

MINUTES

Committee: Amenities Committee
Date: Monday, 22 May 2023
Time: 7:00 pm
Venue: Younghayes Centre, 169 Younghayes Road EX5 7DR

Present

Cllr Barry Rogers (Chair)
Cllr Kim Bloxham
Cllr Les Bayliss
Cllr Kevin Blakey
Cllr Colin Buchan
Cllr Lisa Goudie
Cllr Vincent Wilton

Also Present

One member of the public
George Trott, Tony Benger Ground Maintenance and Landscaping
Cllr Ray Bloxham
Cllr Matt Bayliss
Alexandra Robinson, Deputy Clerk, Cranbrook Town Council

A/23/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology was received on behalf of Cllr James Gill.

A/23/26 DECLARATION OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATION

Cllr Barry Rogers declared a personal interest in Agenda Items 14 and 15 by virtue of being an allotment plot holder therefore Cllr Rogers would abstain from Chairing and voting thereon.

A/23/27 MINUTES

It was proposed by Cllr Colin Buchan seconded by Cllr Kim Bloxham and **resolved** to accept and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2023 as a correct record.

A/23/28 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public requested to comment on any matters under public participation.

A/23/29 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee noted the Terms of Reference for the Amenities Committee.

It was proposed by Cllr Kevin Blakey, seconded by Cllr Kim Bloxham and **resolved** to adopt the Terms of Reference for 2023-24 subject to minor amendment to item 6 to include the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council as ex-officio members of the Committee. The Chair and Vice Chair of the full Council would have voting rights and form part of the quorum. The Terms of Reference would be recommended to the Full Council for approval.

A/23/30 AMENITIES MONITORING REPORT

The Committee noted the amenities monitoring report.

Signed

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A/23/31 VETERAN OAK, TILLHOUSE ROAD – TREE MANAGEMENT

The Committee noted that the Static Load Test was carried out on the Veteran Oak Tree, Tillhouse Road by specialist arboriculturist in January 2023 and the report and findings were considered by the Committee at its meeting of 13th March 2023 (Minute A/23/19 refers). Given the specialist nature of the particular tree the Committee sought advice from the Council's arboricultural adviser in respect of ongoing tree management. Mr Trott, raised the following key points:

1. To consider the tree as an individual rather than one of many within Cranbrook.
2. Retrenchment pruning is intended to achieve crown reduction, carried out very gradually over 15-20 years. The aim is to stimulate epicormic growth at the centre of the canopy whilst reducing the overall crown. If too much of the canopy is removed in relation to growth, the tree will suffer from reduced energy levels and is at risk of failing.
Annex 1 provides additional background information on Retrenchment Pruning.
3. Retrenchment pruning is ideally carried out during the height of summer or mid-winter and can be scheduled accordingly.
4. Improve the nutrients in the soil to the area surrounding the base of the tree by either;
 - a) applying mulch, topping up every three years;
 - b) planting wildflower meadow which helps to reduce compacted soil and could improve the aesthetics given the large area around the base of the tree; and/or
 - c) apply nutrient injections directly into the soil;
5. Whilst the costs of managing this individual tree are substantial it is anticipated that they would reduce over time.

Following a lengthy discussion among members it was proposed by Cllr Barry Rogers, seconded by Cllr Kevin Blakey and **resolved** to accept the quotation of £4,067.95 +VAT and instruct the Council's Landscaping and Grounds Maintenance contractor to carry out the initial works during 2023-24 and for the Committee to make appropriate annual budget provision for long term management of the Veteran Oak.

Cllr Colin Buchan voted against the resolution.

MEETING SUSPENDED AT 7.45PM

MEETING RESUMED AT 7.48PM

A/23/32 ANNUAL RoSPA PLAY PARK INSPECTIONS

The Chairman referred to the recent Annual Play Park Inspections undertaken on behalf of the Town Councils by a RoSPA Play Park Inspector. The purpose of the inspections being to establish the overall level of safety of the equipment, foundations and surfaces and including an assessment of compliance to required standards EN 1176 and are carried out in addition to the Council's Weekly routine and Quarterly operational inspections. Members noted the recently opened Platinum Play Park would be subject to an annual inspection from next year.

