

MINUTES of a meeting of the COALVILLE SPECIAL EXPENSES WORKING PARTY held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on TUESDAY, 12 OCTOBER 2021

Present: Councillor D Everitt (Chairman)

Councillors M French, E G C Allman, A J Bridgen, A S Black, J Geary, J Legrys, J Windram and M B Wyatt

In Attendance: Councillors

Officers: Mrs C Hammond, Ms K Hiller, Mr J Knight, Mrs W May, Mr P Sanders and Miss A Wright

10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor M Wyatt declared non-pecuniary interests in all items should reference be made to Coalville town, as the owner of two town centre businesses.

Councillor J Geary declared non-pecuniary interests in all items as a director of the Springboard Centre, founder member of Mantle Community Arts, and supporter of Coalville Town Football Club should any reference to them arise at the meeting.

Councillor J Legrys declared non-pecuniary interests in all items as a volunteer at Hermitage FM, should reference be made to Coalville town.

12. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2021.

It was moved by Councillor J Legrys, seconded by Councillor A Black and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

13. EVENTS UPDATE

The Cultural Services Team Manager presented the report to members with specific reference made to Christmas in Coalville. She advised that the budget allocated to miscellaneous events would be moved to the Christmas budget to allow more to be delivered at this year's main event on 27th November but also other Christmas events throughout the festive period.

Reference was made to the proposed events programme and the associated budget for 2022/23 and she advised that the Christmas lights had been ordered and are due to be installed shortly in time for the 'switch on' event on 27 November. She asked the Group to promote and invite applications for funding from community groups as there was still a healthy amount of funding available having taken into account the number of applications and approvals to date.

The Chairman invited comments and questions.

Chairman's initials

Councillor M Wyatt advised that he had received some very positive feedback in respect of the drive in cinema and looked forward to seeing this continue in coming years. Disappointment was expressed that the Steampunk event did not go ahead and hoped this would be remedied going forward. Councillor Wyatt asked why the date of 27 November had been selected for the Christmas 'switch on' event as it had been earlier in previous years. He was advised that the Steampunk event had been affected by a number of factors not least Covid and the availability of a suitable location; but that this was very much still a consideration for a future event going forward. Councillor Wyatt was further advised that the date of 27 November for the Christmas event was not discordant with previous years as the event is held on the fourth Saturday of the month with attempts also made not to clash with the event in Ashby. This date is not negotiable at this late stage as the performers and external providers have been booked. Councillor Wyatt expressed his disappointment that the Ashby event took precedence over the Coalville events but he was advised that this was not the case. The dates had been arranged so as not have a clash of events.

Councillor J Legrys referenced the 'Coalville by the Sea' event and the disappointment felt by many over the pricing and quality of the event and that he understood that alternative providers would be sourced in the future. He considered it inappropriate for the current provider to have left the sand to be collected by council officers and not to have processes in place to clear it up themselves. The Cultural Services Team Manager acknowledged that the event delivered by the third party was not to the standard that would have been strived for had the Council delivered it and his concerns were noted; but it was acknowledged that in order to achieve this, there is a subsidy from the Coalville Specials fund in the sum of £4,000 which negates the need to charge entry or make some commercial decisions that a third party would need to make in order for it to be financially viable. Members were reassured that the removal of the sand was at no cost to the Council as this was reclaimed from the third party organiser.

Councillor Legrys agreed with the earlier comments about the success of the cinemas, both in the park and the drive in. He advised that he had received some concerns about the noise and light emanating from the event but the positivity far outweighed the negativity in terms of these events.

Councillor J Geary referenced the budget for this year's Christmas event and the increased budget in order to make it a bigger event in lieu of the one which did not take place last year. He was concerned that this may build up expectations for future years. He also acknowledged that next year would quite likely see the opening of the new Marlborough Square and considered that this would require a big opening event. He asked for assurances that a budget was in place for new Christmas lighting for this area of the town. These assurances were provided and details were referenced in the report.

Councillor M Wyatt sought clarification on this issue as he considered that, as Marlborough Square was an open space within the district, then any funding for this area should be provided from a corporate budget as opposed to the Coalville Special expenses budget. In response to this, it was suggested that Paul Wheatley, Head of Economic Regeneration, be invited to a future meeting of the Group to explain how the work around the Marlborough Square and Coalville regeneration project aligned with the work of the Coalville Special Expenses Group.

