

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE  
HELD ON MONDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 2008 AT 7.30PM IN THE CASTLE,  
HERTFORD**

PRESENT: Councillor N Wilson, in the Chair.

Councillors J F Cook, Miss K P Darby, Mrs H P Durbin, J C Hedley,  
Mrs S M Newton, R A K Radford and Mrs B M Wrangles.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors S Bright and Dr L E Radford  
Ms N L Villa, Town Clerk  
Miss M Challis, Assistant to the Town Clerk  
Mr S Davies, Finance Manager.

169. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were received from Councillor Mrs B S Haddock, and D R Poole.

170. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors J F Cook declared a personal interest in item 6 relating to allotments, as an North Road allotment holder and to item 7 relating to North Road Cemetery due to his family connections.

Councillor Mrs B M Wrangles declared a personal interest in item 6 relating to allotments, as an Cromwell Road allotment holder.

171. **THE MINUTES**

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2008 were approved as a correct record and the Chairman authorised to sign the same.

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

The Committee received an updated Action Sheet.

(a) Cllr Durbin asked for an update on the additional signage which was to be purchased to remind dog walkers to keep dogs on leads. Town Clerk will pursue as a matter of urgency.

(b) Cllr Cook queried the suitability of the new ramp at Cromwell Road for wheelchairs. Town Clerk confirmed that the gradient of the newly installed ramp at the Ware End of Cromwell Road Allotments does meet the criteria required for the provision of disability access.

(c) Cllr Cook queried whether the Town Council has secured a contractor to rotivate the new allotments at Cromwell Road. The Town Clerk confirmed that Mr Alan Heathcoat has been selected as the chosen contractor to plough the currently fallow land on Cromwell Road Allotments as it is known that his work is good value.

It is not necessary to put this work to tender, as it falls below £2500 as stated in the Town Council's Constitution – Financial Regulations (2.3), item 11.1 (b).

- (d) Cllr Durbin asked for an update on Crawley's Field. The Town Clerk confirmed that information subsequent to the last Committee meeting has made it clear that the land is not suitable for allotment use and the Council will re-evaluate following legal advice. The Town Clerk has already sought such advice and will go ahead with the Notice to Quit to the current tenants as the licence for Crawley's Field expired in 2001. Should the existing tenants wish to remain on site, it is on the understanding that a more up-to-date formal agreement be drawn up. Councillor R A K Radford requested that the committee consider the feasibility of selling the land rather than letting it.
- (e) Cllr J Cook informed the Committee that the oak tree in Block B in North Road Cemetery has lost branches which need removal.
- (f) Cllr Mrs H P Durbin requested that information be made available for people who may enquire about Woodland Burials.
- (g) Cllr J Cook commented on the Lime Trees at St Leonards, stating that they should be removed. The Town Clerk advised that there is no preservation order on the lime trees at St. Leonards/Holy Trinity at present; however a preservation order will be enforced if the Council attempts to remove them. Cllr Cook was asked by the Chair to prepare a report for the next Community Services meeting regarding the damage that the trees are causing to the fabric of the wall.
- (h) Cllr Cook suggested that a stockpile of mulch will be created from tree works within St. Leonards' grounds, rather than incur the cost of purchasing new.
- (i) Cllr Cook queried the state of the drainage at the Skateboard Park. The Town Clerk confirmed that the drainage conforms to ROSPA regulations. The current drainage problems are caused by leaves blocking the drains.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Action Sheet be received and noted.

### **173. QUESTIONS AND/OR STATEMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

There were no members of the public wishing to speak.

#### 174. ALLOTMENTS – NORTH ROAD ALLOTMENTS SITE

Mr B Wilkerson thanked the Town Council for its sponsorship of the Horticultural Society Show, and allowing the Castle to be used as the venue.

An addendum to the report of North Road Plotolders Group was made by Mr Wilkerson, Secretary to Group:

As I have to submit my report three weeks prior to this meeting, I have the following update:

##### Consultation

The Council is committed to consult with the Group before changing or introducing rules. Again we are excluded. The report on the keeping of chickens and rabbits is inaccurate and at points makes the Council a laughing stock. People keep rabbits to breed for meat not as pets; a restriction to two is ludicrous.

The comment on the chickens on North Road in 2004 concerned one complaint with counter allegations of theft which was more to do with personalities than animal welfare. This situation was not fully investigated by the Council and therefore the full facts are not recorded. The combined coop and run the four hens were kept in was R.S.P.C.A. approved and recommended by poultry keeping associations.

It seems that when a difficult situation arises this Council seeks to throw a blanket rule at allotment holders instead of dealing with the problem under existing legislation.

If you introduce these new rules, every town council tenant will require a new leasing agreement to include them. However if tonight you agree that the keeping of livestock in Hertford must comply with the allotment legislation and inform one poultry keeper of your decision, no further action will be required.

The North Road Plotolders are not prepared to be bound by rules that we have not been consulted on.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The report from the North Road Plotolders Group be received and noted.

#### 175. ALLOTMENT STATISTICS

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The allotment statistics be received and noted.

#### **176. ALLOTMENTS MAINTENANCE**

Cllr Durbin queried whether Notices to Quit were preceded by any other correspondence. The Town Clerk confirmed that two letters are sent and a site visit conducted prior to tenants being issued with Notice to Quit.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) Grounds Supervisors Stuart Baker and his team were to be thanked for his clear and concise report and the work they undertake on the Councils behalf. Town Clerk to draft a letter from the Committee to be signed by the Committee Chairman.
- b) The report on Allotments Maintenance be received and noted.

