

MELTHAM TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL TO DISCUSS MATTERS OF PROPERTIES, ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE HELD ON MONDAY 10 DECEMBER 2018

Present: Councillor Haigh (Chair), Councillor Bampton, Councillor Keighley, Councillor Noon and Councillor White

PUBLIC SESSION: There were no members of the public present.

18/48 NOTICE OF MEETING

Public Notice of the meeting was taken as read.

18/49 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Wrathall and accepted.

18/50 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

18/51 ADMISSION TO THE PUBLIC

As printed agenda

18/52 INTERNAL CONTROLS

Councillors considered the Schedule of Payments for October and November 2018 circulated with the agenda

RESOLVED: That the Schedule of Payments for October 2018 in the sum of £10066.75 be approved.

RESOLVED: That the Schedule of Payments for November 2018 in the sum of £8411.45 be approved.

In accordance with the internal control checks agreed by Council the Committee checked that the petty cash balanced with the petty cash book and that the monthly bank reconciliations matched the relevant current account bank statements, and all was found to be in order.

18/53 ROBERT ASHTON MEMORIAL PARK

Councillors received an update from the Clerk on progress regarding the tree works in the park. The applications for consent to fell / prune had been considered by Kirklees Council and had been partly approved and partly refused. The Clerk said she would make further enquiries regarding the refusal to fell all birch in group G28. The contractor had informed the Clerk that the work would commence either be before Christmas or early in the new year. The Clerk had asked the contractor for advance notice in order to give the public advance notice of what would be happening including the closure of the driveway into the park whilst felling operations were taking place.

The Clerk informed Councillors that she had received notification of a detached tree branch over a footpath in the park and had taken the decision to proceed with its immediate removal via instructing a tree surgeon on health and safety grounds. The Clerk requested that the Committee ratify the Clerks decision to proceed with the removal of the tree branch and to approve the necessary expenditure in the sum of £200.00.

RESOLVED: That the Clerks decision to proceed with the removal of a tree branch on health and safety grounds by a tree surgeon be ratified and that the expenditure in the sum of £200.00 be approved.

Councillors consider the feedback as a result of the recent park inspections.

- It was noted that the steps leading from the car park needed work. The options were considered and Councillors opted to ask the contractor for a quote to replace the risers with railway sleepers and gravel treads. The Clerk to report back on the costs involved.
- Councillors approved the purchase of two outdoor warning signs for the pond area from a local supplier.
- The Clerk was asked to raise the issue of the willow hedge with the ground's maintenance contractor
- A discussion took place about whether the Councils boundary wall had been re-instated as agreed near a new build off Meltham Mills Road and some possible felling of trees at the rear of the property. It was agreed that the Clerk and Councillors White and Haigh would go and inspect these two issues in more depth.
- It was agreed to instruct the tree surgeon currently undertaking tree works in the park to remove the trees growing through the dry-stone wall bordering the lane running up to Back Lodge as they would eventually undermine the wall and to approve any additional costs involved.
- It was agreed to swap the bench designed for wheel chair users with one of the ones by the bandstand.
- A discussion took place about the drainage in the older children's play area. The Clerk relayed the difficulties in getting anyone to come and inspect. It was reported that the caretaker suggested a thicker layer of bark chippings may mitigate any water pooling issues, but it was decided to look at alternatives. Councillor Noon agreed to make enquiries.
- Councillors considered a request from the caretaker to erect some large toilet symbols on the toilet walls. Councillors considered that at the present time there were other priorities but that they might return to toilet signage in the future.
- Councillors noted the caretaker was to remove the plastic netting from the football pitch and to fix the missing gazebo rail.
- Councillors noted that the caretaker would be monitoring the flag stones by the tennis courts for uneven / lose flags and would report back if any issues arose and that the caretaker would be monitoring the surface of the tennis courts.
- It was noted that there was buddleia / ivy growing in the newly refurbished allotment wall and it was agreed that the grounds maintenance contractor to be asked to treat this area again and to look at filling the hole underneath the goal on the football pitch.

Councillors considered the information the Clerk had obtained regarding lighting in the park and decided to add this information into the wider plan for future of the park. Councillor Noon suggested the Council might look at solar lighting as well.

The Clerk informed Councillors that she was working with the caretaker on creating a checklist to document weekly inspections of the park

18/54 BUDGET PLANNING / PRECEPT 2019/20

The Clerk explained that in the previous year and this year there had been a combination of slight overspends and underspends against various budgets but that in both years this had resulted in a global underspend. The Clerk explained it was difficult to make exact comparisons as budgets had been changed between the years. It was noted that last year there was a significant underspend which was offset against the projected spend for 18/19. Deducting the projected income from allotments and the £7054.00 CTR grant from the projected spend for 18/19 brought the 'balancing figure' (i.e. the difference between The Councils projected spend less income) to £105,063.00 which formed the Council's precept demand in 18/19.

