

MINUTES of a meeting of the COALVILLE SPECIAL EXPENSES WORKING PARTY held in the Board Room, Council Offices, Coalville on MONDAY, 20 OCTOBER 2014

Present: Councillor R Johnson (Chairman)

Councillors R Adams, N Clarke, P Clayfield, J Geary, J Legrys, M Specht and M B Wyatt

Officers: Mr L Brewster, Mr J Knight, Mr D O'Nyons and Mr J Richardson

10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies received.

11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors J Geary and R Johnson declared a disclosable non pecuniary interest in Item 4 – Capital Projects Update as regular supporters of Coalville Town FC.

Councillor J Legrys declared a disclosable non pecuniary interest in Item 5 – 2014/15 Events Update due to his involvement with Hermitage FM.

Councillor M B Wyatt declared a disclosable non pecuniary interest in any reference to Coalville, as a business owner in the Town Centre.

12. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2014.

Councillor J Geary reiterated his disappointment that a visit to Broomleys Allotments had still not been arranged as had been agreed at April's meeting. He stressed that the visit should happen before next May's elections.

Councillor M Specht suggested that Members from Wards outside of the Coalville Special Expenses Area should also be invited. He stated that doing so could encourage Members to pursue similar projects elsewhere in the District.

Councillor M B Wyatt informed the meeting that he would arrange the visit and would update Members in due course with further details.

It was moved by Councillor J Legrys, seconded by Councillor N Clarke and

RESOLVED THAT:

the minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2014 be approved.

13. CAPITAL PROJECTS UPDATE

The Leisure Services Team Manager presented the report to Members.

He provided the Working Party with an update on each of the ongoing projects.

Coalville Park Improvements

It was confirmed that installation of the two-way communication flowers had been completed.

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The Leisure Services Team Manager informed Members that a suitable location for the Peace Garden had been identified and that initial designs had been developed. He encouraged Members to provide feedback on the proposals and stated that, if Members were in agreement, a visit to the site would be arranged. It was stated that some minor improvements to the initial plans had already been suggested, including a walkway and making the area more enclosed.

Councillor J Legrys placed on record his thanks to Officers for having created the plans. He stated that the Peace Garden should also commemorate the deaths of soldiers killed in conflicts other than the two World Wars. He made reference to Private Adam Morris, who was killed whilst on duty in Iraq, and stated that it was important that every resident of the District who had given their life was commemorated.

Councillor J Legrys asked whether a sensory element could be included in the Peace Garden, for the benefit of individuals that are visually impaired. He also stated that it was essential that access was provided for those that used wheelchairs.

Councillor R Adams stated that he was staggered at the progress that had been made on the project and praised the hard work of Officers.

Councillor J Geary reiterated that it was imperative that all residents of the District that had died serving their country were remembered. He stated that this should include those who sacrificed their life in under recognised roles, such as the Bevin Boys who had been conscripted to work in the coal mines.

Councillor P Clayfield expressed her desire that any women that had lost their lives whilst serving with the Armed Forces should also be remembered.

The Leisure Services Team Manager stated that he was happy to take into consideration all of the comments that had been made. He stated that Coalville Park already had a sensory area but that he would make enquiries to see whether it would be feasible to link them together or to relocate some elements of the existing area to the Peace Garden.

Owen Street Recreation Ground

The Leisure Services Team Manager stated that proposals and costs for the electricity upgrade work had still not been received, despite the fact that the firm involved had visited the site in August. It was confirmed that if no response was received imminently then another contractor would be sought.

It was stated that the proposed long term lease between the Council and the football club had now been finalised. The football club were now in the process of setting themselves up as a limited company and it was confirmed that once this process was complete the lease would be signed. This would allow the football club to apply to the Football Stadia Improvement Fund for matched funding for the new changing room pavilion.

It was stated that the long term lease would result in the management committee for the pavilion being disbanded as the football club would take full responsibility for the asset. However, it was stated that the football club had advised that they would like to maintain the relationship with the Council and would therefore continue to incorporate Member representation in the new management structure.

