

IVYBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

The Minutes of the Parks and Open Spaces Committee held in the Town Hall on Tuesday 14 December 2021 at 6.45pm

Present: Cllr A Spencer (Chair)
Cllr A Rea
Cllr L Rea
Cllr T Lannin

In attendance: Mr J Parsons (Town Clerk)
Mrs J Gilbert (Assistant Town Clerk)

There was no public participation session

PA21/028 **APOLOGIES:** Apologies were received from Cllrs Wilson and Budd.

PA21/029 **INTERESTS TO BE DECLARED:** Cllr T Rea declared an interest in any allotments discussions due to him having a Park Street allotment.

PA21/030 **WORK PLAN:** The work plan proposed at the last meeting was reviewed (copy previously circulated).

The Town Clerk confirmed that the MacAndrews Field goal posts have now been welded and the Victoria Park gate refurbished with new furniture. Kings Gutter is still ongoing, and he is scheduled to meet with the PROW officer to ascertain his thoughts whether introducing steps would be an appropriate action and not introduce a hazard, and will bring a firm plan to the next meeting.

Cllr L Rea confirmed that the work plan is a positive step but requested that it be brought to each meeting, and that it would be helpful to have it on the secure drive as an excel spreadsheet updated regularly.

The situation regarding the Parks Ranger vacancy was queried. The Town Clerk confirmed that the post is being advertised at 28 hours, equalising the two Parks ranger roles on the same grade with more resources on the ground, and ideally the person will have volunteer leading experience. More officer support will be provided by the Assistant Town Clerk to cover admin and health and safety. More hours on the ground would enable the Town Council to support the town's excellent volunteers, for example with In Bloom tasks such as watering which was not undertaken last year. The Rangers will be out on site undertaking some jobs together, and will work one weekend a month each as part of their normal hours in order to provide a presence in the town.

Members queried the £6k for the Macandrews field play equipment. The Town Clerk advised that the play equipment is decaying and this figure was a quote from the installers to replace some of the wood,

however he would investigate using carpenters to replace the wood like for like in an effort to try and reduce the figure quoted.

Cllr L Rea suggested that the format of the work plan correlates with the budget, identifying what is specified in the budget and what will come out of reserves. Cllr T Rea suggested colour coding and timescales to highlight priorities. This would also be helpful for future members of the Parks Committee to follow. The Town Clerk suggested that when it goes onto the spreadsheet the tasks could automatically change colour when dealt with. Cllr L Rea asked that any excel spreadsheet used is compatible as she is unable to open some versions. The Town Clerk confirmed that Google Sheets could be used, and he would have write access.

Cllr L Rea confirmed that she had completed her task to set up a forum for regular communication with Erme Primary School.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) receive and note the information;
- (ii) introduce a work plan on the secure drive using Google Sheets;
- (iii) report back on the meeting to resolve the Kings Gutter tree;
- (iv) investigate remedial works to the MacAndrews Field play equipment

PA21/031 **MANSTOW FOOTBALL CLUB:** An update was received on the lease discussions with the Club and the urgent works needed (copy previously circulated).

The Town Clerk confirmed that since the agenda had gone out he had received the tree report and met with the football club, and discussions have been very constructive. They understand the safety priorities and the need to compromise. The arborist's report gave quite a wide berth, and would result in the club losing an age bracket. The football club have submitted a proposal of a radius of 16m which is outside of the drip line, and which enables them to have a bigger third pitch. The arborist has accepted their proposal, and this gives the best protection to the tree whilst preserving Manstow Football Club. At the meeting the club had pegged out the pitches, and communications have been good. If the committee are in agreement the Town Clerk will ask the arborist to formalise the proposal. The club do not play matches until the New Year so this would allow them to redesign the pitches in the next three weeks.

The club are requesting funding of £400 to implement this, however this issue has already cost the Council for the tree survey works and officer time. Therefore, they will be making a bid to P&R for a grant.

The club's lease expired in 2019 and they are currently paying £576 a year. They have no mains water or drainage. Historically there was a water supply in the park that sprung leaks. If they can find the water meter they can take on the water supply if the Committee agree once it has been located by the club.

A discussion took place on the rents from the other clubs using the park, however these could not be compared as they are not equivalent, the Cricket club have a club house and cricket ground, and the fishing club built the lake and was grant funded. The committee recognised that Manstow offers the youth the opportunity to play football in a non-competitive way. The Town Clerk suggested that he undertakes some investigations into what comparable clubs in Devon are paying. He advised that a solicitor would be involved when arranging the lease. Cllr T Rea suggested that wording from the Ivybridge Community College Community Use Agreement could be used.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) the pitches be reallocated in accordance with meeting health and safety requirements;
- (ii) the Town Clerk would investigate rents from comparable clubs in Devon before a new lease is agreed.

PA21/032 **BUDGET 2022-2023:** The draft budget for 2022-2023 was considered (copy previously circulated)

Cllr Spencer thanked the Town Clerk and Senior Finance Officer for producing the budget, making reference to the reduction on projected figures for the current year.

