



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE DIRECT SERVICES COMMITTEE OF AYLESBURY TOWN COUNCIL HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, 5 CHURCH STREET, AYLESBURY, ON WEDNESDAY 8 SEPTEMBER 2021 AT 7 P.M.

Present: Cllr W Raja (Chairman)
Cllr C Hedren
Cllr N Hussain
Cllr R King
Cllr S Lambert (from 7.09 pm)
Cllr R Lloyd
Cllr A Morgan

Officers in attendance: Mr M Broughton (Deputy Town Clerk)
Mrs J Priest (Senior Communities Officer, Item 5)

No members of the public were in attendance.

The Chairman formally opened the meeting at 7.00 pm and welcomed everyone present.

1. APOLOGIES

RESOLVED: To note and agree apologies for absence. Cllr Lambert for late arrival.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

3. MINUTES

To receive, accept and sign the Minutes of 9 June 2021.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be duly agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING

To receive any matters arising from the Minutes/report from the Clerk
The Deputy Town Clerk advised there were no matters arising.

5. JONATHAN PAGE PLAY CENTRE

To receive and consider a report from the Senior Communities Officer (SCO)
The Senior Communities Officer gave a verbal update and reported that expansion to the usual capacity of 65 children had been enacted. Over the last six weeks of the summer holidays, the daily occupancy rate of children attending was averaging 93%. Varying demand flows from the different schools were being monitored. An annual survey of parents had recently been undertaken and feedback had been good, with positive comments especially in relation to staff

and commitment to the service. The SCO indicated that the survey supported the contention that the staff team was valuable and highly regarded. A mayoral visit has recently been hosted at the JPPC and the SCO thanked all those who had donated items to fill the outdoor space.

A member asked whether a rise in capacity was possible and in response the SCO indicated that more staff would be required (recognising staff/child ratios) but space was a constricting factor to expand capacity. A member asked whether all staff at the JPPC were trained and if not could the employer assist. The SCO reported that staff were childcare qualified and that training opportunities for further development were provided.

The SCO was thanked for her report.

[Cllr Lambert joined the meeting at 7.09 pm]

6. DEVOLVED SERVICES

To receive an update from the Town Clerk.

The Deputy Town Clerk gave a brief verbal update and advised members that to date no further feedback had been received from Buckinghamshire Council, despite the need to consider a revised long-term Devolved Services Agreement (covering Outside Maintenance duties as well as possible additional devolved activities) by March next year. Unitary members were asked to do whatever was possible to continue to lobby the unitary council so that some progress could be made on the matter. Members noted that decisions needed to be made very soon in regard to equipment leasing etc and the budget process would also inform the timeline.

It was agreed that a letter be sent from the Town Clerk to the Chief Executive of Buckinghamshire Council bringing to their attention the Town Council's concerns at the lack of dialogue thus far that no indications had been received from them in relation to devolved services from April 2022, and that if no response was forthcoming that a follow-up meeting be held in October to consider matters further.

7. CEMETERY

7a) To receive an update on cemetery matters.

The Deputy Town Clerk briefly reported that everyday management and operation of the cemetery had been continuing over the summer. The Cemetery Manager had recently tendered his resignation after being in post for over four years. The vacancy was presently being advertised and the closing date was the end of this week. Members noted the report and extended their thanks to Mr Motyka for his valued and conscientious service as Cemetery Manager.

7b) To receive, consider and make decisions as appropriate regarding repair of the cemetery chapels and following quotes received.

The Deputy Town Clerk outlined the latest developments in this long-running saga. A meeting had been held on site in early August 2021 with a planning officer of Bucks Council also present and the conclusion was that removal of the entire roof in each case was unmerited bearing in mind the high costs and instead it would be appropriate to undertake a patching job. Quotations had been sought in line with the Council's Standing Orders but only one firm had tendered for the

works. The only quote received was from Kev's Plastering in the sum of £1,260 inclusive of both chapels representing a "like for like" repair.

There was also a need to consider minor lath and plaster patching works to the Dead House which was likewise a Grade II listed building. The costs - likely to be a very modest sum - could be met from the Dead House earmarked reserve.

RESOLVED: It was proposed by Cllr Raja, seconded by Cllr Lloyd and on being put to the vote and duly carried that the quotation from Kev's Plasterers of £1,260 for external "like for like" lath and plaster patching works to the two chapels be agreed.

RESOLVED: It was proposed by Cllr N Hussain, seconded by Cllr A Morgan and on being put to the vote and duly carried that Kev's Plasterers be asked to submit a quotation for "like for like" external lath and plaster patching works on the Dead House, at an envisaged nominal cost, to be taken from the Dead House earmarked reserve.

7c) Locking of Cemetery gates (weekdays and weekends).

The Deputy Town Clerk briefly appraised members to the background to this matter and options available going forward. The difficulties in recruiting a dedicated employee in such a restricted role in terms of hours offered and every day attendance was acknowledged by the Committee. The option of leaving the cemetery permanently open did not find favour due to potential crime and anti-social and thus reputational damage concerns. The possibility of contracting out the locking/unlocking to a security company for an annual fee of around £12k also found little support. A member suggested a possible alternative option would be provision of three gates operated by electronic timers/mobile phone app and advocated looking further in depth at this as a possible solution. Indicative costs were in the region of £4,500 per gate.

It was agreed that investigations take place to consider the desirability of the provision of electrically operated gates as the preferred option and in the interim, a volunteer rota of elected members could be established to ensure gate locking/unlocking was undertaken, whilst still seeking a dedicated employee to undertake this role.

8. ALLOTMENTS

8a) To receive a quarterly update on allotment availability.

The report of the Allotments and Devolved Services Officer had been circulated in advance of the meeting which included information on occupancy rates and plot availability per site. The Committee noted the report.

8b) To consider the outcome of the public consultation at Bedgrove allotment boundary and take decisions as appropriate.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that of 15 properties written to as part of the consultation, 11 had responded by the closing date of 16 July 2021. Of these, 8 preferred the metal palisade security fencing with planting, and 3 preferred the wooden fencing. There was thus a clear preference for the metal type of fencing with hedging. This would cost a total of approximately £9,400.

Members briefly discussed the results of the consultation.

RESOLVED: It was proposed by Cllr Lloyd, seconded by Cllr Lambert and on being put to the vote duly carried that the metal palisade security fence with hedging be provided at this location.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Two members indicated that Wednesdays were not conducive to their attendance at meetings of the Committee. Possible alternative meeting dates for the remainder of the municipal year would be circulated to members shortly and the date of the next meeting duly communicated in good time.

10. RESERVED ITEMS

To pass a motion that under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 (section 2) (and as extended by section 100 of the Local Government Act 1972), the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information.

11. TOWN HALL

Town Hall rental of office space.

Decisions to be made regarding future leases and rental of office space.

The Deputy Town Clerk apprised the Committee of the background to this matter and tabled a letter from one of the Council's two Town Hall tenants.

Members recognised the inherent current uncertainty over near-future demands for office space in the circumstances.

RESOLVED: It was proposed by Cllr Lambert, seconded by Cllr Lloyd and on being put to the vote duly carried that both tenants existing leases should be extended to the end of March 2022, that the tenants be written to accordingly and that the situation be re-examined at the Committee's next scheduled meeting.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.23 p.m.

Chairman _____ Date _____