Councillor M B Wyatt asked whether the Council currently paid the cost of cutting the grass at the site. If so, he enquired whether there would be a saving as a result of the football club taking responsibility for the asset.

The Leisure Services Team Manager confirmed that the football club would assume responsibility for the grounds maintenance. It was stated that the Council would continue to undertake the work and there would be savings back to the Council.

Thringstone Miners Social Centre

It was stated that it was unlikely that external funding could be sourced towards the project without the relevant planning permissions being in place. Consequently, it was recommended that the outstanding budget for this project be allocated to obtaining planning permission and diverting the footpath. Further funding could then be sourced to cover the cost of fencing and surface works.

The consensus of Members was to allocate the remaining funds to obtaining planning permission and diverting the footpath.

Cropston Drive BMX Track and Wheeled Sports Facility

It was confirmed that the BMX track had now been completed and that the wheeled sports facility had been installed but required some further aesthetic work before it could be considered complete.

It was stated that usage of the facility had increased significantly and that the area was now considered to be a locality play hub. Consequently, it was recommended that further investment be made in the area to improve aesthetics and increase usage further. It was suggested that consideration be given to improving the fencing at the entrance, reseeding the area, shrub removal, hedge height reduction, additional tree planting, resurfacing of the hardstanding area and removal of part of the hedge line to make the area more visible from Cropston Drive.

Councillor M B Wyatt stated that he would like vandal resistant litter bins to be installed at the site. The Leisure Services Team Manager confirmed that fire proof bins were currently on order.

Councillor J Geary enquired whether there had been any reports of anti-social behaviour in the area. The Leisure Services Team Manager confirmed that he was unaware of any such behaviour.

Councillor N Clarke stated that reaching this stage had been a long time coming but that the increased usage at the site proved that the lengthy consultation had been worthwhile.

Councillor M B Wyatt asked that Officers consider improving the basketball area, specifically the painted lines which had faded significantly. The Head of Community Services confirmed that resurfacing of the area was being considered.

Urban Forest Park

It was confirmed that the second draft proposals had now been finalised. It was stated that the water sampling had now been undertaken and that nothing had immediately been found. The contractor had advised that the full results would be available in the next few weeks.

Councillor J Legrys thanked Officers for their work and asked that the full results be circulated to Members of the Working Party once they were available.

The consensus of Members was to proceed with the proposals, subject to the full water sampling results highlighting no issues.

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Scotlands Playing Fields

It was confirmed that a potential location had been identified and that local residents had been consulted and were generally supportive of the proposal. It was stated that planning permission had been approved for the change of use of the area and the work will now proceed accordingly once the developer had successfully altered their Section 106 agreement.

It was stated that the only organisation to express reservations regarding the proposal was the bowls club who had indicated that they were nervous regarding the increase in youth activity in the area. Consequently, it was recommended that security improvements be made to the bowls club and the entrance area to the site.

Councillor J Legrys expressed his thanks to everyone involved and stated that he was surprised that the public consultation responses had been so positive.

Draft 2015/16 Projects

Shrubbery Works

The Leisure Services Team Manager confirmed that the County Council had no objection to the District Council maintaining the shrubs at Phoenix Green, Bardon Road and Ashby Road on an ongoing basis.

Before the ongoing maintenance commenced, it was recommended that an initial one off improvement be funded in order to bring the areas up to a good standard. The initial works would cost £2,114 and there was a possibility that 50% of the total could be funded by the District Council's environmental improvement grant scheme that had recently been approved by Cabinet. It was confirmed that the cost of the ongoing maintenance would be approximately £13,000 per annum.

Councillor M B Wyatt stated that he was not convinced with the proposal and that it appeared to him that District Council money would be used to maintain County Council land.