Cllr T Rea sought clarification on what the various Reserves represented. The Town Clerk explained that the Earmarked Reserves could be used for eventualities not budgeted for, for example if emergency major tree works were required. Committed Reserves are very specific and can only be spent on particular items, and Restricted Reserves are restricted by funders. Cllr L Rea enquired about the £281 for MacAndrews Field, and the Town Clerk advised that a mechanism could be found to release that money.

Cllr Lannin enquired why three quarters of the way through the year the spend is much lower than projected. The Town Clerk explained that the apparent underspend is due to income for grass cutting being received at the beginning of the year but cutting will not start until later in the year, plus there was a reduction in using the ParkLife contractors. Salaries had previously been incorporated into each committee budget, but to try and simplify this these notional figures have been moved into the corporate budget. This also includes the Assistant Town Clerk who will undertake an extra day to absorb some work left by the Parks Ranger. Only the Parks Rangers salaries remain in the parks budget. Parks contractors will still be required for skills not

available in house, for example arboricultural reports, tree surgery and wall building, and ParkLife work at Filham will be funded by Section 106.

Cllr L Rea suggested a dashboard format for the budget that could be reviewed at each meeting. She considered the current layout to be complicated and needed to be accessible to the community. The Town Clerk responded that the software package would not do that, and he would worry about exporting figures manually, but a regular report could be provided such as is given to P&R. Cllr Lannin remarked that she understood that the grave-digging was kept under a separate area, but queried why there were not overall costs for the other areas. The Town Clerk stated that he would worry when transferring figures as exporting them would have to be done manually. Cllr Spencer commented that he would see if there was possibly a way of scoping this so people can understand.

Cllr L Rea stated that she was uncomfortable with a 5% increase in the precept due to the rising household costs. The Town Clerk explained that the parks budget had actually reduced, but that this increase took account of a 2% increase for personnel, and that the precept was not increased last year.

Cllr T Rea suggested that the committee could 1. use reserves, 2. raise more income, for example from leases and 3. not do some of the projects. Cllr Lannin advised that the Council could obtain grants and apply for pots of money, and that it was helpful understanding the budget and the rise in staffing costs in order to justify this to the community.

The Town Clerk explained the process for the approval of the budget, in that the Chair would take the committee's recommendations to the January Policy and Resources Committee, then only Full Council can agree. Cllr L Rea suggested proposing to P&R that reserves are used. Cllr Spencer warned that the Council needs to keep 6 months running costs in reserve. Cllr L Rea had a nervousness if paring down on this committee that other committees may not do the same. The Town Clerk advised that the 5% increase would result in approximately £7 a year rise on a Band D property. He advised that he and the Senior Finance Officer had done their best with the projections to be realistic without being reckless. As an employer of 16 personnel it is a fine balance ensuring the parks are not neglected and that The Watermark remains buoyant.

The Committee went through the budget figures. The leases were again discussed and Cllr Spencer queried if any income was received for the gas pipeline. The Town Clerk was not aware but would investigate. The Town Clerk warned against reducing the maintenance budget as once spent would prohibit any further maintenance until approval was applied for at the next Parks Committee meeting.

At 8.45pm in accordance with Standing Order 3aa that the meeting should not exceed two hours, Members present agreed to extend the meeting until 9pm.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) a recommendation be agreed to Policy and Resources Committee to reduce the hanging baskets by £1,000 although ranger support with watering will be provided, and reduce the Parks contractors by £2,000. By reducing £3,000 off the parks budget for 2022-23 the committee had saved just over 10% of the projected rise and done their absolute best to reduce costs;
- (ii) the Chair of Parks would undertake a scoping exercise with the budget to see if it could be presented in a simpler format.

PA21/033 **UPDATES AND INFORMATION:** Updates and information were received (copy previously circulated).

Parks Ranger Update

The Town Clerk advised that the Parks Ranger vacancy is currently being advertised following an extension to the deadline, and he has received some applications.

Filham Masterplan

The masterplan is currently being developed and implemented, and is being managed by ParkLife.

Grounds Maintenance Contracts

The Town Clerk advised that the new contracts have been drawn up and are due to be advertised. The specification has been changed to allow for biodiversity areas.

Urban Tree Challenge Fund

South Hams have secured £250,000 for tree planting in the district, and will plant 52 trees across some of our parks.

Wayside

DCC commissioned the Town Council to plant wildflowers and trees at Wayside. The Parks Ranger had taken on the work prior to resigning, therefore he has been contracted under ParkLife to complete the work, plus finishing off other works already started. No agreement has been made with DCC for long term maintenance of the area.

Longtimber Path Improvements

Improvements to the Longtimber Woods boardwalk and viaduct entrance on Station Road are scheduled in the New Year.

Urgent Tree Work

The tree works to a tree on Station Road requested by DCC will commence on Monday 20 December.

It was **RESOLVED** to receive and note the information.

Meeting ended at 8.56pm

Signed.....

Date: 24 January 2022

DRAFT