

MELTHAM TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL TO DISCUSS MATTERS OF PROPERTIES, ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE HELD ON MONDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2019

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

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

19/01 NOTICE OF MEETING

Public Notice of the meeting was taken as read.

19/02 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Keighley and accepted.

19/03 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

19/04 ADMISSION TO THE PUBLIC

As printed agenda

19/05 INTERNAL CONTROLS

Councillors considered the Schedule of Payments for December 2018 and January 2019 circulated with the agenda

RESOLVED: That the Schedule of Payments for December 2018 in the sum of £15,434.34 be approved.

RESOLVED: That the Schedule of Payments for January 2019 in the sum of £11,085.66 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.

19/06 REVIEW AND STATEMENT OF INTERNAL CONTROLS 2019

Councillors considered the review and the statement of internal controls for 2019 prepared by the Clerk and made the following recommendations to Council:

RESOLVED: That the Properties, Administration and Finance Committee recommend that the Council note the review, adopt the recommendations of the Clerk and approve the Statement of Internal Controls for 2019.

19/07 ROBERT ASHTON MEMORIAL PARK

Councillors received an update from the Clerk on progress regarding the tree works in the park. Councillors noted that the tree surgeon being used for the works had strongly recommended getting a decay detection inspection on Tree T10a (beech) rather than fell it and the Committee had previously decided to get this inspection done and then implement the recommendations. The Committee had also previously decided to have a climbed inspection undertaken on tree T25 (beech) and then implement the recommendations of that inspection.

In relation to tree T30 (cherry) it was noted that the original tree hazard survey recommended felling, but the tree surgeon being used for the works had suggested it should be discussed on its merits and the Clerk had been asked to liaise with the contractor about this matter, obtain any detection work that might be required and then implement any recommendations.

The Clerk said arboricultural consultants had now completed a decay detection inspection on Tree T10a (beech) and recommended (instead of felling) a 15% reduction and a 15% thin. The Clerk reported that the tree surgeon being used for the works quoted £400 plus vat for these works. A tree preservation order application has been made as this tree is protected by a TPO.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk authorise the contractors to carry out these works and approved the expenditure in the sum of £400 plus VAT.

The Clerk said in relation to T30 (cherry) the arboricultural consultants had recommended a 20% reduction. The tree surgeon being used for the works will do this free of charge if done with the beech tree or it would be £150 plus VAT on its own. The Clerk reported that there is no planning protection on this tree.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk authorise the contractors to carry out these works and approved any necessary expenditure.

The Clerk reported that the tree surgeon being used for the works have carried out a climbed inspection on T25 (beech) and suggested that it is something that should be looked at by a arboricultural consultant.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk be authorised to instruct the arboricultural consultants to undertake a decay detection report on this tree which is likely to be in the region of £300.00 plus VAT and implement any recommendations

The Clerk reported that the tree hazard survey had originally recommended felling all the birch trees in group Q28. The tree preservation order application to fell was refused by Kirklees Council as they felt the report was not specific enough regarding individual trees. The arboricultural consultants also agreed at no extra cost to look at an English oak tree within the birch group which looked unsound. The Clerk reported that following this inspection the arboricultural consultants had recommended felling the English oak which is part of the G28 Group. The tree surgeon being used for the works have quoted £100 plus VAT to fell the English oak. A Tree Preservation Order application for the oak tree has been made.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk authorise the contractors to carry out these works and approved the expenditure in the sum of £100 plus VAT.

The Clerk reported that a decision still needed to be made about the birch trees in Q28 which the original tree hazard survey recommended felling and that there will be a charge for the arboricultural consultants to do a survey of those trees.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk be authorised to obtain a quote for a survey of the Q28 birch trees and to delegate to the Clerk authority to accept the quote provided it is reasonable and then implement the recommendations and approved any necessary expenditure.

The Clerk reported that she was asked to get a quote for the removal of the trees etc. in the hedge that runs up to Bank Lodge in the park as it is undermining the wall. The tree surgeon being used for the works has quoted £500 plus VAT for the lapsed hedge removal. The Clerk reported that these trees are not protected by TPOs.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk authorise the contractors to carry out these works and approved the expenditure in the sum of £500 plus VAT.

The Clerk was asked to contact the residents of Bank Lodge to let them know about the works.

The Clerk reported back on the recent payments for tree works in the park and it was noted that these were being classed as capital works. The Clerk reported that the contractor had recommended getting a new park wide tree survey done by an arboricultural consultant and then repeating in more regularly. The Clerk suggested that the Council had the costs of the previous tree hazard survey for comparison and it was noted that the first survey by a new consultant will be the most expensive due to the process of plotting the trees.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk be authorised to obtain a quote for a park wide survey of the trees and report back to a future meeting.

Councillor Noon suggested Kirklees Council might be able to assist with the mapping of the trees.

At an earlier meeting the Committee opted to ask the Council's contractor for a quote to refurbish the steps from the car park in the park replacing the risers with railway sleepers and gravel treads. The Clerk reported that the contractor had quoted £325.00 and the Committee thought this represented value for money.

RESOLVED: That the quote from the contractor in the sum of £325.00 to refurbish the steps be approved and the necessary expenditure be authorised.

