

Minutes
Amenities Committee
Democratic Services

Date 09/01/2024
Time 18:00 - 19:36
Location King's House, Council Chamber
Present Carla Barreto, Chris Harvey, Terry Jermy (Chair),
Mac Macdonald, Hazel McCambridge (Vice Chair), and Stuart Terry.

Officers Alan Yorke (Acting Town Clerk),
Nick Thompson (Town Team Manager),
Karen Robinson (Committee Clerk).

Members of the public There was one member of the public in attendance.

MINUTES

551/23 DECLARATIONS OF ANY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

None.

552/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies: Councillor David Evans.
Absent: Councillor Mike Brindle.

553/23 MINUTES

RESOLVED: The minutes of the Amenities Committee meeting held on 5th December 2023 were agreed as a true record and signed/initialled by the Committee Chairman.

554/23 TOWN TEAM MANAGER'S REPORT

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

- Residents have reported that they are pleased with the cleaning of the Glebe Close underpass, which should be publicised.
- Castle Mound and Ramparts has been visited by contractors, Historic England has been contacted, works to commence before the bird nesting season begins.
- The Speed Awareness Monitor (SAM2) has recently been installed on Castle Street for 4 weeks and will then be moved to London Road.
- Nun's Bridges/Spring Walk – grassed areas to be monitored as the area is being mis-used by members of the public.
- Several graziers have been contacted and are keen to support the Council with livestock grazing.
- The Committee noted that there are a few areas in and around the town where commercial bins are situated outside front entrances to businesses and sometimes on the road outside premises.

Action Points:

1. Town Team Manager to contact Councillor Chris Harvey regarding the SAM2 being relocated to Icknield Way.
2. Town Team Manger to contact Breckland Council regarding the commercial bins' issues.

The report was noted.

555/23 REVIEW OF OPPORTUNITIES TO FURTHER DEVELOP THE CEMETERY

The Committee received a presentation from Sue MacDonald to consider suggestions on how best to further develop the Cemetery so that sufficient funds will be available to enable the Cemetery to be maintained on an ongoing basis and for burials to continue in the longer-term:

- Thetford Cemetery has a chapel plus a water supply to the site which are good assets.
- Administration tasks (regulations, the foundation of everything, annual reviews), public-facing tasks (enquiries and complaints, sexton duties, at the most traumatic time), and the generation of new revenue (memorial trees, plaques, benches, Sanctum Vaults for cremated remains), are required to enable the cemetery to function.
- Current challenges faced by the Council are water table issues and governance issues (updating of Cemetery related policies in particular.)
- An exercise of mapping the trees was suggested and enhanced advertising.

The presentation was noted and Sue MacDonald was thanked.

The key actions from the presentation were as follows: -

- Cemetery Policy to be reviewed.
- Layout of the cemetery to be sent to Committee members.

Action Point: Cemetery Development Plan to be taken forward by the Working Group and first draft to be presented in six months' time.

556/23 VARIOUS CEMETERY RELATED MATTERS

The Committee discussed various matters relating to the cemetery:

1. BURIAL ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

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

The report was noted.

2. REVIEW OF OPENING HOURS OF CEMETERY

The Committee discussed the trialling of extending the opening hours of the Cemetery, including feedback on the survey that was carried out, on documentation which was circulated prior to the meeting:

- Results of the online survey received 12 responses.
- There were only a few complaints regarding misuse of the cemetery.
- Automatic gates installation costs exceed £11,000.

RESOLVED: The vehicular gate of the Cemetery be open from 8.00am to 7.00pm in the summer period (1 April to 30 September) and 8.00am to 4.00pm in the winter period (1 October to 31 March). The London Road and Sweyn Close pedestrian gates be open at all times in the summer period and close at 4pm in the winter.

3. CEMETERY FEES AND CHARGES

The Committee reviewed recommendations from officers on the review of Cemetery fees based on a benchmarking exercise with other local councils in Norfolk and Suffolk, which was circulated prior to the meeting

Councillor Mac Macdonald proposed, and Councillor Carla Barreto seconded:

RESOLVED: That the recommendations set out in Annex A be approved.

4. APPLICATION FOR A MEMORIAL BENCH AT THE CEMETERY

The Committee discussed a Memorial Bench Application that has been previously distributed to Committee Councillors.

RESOLVED: The Memorial Bench Application was approved.

Action Point: The Committee asked officers to write a letter of thanks to Mark Skinner for providing the Christmas tree at the cemetery.

557/23 PRELIMINARY FINANCIAL REPORT (AMENITIES)

The Committee discussed the preliminary Amenities Financial Report for the nine months ended 31 December 2023:

The Financial Report was noted.

558/23 PRELIMINARY FINANCIAL REPORT (CEMETERY)

The Committee discussed the preliminary Cemetery Financial Report for the nine months ended 31 December 2023:

The Financial Report was noted.

559/23 SMALL GRANTS

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

Thetford Short Mat Bowls Club – to purchase replacement equipment to enable the club to continue to provide valuable resources for Thetford residents and promote Thetford in the wider Norfolk community and beyond.

Councillor Chris Harvey proposed, and Councillor Mac Macdonald seconded.

Thetford Singers – to fund the services of an orchestra, venue hire, music hire, publicity, and promotion.

Councillor Stuart Terry proposed, and Councillor Carla Barreto seconded.

Friends of Thetford Museum – to contribute to the cost of the ‘Prince Frederick’s Thetford Museum’ project to mark the centenary of the Ancient House Museum.

Councillor Terry Jermy proposed, and Councillor Carla Barreto seconded.

RESOLVED: That the three Small Grant Applications be approved.