Councillor E Allman asked whether, in light of the Steampunk event not going ahead, there were other events in the pipeline at the Snibston Colliery site. It was noted that the Steampunk idea had not gone away but consideration needs to be given to the location, timing and linking the site with the town centre.

Councillor A Bridgen suggested that charity collections be invited where events were free to enter.

Chairman's initials

Councillor M Wyatt sought assurances that picnic in the park would return in 2023/24. He was advised that this was in the gift of members; as they would decide how they wished to spend the budget.

It was moved by Councillor E Allman, seconded by Councillor J Geary and

RESOLVED THAT:

The Working Party noted:-

1. The progress update on 2021/22 events.
2. The update for Christmas Lights 2021/22.
3. The proposed events programme and associated budget for 2022/23
4. The update for 2021/22 Coalville Special Expenses Community Grant Scheme.

ACTION – That Paul Wheatley, Head of Economic Regeneration, be invited to a future meeting of the Group to explain how the work around the Marlborough Square and Coalville regeneration project align with the work of the Coalville Special Expenses Group.

14. CAPITAL PROJECTS UPDATE

The Leisure Services Team Manager presented the report which provided an update on existing projects that already have approved budget or funding in place. An additional update was provided verbally on the successful bid to the Local Authority Treescapes fund, which gives 100% funding for the planting of trees along with a 3-year maintenance contribution. The report included a number of issues on which a preference and /or a decision of members was being sought.

On the issue of the solar lights, an update was provided by the Cultural Services Team Manager who advised that had she made some assumptions due to the lack of further information which had not been forthcoming from the Coalville Community Action Group, who submitted the request. Discussions with providers suggested that there was no product which could be recommended for use in public areas due to issues around the longevity of the product; and the lack of light in the winter months to provide sufficient solar charge. There are also issues around the positioning of the lights to take into account mitigation against anti-social behaviour which would impact on the overall visual effect. Further complications were around the power source given the location; and with batteries proving to be expensive and prone to theft.

The Chairman invited comments and questions.

Councillor M Wyatt made some observations. In relation to the consultation on the park improvement options, it was clear that option one was preferred by local residents and he considered this the most practical option. He asked that a task and finish group be set up to look at the play equipment in play areas to determine if equipment needed to be replaced or if a saving could be effected to Coalville Special Expenses by removing equipment and using the area in a different way. On the decision as to whether the trees be replaced, he considered this essential and that we should not give in to vandalism and he welcomed the continuation of Coalville in Bloom. He was pleased to see that the application was to be submitted in respect of solar panels for the bowls club and hoped for its success; and he agreed with the views of officers that the solar lights in the trees was not feasible and felt that having permanent lights in situ detracted from the effect of having Christmas lights.

Coalville J Geary supported the comments in relation to Coalville in Bloom adding that it was in the gift of members to agree the level of funding and he urged caution about the

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planting of trees on verges where there may be an adverse effect on the infrastructure beneath. He sought clarification on the height of the cemetery wall as he considered it higher than the reported 1.2 metres. He was advised that the cemetery wall was 2 metres high and the 1.2 metres was one of the replacement options; there was a further option of a 'like for like' replacement. Councillor Geary advised therefore that his preferred option was four, the 'like for like' replacement. In terms of the application for the grit bin, he asked that this be taken forward.

Councillor J Legrys congratulated Friends of Coalville Park for the work they had done on the bid and to officers on the support they had provided to members. In respect of the park options, Councillor Legrys asked that, whichever option, a path be included from the park exit through to Hawthorn Close; and that measures be introduced to deter vandalism. He supported option one. He asked officers whether they felt confident that the site at Lillehammer drive would be cleared by Christmas 2023 considering the length of time this issue had been rumbling on. He echoed the supportive views on Coalville in Bloom and shared his concerns at the level of vandalism and the risk of this when considering lights in trees. In relation to the cemetery wall, Councillor Legrys asked about ownership and who was responsible for this, as he considered it should come from a corporate budget and was not the responsibility of this Group. In relation to the county council owned area known as Phoenix Green, he asked that a bid be made to enable the Parks Team to undertake some basic maintenance works.

