

Minutes of the **Open Spaces Committee** held in the Council Chamber, North Street, Ilminster  
on Tuesday 11 September 2018 at 7.30pm

**Present:**

Chairman: Cllr S Shepherd

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

**In Attendance:**

Councillors: J Fowler, A Shearman, T Walker

Officers: Miss J Norris (Town Clerk), Mrs D Salt (Administration Officer (Information))

One member of the public attended.

**OS 196. Apologies for Absence.**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Taylor and White.

**OS 197 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 198 Minutes**

- a) The draft minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2018 were presented for confirmation.

**RESOLVED** to confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2018 as a correct record.

- b) The action list relating to the Open Spaces committee was considered.
- It was reported that on 6<sup>th</sup> Sep 2018 SSDC resolved to support the designation of Herne Hill as a Nature Reserve and delegated making the declaration to Ilminster Town Council. On 10<sup>th</sup> Sep 2018 contact was made with Natural England requesting information on the next steps. The Town Clerk informed the committee that this process could take a couple of years.

**OS 199 Police Report.**

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

**OS 200 Financial Monitoring.**

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

Issues discussed included:

- 430/5 we would reduce the amount charged to the fair for a deposit.
- Currently over spent by £5,000 this figure includes the money for the toilets and maintenance.

**OS 201. Refund of Circus Deposit.**

Consideration was given to returning the deposit received from John Lawson's Circus. The deposit is taken to cover and damage that may arise from their use of the Wharf Lane Recreation Ground.

**RESOLVED** to recommend to the Town Council return the deposit received from John Lawsons Circus.

**OS 202. Grass cutting equipment.**

Consideration was given to the replacement of the existing Stiga grass cutting machine, with particular regard for its use at the cemetery and the Minster.

Discussion included the following

- The stiga is primarily a domestic machine
- The Committee has previously recommended that the stiga only be used for work in the cemetery and church yard.
- It has been suggested that the replacement for the stiga should be a commercial vehicle, when the recent machinery demonstrations took place one of the suggestions was to consider replacing the stiga with a small Ferris machine.
- Some councillors felt that there had been an opportunity to replace the grass cutting equipment with one commercial machine that would be capable of doing all the work. This would avoid having different machines for different areas of work.
- The stiga is still currently serviceable but it doesn't have to be replaced like for like but with a machine that can do the work required.
- the engine is quite healthy in the winter months it would be prudent to have the bed taken off so that it can be repaired and reinforced.
- The budget plan is set up for the stiga to be replaced when it is 5 years old which is this financial year
- The Ferris that was recently purchased was paid for by taking a percentage from all Open Spaces budget headings as there were no reserves set aside for purchasing this piece of equipment.
- There is money in the budget to buy a replacement for the stiga
- Before making a purchase there would need to be some research as to what is an appropriate machine.
- How much longer will the stiga be usable?.
- The new Ferris machine is being used to mow the larger areas, and the stiga is being used at the cemetery and the Minster.

**OS 203. Open Spaces Work**

The Town Clerk provided information on the plans that have been put in place to cover staff absence and other possible temporary solutions.

The report included the following information:

- The Open Spaces Team is currently short staffed the Town Clerk is in the process of making arrangements to cover the work
- The Mayor and the Chair of the Open Spaces Committee have indicated that priority is to be given to Britten's Field, the Warf Lane Rec, the Cemetery and the Minster and ideally the grass in those places should be cut once a week
- The Town Clerk has contacted with Head of street scene at South Somerset District Council to ask for help with grass cutting at the cemetery



- A private contractor has been approached and asked if they would be able to cut West Crescent and Winterhay Rec once a fortnight.
- All companies approached would be using their own equipment
- Summer watering will now be reduced and be done once a week.
- The hanging baskets at the Market House will be taken down before the carnival
- Normally replant for winter around Oct/Nov.
- The planters, troughs and the Minster flowerbed are usually replanted for winter at the end of October / beginning of November

Issues raised and discussed regarding this agenda item included:

- There were no Open Spaces staff in on Monday so the Town Clerk litter picked the Wharf Lane Rec at 3pm approx.. 3.30pm
- The litter and dog bins were all emptied on the evening of Friday 7<sup>th</sup> September.
- SSDC come and empty the bins in town but this week have, in addition, done all the dog bins etc around the Rec as a favour.
- The agency that is supplying our current seasonal open spaces warden have been approached to see if there are anymore temporary staff available but they don't think this is likely until end of October.
- The tractor and snake broke down on 6<sup>th</sup> September. The maintenance company has been out to repair it but will need to order parts which should be fitted by 12<sup>th</sup> September.
- The tractor might need to have a new battery; this will be looked at when the snake is being repaired.
- There has been a problem starting the Ferris, which is now hopefully resolved.
- The bottom third of the cemetery is a rabbit warren and would benefit from pest control. The rabbit holes could be a danger to the general public.

The Committee Chair made a statement regarding the reasons for the current staffing situation.

### **RESOLVED**

- (i) that the action taken by the Town Clerk is noted
- (ii) that pest control be carried out at the cemetery with the aim of reducing the number of rabbits

### **OS 204. Open Spaces Volunteers and Support to Other Organisations**

Following on from discussions at the 26 June and 10 July meetings consideration was given to the support given to other organisations e.g. loan of town council equipment, carrying out extra grounds maintenance tasks.

Issues raised or discussed during consideration of this agenda item included the following:

*Note 20:03hrs Cllr Shepherd declared a personal interest in this agenda item*

- The Town Council has 3 registered volunteers who are members of the Football Club have been trained and assessed by a Senior Open Spaces Warden how to use the tractor and the snake
- the cost of organisations hiring their own equipment
- the permissions required from the town council should an organisation wish to cut their own pitches
- The usual process is for a volunteer to contact the Senior Open Spaces Warden on a Monday and then arrange a convenient time to use the equipment with the ITC open spaces team.

**RESOLVED** Town Council Open Spaces equipment is not loaned to or used by any organisations, club or individual for the purpose of maintaining their area used for their particular club/organisation.

The meeting closed at 20.25hrs

