

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE  
HELD ON MONDAY, 12 NOVEMBER 2012 AT 7.30PM IN THE CASTLE,  
HERTFORD**

PRESENT: Councillor P Ruffles in the Chair

Councillors P Boyle, Mrs B Haddock, Mrs B Mansfield, D Poole, R Willis and N Wilson.

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms N Villa, Town Clerk  
Ms T Carpenter, Civic Administration Manager  
Mr S Davies, Finance Manager  
Mudlarks Community Allotment Group (part of meeting)  
North Road Plotters Group (part of meeting)

**245. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillor M McCormick (Work Commitment)

**246. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr P Ruffles	Agenda Item 6(c) Land at Sele Rd	Advisory Director Groundwork (East Herts appt)
----------------	-------------------------------------	--

**247. THE MINUTES**

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 September 2012 were approved as a correct record of the proceedings and the Chairman was authorised to sign same.

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

Cemetery – Garden of Rest

It was requested that action be taken to remove the shrubs that had been planted behind various headstones in the Garden of Rest, particularly the budleia.

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

None.

**250. ALLOTMENTS – STATISTICS AND MAINTENANCE**

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

It was noted that there continued to be a few vacancies on some sites and it was requested that a press release be issued to promote the allotments. Furthermore, the Committee requested that allotment holders be approached to ascertain their interest in an allotment site open day, to showcase the allotment sites to members of the public.

The Committee welcomed the proposal to alter the cutting regime of the hawthorn hedge at Cromwell Road to bi-annual and to seek the advice of the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust prior to carrying out future maintenance to the hedge.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The allotment statistics and maintenance details be received and noted.

#### **251. ALLOTMENTS – MUDLARKS COMMUNITY GARDEN PROJECT**

The Committee received a report from Mudlarks regarding the recent activities of the project, including an update of the progress of the maintenance work to Holy Trinity Churchyard, St Leonard's Garden and the Sensory Garden at the Castle.

The Committee had been particularly impressed at the improvements Mudlarks had made to the Sensory Garden at the Castle, recognising that the garden was enjoyed and appreciated by members of the public, and were happy to arrange for a plaque to be installed to recognise the work of Mudlarks at this Garden.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **notes** the report.

#### **252. NORTH ROAD PLOTHOLDERS GROUP**

The Committee received a report regarding the recent activities of the North Road Plotters Group.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **notes** the report.

#### **252. 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 to note that a meeting had recently taken place with three local individuals who had expressed an interest in forming the core of a community group to the work at the site and to encourage other local individuals to join. A series of weekly on site meetings would take place throughout November, with a further meeting

arranged to take place at the Castle in December. The Awards for All grant had provided funding for Groundwork involvement at the site until February 2013, during which time workshops would be arranged to enable the first spring planting to take place. Further grant funding had also been provided to install a water harvester and raised beds.

The Council had carried out improvement work to the perimeter fence and the installation of a gate with ramp access, and a notice board and tool shed would also be provided.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **notes** the report.

### **253. ALLOTMENT RENTS**

The Committee received a report outlining a proposal to increase allotment rents from £4.20 per pole to £4.50 per pole with effect from 1 January 2014.

The Committee noted that Hertford remained extremely competitive in its allotment rents and generally provided a higher level of service than neighbouring Councils including, for example, the provision of toilets. It was also noted that the costs associated with running the allotments, particularly the cost of water, had increased considerably in the last few years. On this basis were happy to approve the recommended increase.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The allotment charges be increased to £4.50 per pole with effect from 1 January 2014 with continued provision of a 50% concession for senior citizens.

### **254. 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 also a recommendation for work in the Cemetery at Block F.

The Committee noted the recommendation to install a safety rail at Block F to prevent members of the public from falling down a steep bank when tending graves. The Committee considered that the safety of members of the public was a priority and that £3000 should be included in the Budget for 2013/14.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **notes** the report.
- b) The Committee **recommends** to the Finance, Policy and Administrative Committee that £3000 be included in the budget for 2013/14 for the installation of a safety rail.

#### **255. NEW CEMETERY MESS ROOM AND WORKSHOP FACILITY**

The Committee received a report which provided information regarding the current working conditions of the staff working at the Cemetery and to request the Committee to consider building a new combined mess room, workshop and equipment store at the Cemetery.

