

Minutes of the **Open Spaces Committee** held in the Council Chamber, North Street, Ilminster on Tuesday 10 July 2018 at 8.00pm

Present:

Chairman: Cllr S Shepherd

Committee Councillors: P Burton, J Dewick, M Gunn, M James, R Swann and F White.

In Attendance:

Councillors: A Shearman

Officers: Miss J Norris (Town Clerk), Mrs D Salt (and Mr C Pearson (Senior Open Spaces Warden).

No members of the public attended the meeting

OS 186. Apologies for Absence.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Taylor.

OS 187 Declarations of Interest.

No declarations of interest were made in respect of any item on the agenda at this stage of the meeting, however Cllr Shepherd subsequently declared a personal interest in Agenda No 9 Open Spaces Volunteers and Support to Other Organisations as the President of Ilminster Cricket Club

OS 188 Minutes

a) The draft minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2018 were presented for confirmation.

RESOLVED

(i) To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2018 as a correct record.

b) The action list relating to the Open Spaces committee was considered.

- It was reported that the toilet cleaning contract has been awarded and the new arrangements will be implemented in the coming weeks

OS 189 Police Report.

There was no police report and no policing matters were raised or reported.

OS 190 Open Spaces Team Report

The Senior Open Spaces Warden reported upon recent open spaces activities in Ilminster. Highlights and discussion of the report included:

- The path in the cemetery, adjacent to the new cremation plot section, which was broken has been concreted
- The workshop has been re-arranged and the floor has been painted.
- There was a swarm of bees in a tree on the rec. The area has been cordoned off and a bee expert is being consulted as to what to do next.
- A possible new project could be to plant bee friendly plants around the cemetery and have some bee hives in the cemetery.

RESOLVED to note the report

OS 191 Financial Monitoring.

Information about the Open Spaces Committee, income, expenditure and commitments compared with the 2018/19 budget was considered.

Issues discussed included:

- There will be a meeting with the Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk and the Open Spaces Warden to discuss the budget and ensure that there is an awareness of how much money has been allocated to different budget headings and what other expenditure is likely for this financial year.

OS 192. Herne Hill Management Plan.

Changes to the Herne Hill Management Plan were considered so that it can be used as part of the application to designate Herne Hill as a Local Nature Reserve.

Issues discussed during consideration of this agenda item included:

- The plan is a combination of work from many people
- There is a requirement to conduct surveys of species to strengthen the case for the area to be a Nature Reserve
- One possibility to get this work done would be to approach university students to see if they would consider doing any survey's as part of their research

RESOLVED to recommend to the Town Council the approval and adoption of the Herne Hill Management Plan

OS 193. Grass cutting equipment.

Consideration was given to an overall strategy for the procurement and replacement of grass cutting equipment, including purchases that maybe required in this financial year.

Issues discussed during consideration of this agenda item included:

- the size of the machine and what would work well with the terrain of the land
- Keeping the Stiga for cemetery work if it can be repaired, this would then provide a back up if the other machine is not working and requires maintenance.
- The Senior Open Spaces Warden's preferred machine would be the Ferris FW 35 walk behind mower with 48" cutting deck.
- It is very difficult to get a number of quotation from a number of suppliers as there are only limited dealers which generally deal within a specific geographic area.
- The FW35 machine is suitable for commercial use
- The Senior Open Spaces Warden has tried to obtain 3 quotes however only 2 companies would give a quote for this machine.
- One of the quotations included an allowance for part exchange of the flail.
- Will there be a service contract?
- The service arrangements for these machines are that oil should be changed every 200hrs and blades sharpened every 200hrs.
- Training on the machine and how to carry out basic servicing will be part of the package
- Not comparing like for like on the quotes as only one has been asked if the flail can be part exchanged.

RESOLVED

- (i) that a Ferris FW35 walk behind mower with a 48" cutting deck is purchased
- (ii) to recommend to the Town Council meeting that the Ferris FW35 ex demonstrator model is purchased from Supplier A subject to confirmation that the £1,500 part exchange allowance for the flail is to be deducted from the quoted Ferris purchase price

OS 194. Open Spaces Volunteers and Support to Other Organisations

Following on from the discussions at the 26 June 2018 meeting options to consider:

- (i) The types of open spaces activities where volunteers can make a positive contribution.

Issues discussed during consideration of this agenda item included:

- On the volunteer application form people can indicate their preferred areas of work e.g. Herne Hill, cemetery
- Whilst trying to be as flexible as possible, volunteers are asked to give 48hrs notice of their availability / intention to undertake a task so that the Town Council knows who is working, where they are and what needs to be done.
- A volunteer record is kept of when volunteers have "worked" and what tasks they have undertaken.
- It important that volunteers do not do work that would usually be done by paid employees but provide an additional level of service / care; for example volunteers could be used to remove Spanish Bluebells, weed untended graves.
- Build on our volunteers get some pictures together and release a story
- There is a requirement that anybody including councillors who volunteer must fill out volunteer application forms and

- (ii) the support e.g. loan of equipment, carrying out extra grounds maintenance tasks, that is given to other organisations.

Issues discussed during consideration of this agenda item included:

- The hourly costs of not only staff but also equipment.
- Should organisations be charged for use of Town Council equipment regardless if the operator is a Town Council employee or a volunteer.
- It is unlikely that the Town Council could set charges for the use of equipment as this may be seen as a hire fee but it may be possible to ask for monetary donations
- If the Town Council Open Spaces Wardens, using Town Council owned equipment undertake work for other organization in working hours it must not be at the detriment of work required by The Town Council for their own land and responsibilities
- Organisations within Ilminster shouldn't be charged they are contributing to society and it would be a way of the Town Council showing support
- A halfway house could be that the organisations pay 50% of the full rate for a warden and a machine.
- There is an understanding between the Chamber of Commerce and the Town Council that over the period that there are hanging baskets in the town they help each other out as and when required, as an example recently the Chamber of Commerce's water pump broke so the Town Council watered

their hanging baskets - this is an example of good will that exists between the townspeople and the Town Council.

- Consideration should be given as to what primary task are the Wardens been taken away from if they are doing work to support outside organisations.
- Principally it is the football club and cricket club who use the tractor to do ground maintenance e.g. spiking the pitches

Note: 21:09hrs Cllr Shepherd declared a personal interest in this agenda item as President of Ilminster Cricket Club

- During the tenure of the current Town Clerk there has been one major equipment breakage in four years when Town Council equipment was being used by a volunteer.
- Why should tax payers pay to support sporting organisations?
- The percentage of people who use the clubs is small in comparison to the population of Ilminster
- Only people who are listed as Town Council volunteers can use the Town Council's equipment; this means that they are covered by insurance all the forms we have
- Consider whether or not the Town Council wants to operate as a business or as community leaders.

RESOLVED that the hourly staffing costs of the Open Spaces team and the operating individual items of equipment are calculated and reported back to the committee so that the matter can be discussed further.

OS 195. Report From Task & Finish Group

A report was considered from the task and finish group who have been charged with the task of identifying learning from the recent experience when an equipment failure led to a significant reduction in grounds maintenance capability, especially where such learning may help the handling of future similar situations.

Issues discussed during consideration of this agenda item included:

- When it is appropriate to be proactive rather reactive
- Responding to comments made on social media is not always a good idea
- It is important to respond to incorrect facts and correct them but not to engage in discourse
- Due to staffing levels it would be impossible to always make a response within 24hrs, 2 days is a realistic option – this allows for weekends etc

RESOLVED that the Town Clerk reviews the existing media policy and if required a revised Policy is presented to the Town Council for consideration.

The meeting closed at 21:30hrs