#### **177. HENS AND RABBITS ON ALLOTMENTS**

The Committee receive a report on the current situation and were asked to adopt new rules and regulations regarding the keeping of Hens and Chickens on allotment land.

Cllr Hedley queried the necessity to refer to an incident in 2004 in the background report and the Town Clerk confirmed that this was not included to imply wrongdoing of any allotment holder but to make the Council aware of any potential problems with the keeping of hens and rabbits on allotments.

Cllr Cook queried whether the rules relating to fire fighting slaughtering are defined clearly enough. Cllr Newton explained that DEFRA regulations are quite specific and that proposed Rules and Regulations do meet the requirements. The Town Clerk confirmed that the report had been produced in consultation with DEFRA and that the proposed Rules and Regulations, included rules relating the keeping of Cockerels, meet both the statutory and DEFRA requirements and agreed to clarify the fire fighting guidance.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

Rules and Regulations for the keeping of hens/chickens and rabbits on allotment sites be approved subject to clarification of the fire fighting equipment requirements.

#### **178. CEMETERY AND CLOSED CHURCHYARDS - STATISTICS FOR BURIALS AND INTERMENT OF ASHES**

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The report on the statistics for burials and interment of ashes is noted.

#### **179. CEMETERY AND CLOSED CHURCHYARD MAINTENANCE**

Cllr Cook requested that a large branch of the horse chestnut tree at the western end of All Saints churchyard be removed, as it broke away

some time ago and is clearly visible from the church door. Town Clerk will request the ground staff remove this branch as soon as the tree contractors are in attendance again.

A report on the Horse Chestnut Disease current plaguing Horse Chestnut trees nationally was requested for the next meeting.

Cllr Radford requested that a letter be forwarded to East Herts. Council expressing the Committee's dismay at the severe level of pruning undertaken on the Castle's Fig Tree, which has caused considerable damage to the tree.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The report on the maintenance work programme for the Cemetery and Closed Churchyard be received and noted and
- b) The Town Clerk is requested to write to East Herts. Council to express the dismay of the Committee concerning the treatment of the Fig Tree in the Castle grounds

#### **180. CEMETERY AND CLOSED CHURCHYARD UNAUTHORISED MEMORIALS**

The Committee received a report on the current status of Block F at North Road Cemetery. The Town Clerk advised that several plot holders have been written to twice and asked to bring their plots in line with the Council's Rule and Regulations for the Cemetery but have failed to do so. The Town Clerk outlined the next steps required by the Local Authorities Cemetery Order 1977 which would allow the Council to take sensitive corrective action on these plots and sought committee approval to proceed.

Several Councillors agreed that the guidelines and the proposed course of action was both reasonable and desirable to ensure the Council maintained the Cemetery in good order provided that the Town Council Ground Staff ensure that any changes made to unauthorised memorials is done as sensitively as possible and that in accordance with the Local Authorities Cemetery Order 1977, any items removed from graves must be kept and stored for 12 months.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The removal of unauthorised memorials in Block F of North Road Cemetery, in accordance with the procedure laid out in s16(1) of the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 is approved.

Councillor S Bright left the meeting at this point for another appointment.

**181. SUB-COMMITTEES AND ADVISORY SUB-COMMITTEES - HERTFORD YOUTH TOWN COUNCIL**

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Minutes of the Hertford Youth Town Council meeting held on 21 August 2008 be received and noted.

**182. HERTFORD COUNTY TOWN GATEWAY**

It was clarified that the Council's planning application has been refused for both the archway and the advertising.

The Town Clerk informed the Committee that should the Gateway not go ahead, the grant of £5000 towards this project from Quality of Place fund may be used for interpretation boards around the town (subject to planning permission). Other funding received from local businesses must be returned or permission sought for alternative use.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (a) The letter from East Herts District Council is noted.
- (b) The Committee defer any further action regarding the Gateway until it hears of the outcome of Scrutiny Committee at East Herts. Council which is currently investigating advertising signage on roundabouts. The date of the Calling Scrutiny is thought to be 10 November 2008.

**183. FINANCE - BUDGET SUMMARY OF SERVICES MANAGED BY THE COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE**

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The budget summary of services managed by the Community Services Committee up to 30 September 2008 is noted.

**184. FINANCE – DRAFT BUDGET 2009/10**

The Committee received a report on the current proposed budget for 2009/10 which included a list of optional projects for Community Services Committee. This included a recommendation from Finance, Policy and Administration Committee to undertake to complete the repairs to North Road Cemetery Railings over two years.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee should split the project of installing new cemetery railings along North Road and Bramfield Road over two years.

b) The Committee **RECOMMEND** the inclusion of the remaining optional projects as described in the Draft Budget report in the 2009/10 budget proposals.

**185. FINANCE - GRANT APPLICATIONS**

The Committee considered the following applications and **RESOLVED** in accordance with its powers under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 that the Committee should incur the following expenditure, which in its opinion is in the interest of the area, or its inhabitants and will benefit them in a manner commensurate with the expenditure:

Sele Farm Women's Club be awarded a grant of £250 towards the running costs and speaker's fees.

It was agree to increase the group's application of £200 to £250 in view of the good work they do in the community.