The Committee noted the Annual Play Park Inspection Reports for the following Play Areas;
Crannaford,
Hayes Square,
Northwood Acres and
St Martin's.

A/23/33 ST MARTIN'S PLAY AREA – PATH REMEDIATION

The Chairman referred to previous path remediation in St Martin's Play area which were replaced in spring 2022 and had so far been resilient to pedestrian traffic and inclement weather.

The Committee noted that further sections of the play park, not subject to the previous remediation were brought forward for consideration in light of poor drainage and increased wear and tear. The path is a hoggin material, which has poor drainage (leading to pooling of water) and is easily eroded by fast flowing water. The steeper sections of the path are prone to water run off, making it not only unsightly, but potentially unsafe for users particularly those with pushchairs, wheelchairs and bicycles.

Signed

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The worse affected area is just inside the pedestrian access gate (located between the primary school entrance and the carpark).

Following a discussion among members it was proposed by Cllr Colin Buchan seconded by Cllr Les Bayliss and **resolved** to recommend to Council to accept the quotation for £8,674.00 plus VAT and to instruct the Council's Landscaping and Grounds Maintenance Contractor to carry out works to replace the entire pathway, through the centre of the play area. The works to be scheduled outside of school holidays to reduce the impact of the temporary loss of amenity.

A/23/34 ST MARTIN'S PLAY AREA – MAINTENANCE & REPAIRS

The Committee noted that the Cableway supplier recommended that it should be serviced annually as it is a well-used piece of play equipment. The Committee previously resolved to approve this as set out in Minute A/21/66. The Council's preferred play park maintenance contractor would carry out the service and any repairs. In addition, two swings required attention and the Committee noted that the Council's Handyman contractor had carried out a number of key areas of repair within the play areas.

Following a discussion among members it was proposed by Cllr Kevin Blakey, seconded by Cllr Kim Bloxham and **resolved** to

- a) approve the service and repair of the cableway at cost of £360.00 (Excl VAT)
- b) approve the replacement of the flat swings at a total cost of £310.60 (Excl VAT)
- c) note the repair works completed by House 2 Home, Handyman.
- d) in noting the age of the play area equipment, to consider preparation of a budget for a replacement programme which would be referred to the Finance and Personnel Committee.

A/23/35 CRANNAFORD PLAY AREA – PATH REMEDIATION

The Committee considered whether the path at Crannaford Play Park required remediation. Gravel is migrating from the perimeter footpath onto the Wet Pour Safer Surface, a rubber based surface specifically used in play area design. As part of the Annual Inspection, the RoSPA Play Safety Inspector reported that over time it is likely to cause premature deterioration of the safer surface as the gravel becomes imbedded in the wet pour. This could potentially reduce the overall standard and performance of the play area surface.

The Council's Ground Maintenance and Landscaping Contractor has been consulted on the options for remediation and recommend that the play area is swept to remove loose gravel. The Committee expressed concern that this may not fully remediate the issue with the loose gravel migrating to the play area and also requested that a meeting be arranged with the Play Park supplier to seek further information on the issue.

Following a discussion among members it was proposed by Cllr Kim Bloxham, seconded by Cllr Colin Buchan and **resolved** to defer a decision on the remediation of the paths at Crannaford Play Area until further discussion had been held with the Play Park contractor.

A/23/36 VEHICLE ACTIVATED SIGN MANAGEMENT

Following its meeting of 13th March, the Committee sought additional information regarding the ongoing maintenance and management of the Vehicle Activate Sign VAS in Cranbrook (minute A/23/18 refers).

The Town Council has a duty to take all appropriate steps to minimise the risk to its operatives, pedestrians and other road users when carrying out tasks associated with the VAS. The Committee noted that the VAS sign and battery are heavy and the deployment requires the operator to work at height in close proximity to the highway. Despite the challenges to operate and deploy safely, the signs are recognised as a worthy deterrent to excessive speeding and a reminder to passing motorists to remain within the speed limit.

In noting the complexity of managing the VAS signs, Members considered solar charged units and alternative and additional products that may benefit the community as part of road safety in the town.