560/23 MONITORING OF AMENITIES’ FACILITIES ON WEEKENDS AND PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

There had been two incidences when the Cemetery had not been opened during the festive break. Officers had suggested the following monitoring procedures: -

- An emergency contact number for the Town Council where a staff member will be contactable out of hours when the main office is closed. This number will be made available and publicised to the Public, Councillors and Emergency Services in the event of an emergency situation.
- The recommendations to the Finance and Personnel Committee are that:
 - A rota for staff be prepared for checking the opening of facilities on weekends and public holidays. Staff claim TOIL for doing this and also be compensated for travel from their home to the various sites.
 - Senior staff monitor the emergency point of contacts, also on a rota basis, over weekends and public holidays.
 - The Council's HR consultants advise on how best to remunerate/compensate staff who are on standby over these periods.

RESOLVED: The appropriate monitoring mechanisms and any changes to signage set out above was approved.

561/23 REQUEST TO HOLD TWO SEPARATE EVENTS ON BARNHAM CROSS COMMON

The Committee considered an application to hold two different events on Barnham Cross Common by BFER on 16 February 2024 and 11 March 2024 as set out in the documentation circulated before the meeting:

- Subject to usual Risk Assessments etc being provided.
- Fees to be waived.

Councillor Chris Harvey proposed, and Councillor Mac Macdonald seconded.

RESOLVED: That the events be approved subject to the Risk Assessments being provided and to waive the fees for use of the Council's Open Space.

562/23 HEALTH & SAFETY

The Committee noted that no health & safety matters have arisen since the last meeting, but should the Council implement signage in and around the town regarding flooding issues.

The update was noted.

563/23 CORRESPONDENCE

The Committee discussed correspondence received: Contractors' removal of Christmas trees in and around the town generating discarded cable ties, possible introduction of financial penalties to be put into contracts henceforth. The Christmas lights decorations are still in place and to be taken down.

The correspondence was noted.

564/23 ACTION POINTS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

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

MINUTE REFERENCE	ACTION PLAN	PROPOSED DATE
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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.
332/23	Town Team Manager to contact NCC and Thetford Academy regarding the refurbishment of the underpass at Croxton Road.	In Progress and continually communicating with NCC.
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.	Completed – information given to Committee Officer.
427/23	Schedule a review of the Cemetery Rules.	To be completed by 30 th June 2024.
495/23	The Chair of the Amenities Committee to write to Norfolk County Council to request that planned future maintenance be brought forward.	Completed – copy of letter to be given to the Committee.
495/23	The Chair of the Amenities to write to Historic England regarding consent to prepare for next season at the Castle Mound and Ramparts.	In progress.
496/23	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.	Will be done before 1 st March 2024.
506/23	Officers to submit Application Form on behalf of the Council for Community Orchards grant (closing date 5 January 2024).	After investigating suitable land, it was decided that it would not be possible to submit a grant. Officers confirmed with Chairman. Noted.

The action points were noted.

565/23 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Committee discussed any consultation or media release required:

- Generate a Press Release regarding the accidental closure of the Cemetery on Christmas Day caused by the Council's contractors.

The media release was approved.

566/23 COMMITTEE OFFICER'S UPDATE

The Committee discussed any update from the Committee Officer since the issue of the agenda:

- Officers submitted an application for a funding bursary with a partnership between Norfolk County Council and Norfolk Bussey Dealership regarding 1 Million trees to be planted. The Council has been awarded £1000, to plant 18 trees at the Cemetery and Barnham Cross Common car park, working with local schools and the community to assist with the planting.

The update was noted.

Chairman

ANNEX A

Recommended increase in Cemetery Fees

Exclusive Right of Burial	Parishioner	Non-Parishioner
Current fee	£550.00	£1,380.00
Proposed charge	£605.00	£1,450.00
Percentage increase (approximate)	10%	5%

The reason for a lower non-parishioner fee increase is that it is already £127.50 more expensive than other local councils in the comparable review.

Internment Fees	Parishioner	Non-Parishioner
Adult Burials		
Current fee for internment single depth	£300.00	£690.00
Proposed change	£330.00	£760.00
Percentage increase (approximate)	10%	10%

Internment Fees	Parishioner	Non-Parishioner
Cremated Remains		
Current charge for internment of cremated remains	£170.00	£330.00
Proposed change	£185.00	£365.00
Percentage increase (approximate)	10%	10%

Monuments (e.g. headstone)	Parishioner	Non-Parishioner
Current fee	£190.00	£380.00
Proposed fee	£210.00	£420.00
Percentage increase (approximate)	10%	10%

There are different charges for different types of monuments. A 10% increase will not result in the fees of Thetford Town Council being higher in most instances than those of comparable local councils.

Searches	Parishioner	Non-Parishioner
Current fee		
One year search	£25.00	£25.00
Each additional year	£25.00	£25.00
Proposed fee		
One year search	£30.00	£30.00
Each additional year	£30.00	£30.00
Certified copy of entry in Register of Burials		
Current fee	£30.00	£35.00
Proposed fee	£35.00	£40.00

<i>Cemetery Chapel</i>	Deed Holder	Non-Deed Holder
Current charge	£70.00	£105.00
Proposed fee	£80.00	£120.00
Percentage increase (approximate)	14%	14%

Recommendation Regarding Children's Burials

Government established a Children's Funeral Fund in 2019 which funds the cost of the burial of children below the age of 18. Some local councils in the comparison study do not charge for child burials. Thetford Town Council do charge in most instances.

We are uncertain that if we charge for child burials, the funeral director pays the fee and claims it from the Children's Funeral Fund or advises the family of the deceased child to do so or whether the local councils who do not charge for child burials claim directly against the Children's Funeral Fund. More work has to be done in this regard and that this be raised at the next Amenities Committee meeting.