

Minutes of a Meeting of the Amenities and Services Committee held on Tuesday 8th September 2020 at 14.00 on the Zoom Virtual Meeting Platform

Present:-Councillor P Johnson (Chairman), Councillors, E Towers, P Glover, P Broomhall

- 1 **Apologies** - To receive any apologies for absence.

Resolved:- to accept the following apologies for absence.

Cllrs Soul, Meakin and Granger

Absent Cllr Nash

- 2 **Declaration of Pecuniary Interests** - to receive declarations of interest.
Cllr Towers declared a bias interest in item 7 allotments as his wife is an allotment holder.

- 3 **Minutes** - To approve as a correct record the minutes of a Meeting of this Committee held on 16th June 2020.

Resolved:- to approve the minutes of 16th June 2020 and the Chairman was given authority to sign them at a later date as a true record.

- 4 **Progress Report on items raised at previous meeting** - for consideration
Litterpicking by volunteers, a discussion took place on whether volunteer litter picking should be allowed at the present time and it was explained that currently volunteers were not being encouraged to return due to the pandemic.

Resolved:- to note and recommend that no voluntary litter picking activity should take place until at least Spring 2021 and that volunteer litter pickers are contacted and informed of this decision.

- 5 **Toilets**

a) Old Toilet Block – to discuss quotes received to market the building.
The Clerk reported that she had approached all 3 estate agents in the town but had only been able to receive a verbal quote from two of them.

Resolved:- to appoint Stokes Estate Agents to act on the Town Council's behalf to prepare marketing materials to advertise the building for lease and to set a budget limit of £500 for this work.

b) Income – for update.

It was reported that income to date was £176.75 this was because the toilets were closed between April and July due to the pandemic. The Clerk reported that the Council had received the £10,000 Business Rates Grant.

Resolved:- to note the report and recommend that the £10,000 be earmarked in reserves for public toilets.

c) Contactless Payment System – to discuss.

A discussion took place on this item and various issues were raised about the proposal including cost and potential for damage of the apparatus and it was

Resolved:- not to progress this at this time.

6 Play Areas/Open Spaces

a) Tree planting – to consider correspondence on this item along with quote received and planting locations.

The Clerk explained that with the Groundsman and Cllr Johnson inspections had taken place at the suggested locations and quotes had been sought to plant trees up to 2m in height at the following locations

Trentham Road Public Open space

3 x Common Oak

3 x Field Maple

2 x Rowan

Wheatfields Public Open space

2 x Sweet Gum

4 x Field Maple

Wem Recreation Ground

3 x Small Leaf Lime including 3 vandal proof guards

Two quotes were presented for the works.

The suggestion by Wem Civic Society that the Town Council co-ordinate the planting of a small copse of up to 100 trees which would represent the names of every person on the war memorial was considered and Councillors expressed concern over where such a copse would be located. It was explained that the tree planting project to commemorate VJ day was to be co-ordinated by Wem Rotary and Wem Civic Society not the Town Council.

Resolved:- to recommend

- **that the supply and planting quote of £1264 from Heathwood Nurseries is approved and funded partly from the £500 remaining in the tree budget with the remainder coming from the Climate Change Budget.**
- **not to progress the suggestion from Wem Civic Society to plant a small copse unless an appropriate location is identified and external funding for the project secured.**

b) Summerfield Road Replacement WI Tree – to discuss (at request of Cllr Towers). A discussion took place on this item and views were expressed that as the tree was to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the WI then they should be encouraged to fundraise for a replacement. Cllr Towers explained that the local branch had reduced in size and this may not be possible however he agreed to discuss the matter with them again.

Resolved:- to discuss the matter as part of any tree planting schedule drawn up for 2020-21.

c) Ash Die Back Group - to consider.

It was explained that the Town Council did not have any mature Ash trees on its land so was not currently impacted by this disease.

Resolved:- not to take part in the forum at this time.

d) Wilmott Meadow Management of Public Open Space – to discuss.
A discussion took place on this matter which was referred to the committee from the June Town Council meeting. Councillors expressed concern over the cost of taking on not only the maintenance of these areas which include bridges, culverts and balancing ponds but also the costs involved as the work would require the Town Council to employ more staff. Councillors also expressed concern that if the Council agreed to this request it could also set a precedent for other developments in the town which are managed by a private management company. Councillors were however sympathetic to the issues faced by residents on the development and it was

Resolved:- to establish a working party composed of Cllr Mellings, Cllr Glover and Cllr Broomhall whose remit would be to meet with representatives of the residents to clarify the situation and discuss exactly what areas the residents were proposing that the Town Council take on and make a recommendation to the Committee.