Councillor E Allman asked whether the issue around the solar lights in Memorial Square had been communicated to the Coalville Community Action Group; advised that he had not yet received any details on the proposals for the play area at Claremont Drive; and stated that he would support option 3 to align with the views of Friends of Coalville Park.

Councillor A Black asked all members to encourage local businesses and residents to support Coalville in Bloom. She appreciates all the hard work undertaken by officers in respect of identifying areas for tree planting, and suggested the relief road at Bardon Road. She asked for a map of where the highways authority have designated tree planting and, with reference to the solar lights, advised that she does not support areas being lit every night due to light pollution and the effect had on local residents; a view subsequently supported by Councillor Wyatt.

The Leisure Services Team Manager responded to the issues and questions raised by Members as follows:-

- The issues around the play areas and equipment are being looked at by the Financial Sub Group and ward members will be fully engaged;
- The tree planting locations came from members, most of which are on county council land; Coalville park is the only suggestion which is owned by the district council; thorough checks will be made to ensure that any planting on highway verges does not impact on underground infrastructure;
- Proposals for the park extension have been adapted in an attempt to mitigate against anti-social behaviour;
- Legal advice will need to be sought on the ownership and responsibility of the cemetery wall given that it sits within the Coalville special area in which there is no Town Council to delegate any specific responsibilities;
- There are many external factors in play with regard to Lillehammer Drive that no absolute certainties can be given on timescales. However, everything that can be done is being done; but reliance on the timescale falls to Barratts.
- Legal advice will be sought on the powers of this Group in requesting the county council to undertake its responsibilities in maintaining the Phoenix Green area and, if so permitted, a letter can be sent to LCC setting out this Group's concerns;
- Happy to raise the issue of tree planting along the Bardon Road relief road with relevant officers; don't have a map but will ask LCC if they can provide;

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A lengthy debate ensued on the merits of holding the meetings more regularly with a suggestion of these being monthly or 6-weekly meetings.

It was moved by Councillor J Geary and seconded by Councillor M Wyatt that a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Group on proposals for looking at its Terms of Reference and it meeting more regularly. An amendment to the motion was moved by Councillor Geary to include that the next meeting of the Group be convened an hour earlier to enable discussions to be held. This was seconded by Councillor Legrys and it was AGREED. It was subsequently

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The progress update on the 2021/22 Capital Projects be noted.
2. That a report be brought back to the next meeting on proposals for looking at the Group's Terms of Reference and it meeting more regularly; and that the next meeting of the Group be convened an hour earlier to enable these discussions.
3. That legal advice be sought on the powers of this Group in requesting the county council to undertake its responsibilities in maintaining the Phoenix Green area and, if so permitted, a letter be sent to LCC setting out this Group's concerns.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET THAT:

1. Option One be the preferred design for the field at the rear of Coalville Park.
2. Option Four be the preferred option for the London Road Cemetery wall, subject to legal advice being sought on ownership and responsibility;
3. That the provision for the grit bin at the junction of Zetland Close and Wentworth Road be supported;
4. The application for the solar lights in Memorial Square not be supported.

ACTIONS

- (1) That legal advice be sought on the ownership and responsibility of the cemetery wall given that it sits within the Coalville specials area in which there is no Town Council to delegate any specific responsibilities;
- (2) That a report be bought back to the next meeting on proposals for looking at the Group's Terms of Reference and it meeting more regularly; and that the next meeting of the Group be convened an hour earlier to enable these discussions;
- (3) That legal advice be sought on the powers of this Group in requesting the county council to undertake its responsibilities in maintaining the Phoenix Green area and, if so permitted, a letter be sent to LCC setting out this Group's concerns.

15. COALVILLE SPECIAL EXPENSES FINANCE UPDATE

The Finance Team Manager presented the report to members.

It was moved by Councillor Legrys, seconded by Councillor A Black and

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The 2020/21 final outturn figures and Coalville Special Expense balances as at 31 March 2021 be noted.
2. The 2021/22 period 3 budget monitoring figures and forecasted outturn for 2021/22 be noted.
3. Future meetings have the Finance Update as the first item on the agenda.

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ACTION: Democratic Service to ensure that future meetings have the Finance Update as the first item on the agenda.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.20 pm