Councillors considered some indicative information regarding solar lighting for the dark areas of the park and the Clerk reported on a development which might provide an alternative option.

The Clerk reported that there was no further information regarding drainage works in the Children's play area and had chased Kirklees Council about this.

Councillors noted that the see saw in the older children's play area had broken beyond repair and had needed to be removed. Councillors decided that it should not be replaced at the present time and that the issue should be revisited after any drainage works had been completed.

Councillors considered whether to continue with the provision of free duck food in the park now that the authorised trial period has ended and if so to approve the ongoing expenditure. It was noted that the pond appeared to be much clearer and that the initiative was welcomed by users of the park.

RESOLVED: To approve the costs of 2 bags of duck food each month and to continue the provision of free duck food.

Councillors also requested that the contractor be thanked for his persistence regarding the duck food as the container had been vandalised twice.

Councillor Noon reported that he and Councillor Keighley were developing ideas for the future regeneration of the Robert Ashton Memorial Park using recent experiences and liaison with some of the users of the park facilities.

19/08 ALLOTMENTS

The Clerk reported that the Town Council is the allotment authority for the township. The Clerk reported on the duties that applied to the Council in terms of allotment provision and the numbers of residents on the allotment waiting list. 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. It was suggested that it would be helpful to look at allotment provision in areas outside of the Town Centre. The Clerk was asked to make enquiries regarding a piece of unused land in Helme, to contact the church about any land they may have and to contact Kirklees Council regarding Hey Doorstep Green.

The Clerk asked whether a review of allotment fees was appropriate. The Clerk provided information on the current prices which are calculated on a price per square yard and it was noted that this gives rise to a number of allotments priced at well under £10.00 per year which does not cover the administration costs.

It was suggested that there should be a one-off administration fee of £25.00 when someone takes on a new plot and that there should be a minimum annual rental charge of £10.00.

The Clerk reported what other comparable councils charge and suggested that the fees are on average double what the Town Council charges. In order to bring the charges in line with other Councils it was suggested that there could be a 15% increase this year, a 15% increase next year and a 20% increase the year after. With a further review in 22/23. Councillors examined what these % increases would mean for allotment holders in real terms. The Clerk was also asked to find out from Kirklees Council what their charges were as it was felt that the Town Council should at least charge what Kirklees Council does.

RESOLVED: That the Properties, Administration and Finance Committee make the following recommendations to Council that:

- there should be a one-off administration fee of £25.00 when someone takes on a new plot
- there should be a minimum annual rental charge of £10.00
- subject to consideration of the information on the fees charged by Kirklees Council and in order to bring the Councils charges in line with comparable councils there should be a 15% increase in the allotment fees in 19/20, a 15% increase in 20/21 and a 20% increase in 21/22. With a further review of fees in 22/23.

The need to communicate with the existing allotment holders was noted if Council approved the recommendations of the Committee. Councillor Noon raised the issue of alternative operating models for allotments and whether this provided scope to support community groups. The Clerk advised that Calmlands Allotment Association rented land from the Council to provide allotments and was a properly constituted body but the allotments adjacent to the park are provided by the Council as the allotment authority in the area.

19/09 DEFIBRILLATOR PROVISION

Councillors noted that Council resolved at its meeting on the 19 November 2018 that the discussion and decisions surrounding defibrillator provision be delegated to the Properties Administration and Finance Committee including authorising any necessary expenditure. It was reported that Meltham Moor School were willing to move their existing defibrillator to the outside of the building for use by the general public but that the Council would need to fund the costs of a cabinet, signage and installation. The Clerk had been provided with some indicative quotes and was asked to progress the purchase of a cabinet and signage and the installation of the cabinet with the monies coming from the Town Enhancement fund budget. Councillor White agreed to see whether the Sports and Community Centre would be able to make a capital grant application to the Council for a defibrillator to go on the outside of the building together with the installation costs, with the cabinet costs being met by an individual benefactor.

RESOLVED: That the Council was willing to fund the costs of a defibrillator cabinet, signage and installation and that the Clerk be asked to progress these matters with the monies coming from the Town Enhancement fund budget and the associated costs being authorised.

19/10 INSURANCE ISSUES

Councillors considered a quote to obtain an accurate up to date rebuild cost for the toilets in the park as advised by the insurers in the sum of £350 and asked the Clerk to instruct the surveyors.

RESOLVED: That the quote in the sum of £350.00 to obtain an accurate up to date rebuild cost for the toilets in the park as advised by the insurers be approved and that the Clerk be authorised to instruct the surveyors.

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 and the checklist for this purpose was noted.

19/11 CREATION OF RECEPTION AREA

It was noted that there had been a significant delay due to establishing whether the proposals were DDA compliant. Councillors considered the plans and the quote to install a door for security purposes in the sum of £1800.00. As the security of a Council employee was affected it was agreed to proceed on the basis of a single quote for speed and to proceed with the works as quickly as possible.

RESOLVED: That the plans and the quote to install a door for security purposes in the sum of £1800.00 be approved and that the necessary expenditure be authorised and that the Clerk be asked to progress this as quickly as possible.