It was noted that for 19/20 there were additional financial challenges. For 19/20 there is projected to be an increase in overall expenditure as a result of inflationary pressures and increases to various budget heads identified in the report circulated with the agenda. For the 18/19 financial year the Council were again projecting an underspend, but it was noted that this was significantly smaller than last time. However, the Clerk pointed out that at present the various fees incurred as a result of the purchase of the Town Hall were set against the professional services budget head. As it was expected that these would be reimbursed these costs could be accounted for differently which would increase the amount of the underspend. The Clerk reported that the greatest impact for 19/20 was caused by the loss of the CTR grant which Kirklees Council had notified they were ceasing to pay this year. Consequently, it was apparent that the 'balancing figure' (i.e. the difference between the Councils projected spend less income) would be higher than in 18/19. The options available to the Council were discussed namely to reduce expenditure in 19/20, to use reserves or raise the precept request. After discussion it was agreed to recommend to Council:

- That the budget for 19/20 set out in the report circulated with the agenda be adopted save that the devolved services budget be reduced to £5000.00 for 19/20 and that an additional £1000.00 be added to the library contribution budget as a contingency
- That the precept demand should be increased as a minimum to cover the loss of the CTR grant as this loss of income was beyond the Town Councils' control.

The Clerk agree to redo the projections based on the discussions and to circulate the revised projections to the Committee in advance of the Council meeting in January.

The Clerk reported that so far it had not been possible to locate the electricity meter in the Park and it was agreed to leave this matter alone at the present time.

RESOLVED: That the Committee recommend to Council that the budget for 19/20 set out in the report circulated with the agenda be adopted save that the devolved services budget be reduced to £5000.00 for 19/20 and that an additional £1000.00 be added to the library contribution budget as a contingency.

RESOLVED: That the Committee recommend to Council that the precept demand should be increased as a minimum to cover the loss of the CTR grant as this was beyond the Town Councils' control.

18/55 ALLOTMENTS

The Clerk reported that there were currently 18 people on the waiting list for an allotment.

The Clerk asked whether members thought there was capacity to create additional allotments or to create smaller mini allotments. A discussion took place about the level of demand and it was agreed that finding additional space for more allotments and / or creating smaller mini allotments is something that should be explored further.

The Clerk asked whether a review of allotment fees was appropriate as the current pricing scheme does not even cover the administration costs in many cases. Clerk reported that she understood that the current prices are calculated on a price per square yard based on 200 square yards + £19.75 with no water and £20.90 with water. This gives rise to a number of allotments priced at under £10.00 per year which does not cover the administration costs. It was suggested that there should be a one-off administration fee when someone takes on a new plot and a review of the annual fees should also be conducted. It was agreed that a report would be brought to the next Council meeting regarding this matter and the need to communicate with the existing allotment holders was noted.

18/56 DEFIBRILLATOR PROVISION

This matter was deferred to the next Council meeting or the next meeting of the Properties Administration and Finance Committee (who have a delegation from Council regarding defibrillator provision including authorising any necessary expenditure) as appropriate.

18/57 INSURANCE ISSUES

Clerk confirmed she had met with a firm of insurers to obtain a comparative quote. The Clerk reiterated the need for a review of the asset register and it was noted that this would be reviewed as part of the governance review.

The insurance company advised the Council to obtain an accurate up to date quote for the rebuild cost of the park toilets currently insured for £40177.97. It was agreed the Clerk would obtain a quote for a rebuild survey.

It was noted that the Council currently insure a drainage system and it was agreed to remove this from the insurance schedule. It was agreed to remove the leather case for the former civic regalia from the insurance schedule. It was noted that the insurance schedule currently includes insurance for other ground surfaces (other than the play park surfacing which is a separate item) and it was agreed to remove this from the insurance schedule. It was also agreed to remove the very low value items from the insurance schedule e.g. swivel chair.

The Clerk reiterated she was still making enquiries to ensure that the CCTV cover was adequate. It was agreed that clarity was required over the Christmas lights insurance as these were on the insurance schedule but in the possession of the Meltham Business Association and clarity was needed as to whether the Council remained the owner of these lights or whether they had been gifted to the Association in which case they should be insuring the lights.

The Clerk informed the Councillors that the insurance company recommended weekly documented inspections of the park in a similar way to that currently undertaken for the weekly play inspections. The Clerk agreed to draw up a weekly inspection check list to be completed by the contractor or herself as appropriate.

The Clerk also clarified that the insurance company had recommended that the most urgent thing was to obtain an accurate figure for the replacement of both children's play areas if they were destroyed.

18/58 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS:

Pursuant to section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 it is resolved that, because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the public and the press leave the meeting during consideration of the following: -

As determined under Agenda Item 4.