The Committee was advised that the current work area was not large enough to accommodate a suitably sized and secure works unit due to the close proximity of burials in the area and that an alternative site had been identified within the Cemetery which could accommodate a purpose built working space for the grounds staff.

The Committee recognised that the Council had a duty of care to provide a suitable working environment for its employees and was therefore recommended the inclusion of £10,000 into the budget for 2013/14 to cover initial feasibility, design, planning and tender costs. The Committee further noted that the building work could be funded through a public works loan.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee recommends that £10,000 be included in the budget for 2013/14 as a provision for initial feasibility, design, planning consent and tender to be undertaken.

#### **257. PATH SURFACE FOR NEW GARDEN OF REST IN BLOCK J**

The Committee received a report outlining a comparison of possible path surfaces for the new Garden of Rest at Block J in the Cemetery.

Several surfaces had been outlined, with costs, durability and appearance highlighted and after discussion the Committee considered that tarmac, being the most durable and easily repairable, was the most suitable surface for the new area. Tarmac would also match the rest of the paths in the Cemetery.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **approves** the use of tarmac for the new surfaces on Block J
- b) The Committee **notes** the report.

## **258. 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 27 September 2012. The Committee was pleased to note that several of the Youth Councillors had volunteered to work at the Remembrance Sunday Service and it was requested that a letter be forwarded to those Youth Cllrs expressing the Council's appreciation for their assistance on Remembrance Sunday. It was also requested that a similar letter be forwarded to the Mayor's cadet for leading the prayers at the service.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **notes** the minutes of the Youth Town Council held on 27 September 2012.

## **259. FINANCE - 1<sup>ST</sup> HALF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2012/13**

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

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee notes the first half income and expenditure to 30 September 2012.

## **260. DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2013/14**

The Committee had received a recommended draft of the proposed budget for 2013/14 and noted the optional budget items suggested.

The Committee noted that in order to aim for a close to zero percentage increase in the precept, approximately £30,000 needed to be lost from the list of the optional budget items.

The Committee discussed an order of priority for items for inclusion in the budget and agreed the following order on the understanding that it was likely that only the first few items would be able to be progressed if a zero percent precept increase was to be achieved. The final details of items to be included in the recommendation to the Finance, Policy and Administration Committee will be determined once the tax base for Hertford is published by East Herts Council in early December.

1.	5340	Cemetery Mess Room	£10,000
2.	5240	War Memorial repairs/cleaning	£4,000
3.	5340	Provision of safety rail in block F	£3,500
4.	5340	Cemetery resurfacing and edging	£10,000
5.	5240	Preparation of block J	£5,000
6.	5340	Resurfacing of Garden of Remembrance	£3,500

7.	5342	Memorial Repairs	£10,000
8.	5030	Allotment Site Improvements	£5,000
9.	5120	War Memorial Reserve	£4,000
10.	5398	Cemetery Land Purchase	£2,000
11.	5180	Community Gardening	£2,000

The building for use by grounds staff was considered the top priority, however it was suggested that a request be made to the Finance Policy and Administration Committee for the initial £10,000 to be funded from either the New Homes Bonus, or the Council's building reserve. This would then allow an opportunity for funding of those projects listed lower on the priority list.

It was noted that work on Block J could be progressed using the budget available in this financial year and therefore additional pathway work could be delayed until 2014/15. It was further noted that the budget for 5180 Community Gardening for 2012/13 was currently unspent and could be rolled forward in to 2013/14 to allow for development of the project next year.

The Town Clerk reminded Members that whilst the intention of the New Homes Bonus is not to supplement the precept, it is available to assist with the development or improvement of infrastructure, which some of the these projects might be considered. The Town Clerk also advised Members that they need to be mindful of the apparent intention of central government to enforce a 2% cap on precept increases from 2013/14, as this would limit the ability of Council to raise funds for delayed and/or new projects in future budget cycles.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **notes** the draft budget; and
- b) The Committee **delegates** authority to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman, to use the above priority list to finalise the recommendation to the Finance, Policy and Administration Committee once the tax base is known.

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm.