

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE
HELD ON MONDAY, 3 SEPTEMBER 2012 AT 7.30PM IN THE CASTLE,
HERTFORD**

PRESENT: Councillor M McCormick in the Chair

Councillors P Boyle, Mrs B Haddock, Mrs B Mansfield and P Ruffles,

IN ATTENDANCE: Cllr Miss I Sigmac (part of meeting)
Ms N Villa, Town Clerk
Ms T Carpenter, Civic Administration Manager
Ms V Hobson, Mudlarks Community Allotment Group (part of meeting)

174. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors D Poole (Unwell), R Radford (Unwell) R Willis (Unwell) and N Wilson (Holiday)

175. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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| Cllr P Ruffles | Agenda Item 6(c) Land at Sele Rd | Advisory Director Groundwork (East Herts appt) |
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176. THE MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2012 were approved as a correct record of the proceedings and the Chairman was authorised to sign same.

177. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES NOT DEALT WITH ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

Cemetery

Concern was expressed that the pathways for Block J had been pegged out, but appeared wider than the 1.2 metres approved at the previous meeting.

It was noted that relatives had been informed that plants on the grass verge of the garden of remembrance would be removed. No adverse comments had been received from relatives in relation to this.

Community Gardening – Flower beds outside Bluecoats

It was noted that Herts County Council had referred this matter to its Legal Department to finalise the details of the permission. The Chairman requested that Councillors provide suggestions for additional sites to expand the community gardening operation.

178. QUESTIONS AND/OR STATEMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None.

179. ALLOTMENTS – STATISTICS AND MAINTENANCE

The Committee received a report detailing the latest statistics for the Town Council's allotment sites, and also maintenance work on the sites.

The Committee expressed its gratitude to the Allotment Officer for the work undertaken to produce the allotment holder profile report, which members considered had been a useful exercise. At a later date it was requested that the matter be re-visited to see if the profiles changed over time.

It was noted that some vacancies now existed on both Cromwell Road and Hertingfordbury sites and it was suggested that members of the Committee advertise the plots available and encourage members of the public to consider allotment gardening.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The allotment statistics and maintenance details be received and noted, with thanks to the Allotment Officer.

180. ALLOTMENTS – MUDLARKS COMMUNITY GARDEN PROJECT

The Committee received a report from Mudlarks regarding the recent activities of the project.

The Committee had been particularly impressed with the Mudlarks colourful display at the Carnival and congratulated the team on winning first place in its class.

It was requested that future reports include information on the work of Mudlarks at St Leonard's Garden, Holy Trinity Churchyard and the Sensory Garden.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee notes the report.

181. LAND AT SELE ROAD

The Committee received a report outlining the progress of the work to establish a Community Allotment Garden at Sele Road.

The Committee was pleased that the Charity Safety Net had shown an interest in assisting in overseeing the membership of the site, however at this stage the Committee considered that the Council should continue to oversee the site until such time as it had become an established site.

Some concern was expressed regarding whether the Council's original vision for the site was being fulfilled, and to this end it was agreed to arrange a meeting with the Project Manager from Groundwork to discuss the finer details of the project and to establish a clear indication for the Committee of the way in which the future management of the site would work. Matters to be discussed included child protection issues and other general practices for the long term management and establishment of community allotments.

The Committee was pleased to note that GlaxoSmithKline had held a successful team building day and had carried out a large amount of improvement work to the site, including weed clearance, construction of raised beds and a herb spiral. However it was noted that in between the site clearance exercises no every day maintenance took place and this was leading to further over grown areas. The possibility of Committee team building days was considered.

A discussion ensued as to proposed charges, if any, to users of the site, however it was considered that it would be difficult to assess a level of charge for the use of the garden given that no specific plot would be allocated to individuals. On balance it was decided that use of the site would be offered free of charge.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) There would be no charge for use of the Community Garden Allotment.
- b) The Committee notes the progress of the development of the site.
- c) A meeting be arranged with the Project Manager at Groundwork to clarify and discuss the direction and progress of the project.

182. WATER HARVESTING AT ALLOTMENTS

The Committee received a report outlining water harvesting methods at allotment sites. The most suitable provision appeared to be through the installation of large water tanks housed under shelters with gutters to harvest rain water and these were available for installation from Groundwork at a cost of £2500 per installation. It was noted that many allotment tenants with sheds currently harvested their own water using this method on a smaller scale and the costs of communal water tanks were considered extremely high when compared to the cost of the provision of water from the mains water supply.

Nevertheless, it was considered that from an environmental point of view the provision of the tanks would be invaluable, and something in

which the Council would be leading the way over other allotment providers and therefore something worthy of further consideration. The Town Clerk suggested that it could be possible to provide such tanks at a much lower cost if the shelters were something that the grounds staff felt qualified to build on the Council's behalf and this was considered worthy for further consideration. It was also suggested that a questionnaire be forwarded to current allotment tenants with the allotment invoices to seek their views on the provision of water tanks and whether the tenants would be inclined to use the tap water less if the tanks were in situ.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The feasibility of the grounds staff building the timber surrounds for the water tanks be explored, along with a questionnaire being forwarded to allotment tenants to ascertain the likely take up of the use of the water supplied in such a way.

183. ALLOTMENT RULES AND REGULATIONS

The Committee had received a copy of proposed revised rules and regulations for allotment tenants. The rules were previously updated in 2009 and since that time it had become apparent that greater definition was required in the general conditions particularly to those rules relating to structures on the sites.

Each point of the document was considered and minor alterations were made on some regulations, particularly relating to clarity and grammatical issues. A discussion took place regarding whether either plastic or metal sheds should be allowable as these materials were considered more secure than timber sheds. Whilst recognising the security issues the Committee considered that from an aesthetic point of view only sheds made of timber and painted in natural colours would be permissible in future. Those sheds currently in situ would be allowed to remain.

The North Road Management Committee had viewed the document in its draft form and had made one or two recommendations, which had been incorporated into the final document, particularly the suggestion relating to the size of wildlife ponds and netting.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

Delegated authority be given to the Town Clerk/Civic Administration Manager, in discussion with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, to incorporate all the recommendations of the Committee into a final document for issue to allotment tenants.

184. CEMETERY AND CLOSED CHURCHYARDS - STATISTICS FOR BURIALS AND INTERMENT OF ASHES

The Committee received a report outlining the recent burials and interment of ashes statistics at the Cemetery along with details of the

maintenance work programme, and a brief report of the plant species recently identified in the All Saints' Church Living Churchyard area.

The Committee noted the increase in burials and cremations on the previous year and enquired which of the two years was typical of the recent trend, as this could affect the discussion of future burial land provision. The Finance Manager confirmed that 2011 had shown a low level of cemetery use in the first half of the year and that 2012 was more typical of the recent annual trend.

It was noted that the provision of a third litter bin in the vicinity of the Pearson Memorial in All Saints Churchyard had not been progressed due to budgetary issues, but that two new bins had been installed to replace the previous small bins.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The report on the statistics for burials and interment of ashes and details of the maintenance work programme be noted.

185. CEMETERY AND CLOSED CHURCHYARDS –BURIAL LAND AVAILABILITY

The Committee received a report which provided an estimate of the number of years' burial space remaining in the Cemetery. Although it was clear that, with 40 years likely space remaining at present, there was no immediate urgency to find a new site, the Committee recognised that, given the scarcity of available land and likely costs involved, it would be prudent to start planning for the future at an early stage. With this in mind it was suggested that a small reserve of £2000 per year be built up over a number of years to prepare funds for the future purchase of land. The site at the corner of the Goldings estate was considered to be a possibility for additional cemetery land being closely situated to the current cemetery and officers were requested to investigate the likely costs involved of purchasing land for burial.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee approves the proposal that £2000 be added to the draft budget to build a small reserve fund towards the purchase and preparation of new cemetery land.
- b) The Committee notes the remainder of the report.

186. SUB COMMITTEES AND ADVISORY SUB COMMITTEES

Hertford Youth Town Council

The Committee had received a copy of the minutes of the Youth Town Council held on 21 June 2012. The Committee considered that the

rounders match organised by the Youth Town Council on 6 July 2012 had been well organised, an excellent initiative and an enjoyable evening. The Committee's thanks were extended to the Youth Cllrs and Officers who made the event possible.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee notes the minutes of the Youth Town Council held on 21 June 2012.

187. FINANCE - 1ST QUARTER INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2012/13

The Committee received a report detailing the first quarter income and expenditure for the Community Services Committee 2012/13.

The Chairman advised the Committee that urgent repair work had been required to the Garden of Remembrance on health and safety grounds, provision for which had not catered for in the budget. It was not clear at this stage, what effect this expenditure would have on any overspend at the end of the financial year.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee notes the first quarter income and expenditure to 30 June 2012.

188. DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2013/14

The Committee had received a first draft of the proposed budget for 2013/14 and noted that the optional budget items suggested by Officers currently stood at £67,000. It was not clear at present what impact this suggested budget would have on the precept

In regard to the proposal for an installation of a safety rail at the end of Block F to allow for more burial spaces closer to the slope, the Committee enquired as to the number of additional burial spaces this was likely to achieve in order to assess a cost/benefit comparison for this item.

It was noted that the Mess Room at the Cemetery was no longer fit for purpose given that the small space was also used as an office for the cemetery supervisor and a storage facility for burial records following the sale of the Cemetery Lodge in 2001. A more detailed report was requested for the next meeting to establish firm costs for a replacement prefabricated building and planning permission requirements.

Also in the Cemetery, it was requested that it be ascertained what the potential adverse impact planting wild flowers would be in terms of seeding. It was also agreed that Cllr Ruffles would liaise with the Groundstaff in respect of the suggestion to replant the Chapel rose bed and the potential effect of "rose sickness" on any new roses. The Finance Manager confirmed that the budget for refurbishing benches

related to refurbishment costs only and did not include provision for hard standing underneath them.

It was noted it was also becoming urgent to carry out repairs to the War Memorial and it was felt more than the suggested £4000 would be required to complete the full repairs required. More information of costs was requested.

The Chairman requested suggestions from members regarding further budgetary suggestions for 2013/14

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee notes the report.

The meeting closed at 9.50 pm.