Councillor J Legrys asked if any land that was owned by the County Council was already maintained by the District Council. The Head of Community Services responded that Memorial Square, Marlborough Square and the High Street were all maintained by the District Council under agreement with the County Council.

Councillor J Legrys enquired whether, in the event of the Working Party not agreeing to fund the maintenance, there was a risk that the County Council would no longer fulfil their responsibility to maintain the areas concerned. The Head of Community Services reassured Members that the County Council would continue to maintain the sites in some capacity. However, he indicated that the County Council were looking to reduce maintenance costs and, as such, there was a possibility that they could move to a reactive system whereby the areas were only maintained when absolutely necessary.

Councillor J Legrys suggested that the Working Party found themselves in an unenviable position in that the maintenance either had to be financed or the look of the town would suffer. He added that the failure to tackle the shrubbery could see pedestrian safety compromised.

The Head of Community Services stated that the County Council would maintain the areas only twice a year. He indicated that Members had to ascertain whether they wanted

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to fund the maintenance in order to ensure that the local area was maintained to a higher standard.

Councillor M B Wyatt raised concerns regarding the annual cost of maintaining the areas. He suggested that revenue could be raised from advertising on these sites. The Head of Community Services confirmed that he would explore this possibility further and report back to Members.

Councillor J Legrys stated that local residents ought to be properly consulted before a decision is made. He stated that those that pay the precept should ultimately decide whether they wanted to cover the costs.

Councillor N Clarke endorsed the proposal to spend £2,114 in order to fund the initial works that would bring the areas back to a reasonable standard. He stated that it was a public highway safety issue, as cars could not see around hedges at junctions. However, he stressed that further debate was required before a decision on assuming responsibility for the ongoing maintenance could be made.

The consensus of Members was to fund the cost of the initial works to bring the areas back to a good standard.

Grass Verges

The Leisure Services Team Manager informed Members that the County Council had invited Parish Councils to undertake the mowing of grass verges within their areas. This offer also extended to the unparished Coalville Urban Area via the District Council.

It was confirmed that the County Council would contribute an amount that covered five cuts per annum. It was stated that the District Council were currently considering whether to take up the offer from the County Council, should the Parishes decide not to. As such, costings were being prepared by the District Council for undertaking the work on the basis of maintaining seven cuts per year. It had been proposed that the cost of the two additional cuts be covered jointly between the District and Parish Councils. Consequently, the proposal would require a level of funding from the Coalville Special Expenses fund.

Councillor J Geary stated that this proposal would solely benefit the County Council, as they would save money whilst the costs for the District and Parish Councils would increase.

Councillor M B Wyatt stated that he fully supported the proposals as it would undoubtedly improve the look of the area. He went on to state that he believed the District Council's approach would be far superior to that of the County Council. He enquired whether the District Council would take a flexible approach to grass cutting. He suggested that in prolonged dry periods, the grass should not be cut for the sake of it. The Leisure Services Team Manager responded that the District Council would take full control and that flexibility would therefore be significantly increased.

Councillor J Legrys sought confirmation that the work would be completed in house and would not be subcontracted at all. The Head of Community Services confirmed that this would be the case.

Councillor N Clarke stated that this was a contentious issue but agreed that bringing the work in house and controlling it would be a good idea.

The consensus of Members was for the Working Party to contribute the cost of an additional cut per annum in order to maintain the current level of seven cuts.

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Warden Presence

The Leisure Services Team Manager stated that usage levels at Cropston Drive Recreation Ground had increased since the installation of the BMX track and wheeled sports facility. It was therefore anticipated that usage would continue to increase as further improvements were made to the area. Similarly, usage levels were also expected to rise at Scotlands Playing Fields and potentially at Lillehammer Drive.

It was stated that the increased usage of these sites would bring associated issues such as litter, security and potentially anti-social behaviour. Consequently, it was recommended that the funding for warden hours in 2015/16 be increased to help alleviate such issues.

Councillor J Geary enquired what hours the wardens would work. The Leisure Services Team Manager confirmed that the wardens generally worked until dusk and consequently worked shorter hours during the winter.