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Members suggested the existing products which had been provided through Devon County Council Locality Budget grant funding be tested for a trial period to ascertain the most effective long term plan.

Following a lengthy discussion among members it was proposed by Cllr Kim Bloxham, seconded by Cllr Vince Wilton and **resolved** to

- a) note the report
- b) recommend to Council the approval and adoption of the Risk Assessments:
 - i) VAS Risk Assessment
 - ii) VAS Battery Check
- c) delegate to the Clerk and the Chairman of Amenities to explore the potential for sharing a qualified contractor for deployment and maintenance of the VAS equipment with a neighbouring parish for a six month trial period, up to a cost of £700, to evaluate the suitability of the equipment and to report the findings to the Committee later in the year.

A/23/37 WEED CONTROL

The Committee considered the 2023 Annual Weed Control Programme to the kerbs and pavements in Cranbrook. Total Weed Control have provided services to Cranbrook Town Council over the past couple of years and base their quotation on experience of the site. The service is based on individual treatments; therefore, the Council is not required to subscribe to more than one treatment at a time.

The Committee gave careful consideration to the type of weed control to be provided, the necessity for the service and the longer term programme to be reviewed as Cranbrook continued to expand.

Following a discussion, it was proposed by Cllr Barry Rogers seconded by Cllr Les Bayliss and **resolved** to

- a) instruct Total Weed Control as the Council's preferred provider to manage the weeds along the adopted kerbs and pavements within the route as specified in the map annexed to the report;
- b) apply to Devon County Council's Community Enhancement Fund to seek proportionate funding (25%) towards the cost of weed control in Cranbrook.

Cllr Lisa Goudie abstained from the vote.

The Chairman having declared a personal interest in the following two items passed to the Vice Chairman, Cllr Kim Bloxham and abstained from voting thereon.

A/23/38 CRANNAFORD ALLOTMENT – PATH REMEDIATION

The Vice Chair reminded members that the communal pathways are all laid to grass and during inclement weather they can become extremely wet and boggy underfoot. This can reduce the capability of wheeled vehicles and limit the accessibility to individual plots. The Committee considered options for remediation of paths on the site, which included, installation of protective matting, topping with tarmac and installing additional localised drainage to the site to remediate the most affected paths. Advice was sought from the Council's Ground Maintenance and Landscaping Contractor who provided a number of alternatives but recommended installing additional drainage to the rear path and then covering with stone and hard core and seeded upon completion.

In considering the cost of the various proposals for remediation, in terms of the number of residents who might benefit from the works, Members were concerned that the expenditure may be disproportionate and impact on the Amenities Budget. However, Members noted that there are greater funding opportunities available for Allotment Associations that preclude applications from Town and Parish Councils. Members would strongly urge current plot holders to consider the benefits of forming an Association and pursuing grant funding and the wider opportunities that self-management of the site would bring.

Following a lengthy discussion among members it was proposed by Cllr Vince Wilton, seconded by Cllr Les Bayliss and **resolved** to

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a) **Not approve** the remediation of the communal footpath along the western boundary at Crannaford Allotments and

b) to delegate to the Clerk and the Property Administrator to support plot holders in forming an Allotment Association, with the necessary advice and guidance. The Clerk and the Property Administrator to include this advice on the website as a reference for plot holders should this question be raised at a later stage. In forming an Association, it was hoped that it would allow the plot holders the opportunity to access Grant Funding.

Cllr Barry Rogers abstained from the vote.

A/23/39 CRANNAFORD ALLOTMENT - MAINTENANCE

The Committee noted that as part of the annual inspection at Crannaford Allotments, the uncovered water troughs required the annual drain flush and clean as previous minute A/22/38, refers. Members recalled the previous works to the site and noted that the regular clean was necessary to minimise the potential for contaminants in the water.

Following discussion, it was proposed by Cllr Colin Buchan, seconded by Cllr Vince Wilton and **resolved** to

a) carry out the annual drain, flush clean and refill of all water troughs.

b) instruct GJ Waller and Co Plumbing and Heating to conduct the annual drain, flush clean and refill of all water troughs at a cost of £128.85.

Cllr Barry Rogers abstained from the vote.

The meeting closed at 9.08pm