7 Allotments

Cllr Towers left the meeting and took no part in discussions.

a) To receive a report on plot vacancies.

It was reported that all allotments are now let with a waiting list of approx. 18 months. A discussion took place on the need to source new allotment land in the town especially as the allotments on the cemetery side were due to be vacated when the cemetery was extended.

Resolved:- to note the report and to raise the need for more allotment land as part of discussions on the Local Plan Review.

b) To receive a report on the Clerk's recent inspection.

It was reported that some plots were in very poor condition however tenants have been given a significant amount of leeway due to the ongoing pandemic.

Resolved:- to delegate authority to the Clerk to issue improvement letters and notice to quit to tenants for non-cultivation following consultation with the Committee Chairman.

c) Gate relocation – to consider request received.

Resolved:- to approve the relocation of the gate.

Cllr Towers returned to the meeting.

8 Cemetery

a) Bench replacement – to discuss installing a replacement bench following the removal of the existing bench due to its poor condition.

Resolved:- to set a budget of £500 for the purchase of a new seat by the water tap to replace the old one.

b) Hedge Cutting – to consider quote received.

Resolved:- to approve the quote received by Via Della Emelia.

9 CCTV

a) To consider quote for upgrading lower car park camera.

The Clerk explained that only 1 quote had been received as this was from the existing CCTV contractor who was fully aware of the system.

Resolved:- to suspend financial regulations to allow the Committee to accept only one quote and award the contract to ORP Surveillance Ltd.

10 Floral Planters

a) Winter Planting – for update.

The Clerk reported that Northwood Hanging Baskets had offered to sponsor the winter plants for the entrance planters this year.

Resolved:- to accept this offer and write to Northwood Hanging Baskets to thank them for this generous offer.

b) 2021 Supply and Planting contract – to consider.

The Clerk explained that as there had been difficulties with the supply of bedding plants by smaller companies this year she had been advised to bring the contract forward so that companies can place orders earlier.

Resolved:- to approve the contract and instruct the Clerk to advertise it with a deadline of 16th October so that the contract can be awarded at the October Town Council meeting.

c) Relocation of Planters – to consider.

The following suggestions were put forward

Relocate Leek Street Planters to the Station verge on Aston Street.

Position a 3 tiered planter on the grass verge by Summerfield Road, New Street junction.

Resolved:- to

- **recommend that funds are allocated in the 2021-22 budget to enable the start of a replacement programme of the existing pole planters starting with the ones located along Leek Street.**
- **request permission from Network Rail to locate any new pole planters inside the station fence adjacent to Aston Street.**
- **relocate the 3 tiered planter on Isherwoods Way to the grassed area on the corner of Summerfield Road and New Street.**

d) In Bloom Competition – to consider taking part in 2021 or running a locally themed competition.

It was reported that the following suggestions had been put forward to run a locally themed garden competition in 2021 as had been organised in the past. The Clerk explained that the office still held trophies from previous competitions that had been organised. Support was expressed for the suggestion. However Councillors felt that due to workload this would be more appropriate if it could be co-ordinated by another group with the Town Council providing some administrative support if required.

Resolved:- to approach Wem Gardening Club to discuss the matter and look to establish a small group to take the project forward

11 Streetlights

a) To consider quote to number all columns.
Quote not received.

b) To consider works arising out of recent annual inspection.
The Clerk explained that the circulated condition report had identified a significant number of columns that need replacement. The majority of which were concrete columns. She reported that she had asked the street lighting contractor to split the columns in need of replacement into 3 categories (a,b,c) so that the most urgent could be undertaken this year and the rest over the next 2 years during the period of the maintenance contract and that quote was expected for the September Town Council meeting. It was expected that this would be funded through the streetlighting budget and earmarked reserves.

Resolved:- to recommend to the September Town Council meeting that the quote is approved so that the replacement works can be started as soon as possible.

12 Date and time of meetings - to note time and date of next meeting.

Resolved:- to note that the next meeting will take place a 14.00 on 8.12.20

Meeting ended 15.20

Chairman.....