RECOMMENDED THAT:

- a) the remaining balance for the project at Thringstone Miners Social Centre be allocated to obtaining planning permission and diverting the footpath.
- b) work proceed with the proposals at the Urban Forest Park, subject to the results of the full water sampling highlighting no issues.
- c) the one off improvement work to the shrubbery at Phoenix Green, Bardon Road and Ashby Road be funded.
- d) the cost of an additional grass cut per annum be funded by the Coalville Special Expenses Fund, in order to maintain the current level of seven cuts.

14. 2014/15 EVENTS UPDATE

The Head of Community Services presented the report to Members.

He provided Members with an update on each event.

Coalville by the Sea

The event received a strong turnout which was helped by the good weather. It was confirmed that the event was delivered within its £1,500 budget.

Christmas Lights Switch On

It was stated that it had been agreed to combine the lights switch on with the Coalville Town Team's Food and Drink Festival on 22 November. The event would comprise of the Food and Drink Festival during the day and the lights switch on from late afternoon.

The lights switch on would include a snow cannon and a fireworks display. It was confirmed that a laser light show had been investigated, however the costs had proved to be prohibitive. It was stated that a prominent individual was currently being sought to help the Chairman of the District in switching on the lights. The event would also be the first of five consecutive Saturdays on which town centre parking would be free over the festive period.

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Councillor J Geary suggested that the Council should approach long distance runner, and local resident, Gemma Steel with regard to helping switch on the Christmas Lights. The Head of Community Services responded that he would enquire about her availability.

Draft 2015/16 Events Programme

The Head of Community Services outlined to Members the draft events programme for 2015/16. It was stated that Councillor M B Wyatt had proposed holding a Proms in the Park event on the Saturday evening prior to the Picnic in the Park. The event would utilise the infrastructure that would already be in place for the following day and would therefore be a cost effective way of delivering an additional community event. It was stated that an indicative budget of £2,000 would be requested if Members supported the proposal.

Councillor M B Wyatt stated that he had been approached by several local residents who had expressed disappointment that the community events that are currently organised mainly catered for younger individuals. He stated that organising a Proms in the Park would help to resolve this issue.

The consensus of Members was unanimously in favour of organising a Proms in the Park event in 2015.

RECOMMENDED THAT:

a Proms in the Park event be organised on the Saturday evening prior to the 2015 Picnic in the Park.

15. PERIOD 5 ACTUAL AND 14/15 FORECAST OUT TURN

The Head of Community Services presented the report to Members.

It was stated that the period five position projected an under spending, with a contribution to balances of approximately £6,609, leading to an end of year projection of balances of £87,681. The main contributions to the under spending included an increase in burial and monument income and a backdated rates refund for Thringstone Bowls Club.

Members were informed that the 2015/16 revenue budgets were being drafted and several items were being considered and costed including the ongoing maintenance of County Council verges, an increased warden presence at several locations, a contribution to the urban grass cutting programme and an annual Saturday evening community event prior to Picnic in the Park.

Councillor M B Wyatt stated that several litter bins in the Working Party's area were too small and that consideration should be given to funding the installation of larger bins in these areas. He cited the litter bin on Long Lane as a prominent example of a bin that was constantly full.

The Head of Community Services stated that there had been several examples of litter bins being used for commercial and household waste and that this had contributed significantly to the issue.

Councillor M B Wyatt stated that he opposed the commitment to spend some of the balances on Coalville Market. The Head of Community Services confirmed that this commitment had been agreed at July's meeting of the Working Party and had been agreed by Cabinet.

RESOLVED THAT:

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the Working Party notes the report.

16. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members noted the dates of the future meetings.

The next meeting will be on Tuesday, 16 December 2014 at 6.30pm in the Board Room.

The meeting commenced at 4.30 pm

Councillor J Legrys left the meeting at 5.30pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 5.42 pm