the preparation of the Amenities Budget as well as the Cemetery Budget for 2024/25:

- The Cemetery Budget will be discussed at the Amenities Committee meeting in January 2024.
- The Amenities Budget has incorporated recommendations that were made.
- Open Space Maintenance has declined compared to earlier budget versions as minimal mechanical cutting of the Council's open spaces expected in the budget year.
- Toilets expenditure has declined due to expected changes in the toilet cleaning model.

It was noted that the budget will be discussed at Finance and Personnel in December, for recommendation to 'Special' Full Council in the second week of January 2024.

The update was noted.

501/23 SMALL GRANTS

The Committee considered three Small Grant Applications that have been previously circulated to Committee Councillors:

- Thetford Methodist Church - to purchase kitchen equipment to support a lunch club plus A-Frame boards for advertising.

Councillor Chris Harvey proposed, and Councillor Hazel McCambridge seconded.

- Thetford Rugby Club – to attend courses, apply for DBS checks and printing advertising material.

Councillor Mike Brindle proposed, and Councillor Mac Macdonald seconded.

Cloverfield Community Church also applied for a Small Grant and following a discussion it was agreed that the request be denied as their application was outside the conditions of the grant programme. The Committee wanted Cloverfield Community Church to apply for other programmes that qualify for the grant framework.

RESOLVED: That the two Small Grant Applications be approved and that the Committee Officer contact the Cloverfield Community Church.

Action Point: Committee Officer to contact Cloverfield Community Church regarding re-submission of the Small Grant Application.

502/23 FINALISATION OF THE PARISH PARTNERSHIP BID FOR 2024/25

The Committee discussed a Parish Partnership Bid of £25,000 is to be made for the bridge to link with the path that was included in the 2022/23 Parish Partnership Bid:

- The Committee Officer informed the Committee that the project itself remains the same, but there have been amendments.
- The Committee was shown the Application Form, which needs to be submitted by 7th December 2023.

Councillor Terry Jermy proposed, and Councillor Chris Harvey seconded.

RESOLVED: The Parish Partnership Bid of £25,000 was approved.

503/23 APPLICATION TO ERECT A CHRISTMAS TREE AT THE CEMETERY

The Committee considered a request to erect a Christmas tree by a local funeral director at the Cemetery:

- This request is submitted most years, the tree is erected inside the Chapel, the event is well supported, members of the public appreciate it, and it attracts positive comments.
- The Committee thanked Mark Skinner for providing the Christmas tree and wooden hearts for members of the public to commemorate lost loved ones with messages.

RESOLVED: The request to erect a Christmas tree at the cemetery was approved.

504/23 REQUEST TO HOLD A SWIMMING EVENT NEAR FORD MEADOW

The Committee considered an application to hold a swimming event on the River Thet near Ford Meadow on 22 September 2024 as set out in the documentation circulated prior to the meeting:

- Subject to usual Risk Assessments etc being provided.
- Good for the public type of event, so Charitable Rate to be charged.

Councillor Mac Macdonald proposed, and Councillor Hazel McCambridge seconded:

RESOLVED: That the swimming event be approved subject to Public Liability Insurance being provided, and the Charitable Rate being charged for use of the Council's Open Space.

505/23 HEALTH & SAFETY MATTERS

The Committee noted that no health & safety matters have arisen since the last meeting, but the Chair reported that Health & Safety will appear on all Committees' Agendas since being suggested at Full Council. Issues can be raised at any time and Councillors do not have to wait for meetings to occur as we are all responsible for Health & Safety.

The update was noted.

506/23 CORRESPONDENCE

The Committee discussed correspondence received:
Breckland Council contacted the Council regarding an Application for Coronation Living Heritage Fund - Community Orchards. Grant funding is being offered from £100 to £5,000 to plant community orchards by purchasing trees, along with stakes and tubes to protect them while they grow. A minimum of 5 trees are classed as an 'orchard' for this purpose and maintenance costs, e.g. to water and care for the plants, are not part of the funding. Application for funds can be made between 5th December 2023 and 5th January 2024.

Action Point: Officers to submit Application Form on behalf of the Council.

The correspondence was noted.

507/23 ACTION POINTS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The Committee reviewed the action points carried forward from previous meetings:
The following are carried forward to the January 2024 meeting: -

MINUTE REFERENCE	ACTION PLAN	PROPOSED DATE
60/23	Letter to be written to Environment Agency (EA) to reduce frequency of groundwater monitoring.	In progress. Contact now made with Environment Agency and past groundwater monitoring reports have now been submitted to the EA. The EA are currently updating their files. To be completed by 31st December 2023.
213/23	A cheque presentation to be organised for the Thetford Town Cricket Club regarding their successful Small Grant Application.	Councillor Terry Jermy to organise the presentation with Thetford Town Cricket Club.
332/23	Town Team Manager to contact NCC and Thetford Academy regarding the refurbishment of the underpass at Croxton Road.	In Progress communicating with NCC
336/23	Burial Administrator to provide a comparative analysis of funeral fees for Suffolk, so that it can be benchmarked against the average. Suggestions made by previous Cemetery Committees to be re-considered. Councillor Mac Macdonald is happy to research additional cemetery income options.	Comparative data has now been obtained. It now needs to be used to prepare an officers' recommendation to the Committee. Organise a working meeting to explore additional income options in January 2024.
338/23	Officers to investigate any other options identified in the discussions relating to the renewal of the Council's fleet.	Still in progress.
341/23	Town Team Manager to investigate the land ownership and the suitability of installation of a bin by Thetford Grammer School.	Still in Progress.
424/23	Councillor Mac Macdonald to provide a list of bell ringers to the Committee Officer.	Still in Progress.
427/23	Schedule a review of the Cemetery Rules.	To be completed by 30 th June 2024.

The action points were noted.

508/23 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Committee discussed any consultation or media release required:

- Publicise the Town Team's work during December on social media.
- The Communications Officer has already sent a press release regarding the erection of a Christmas tree in the Cemetery.

The media releases were approved.

509/23 COMMITTEE OFFICER'S UPDATE

None.

Chairman