



Sleaford Town Council
Services Panel
Notes and Report of Meeting – 22nd February 2022
10:30am to 12.11pm

Panel members present:

Cllr D Suiter
Cllr L Edwards-Shea
Cllr M Offer

Meeting and Panel supported by the Deputy Town Clerk and Administration Officer (MW)

1. **Panel Lead's Welcome**

It was reported by Panel Members that the Panel Lead, Councillor K Fernandes had resigned from the Services Panel and the Culture, Events & Market Panel.

It was agreed that Councillor D Suiter would be the Panel Lead for this meeting only.

2. **Apologies**

Apologies for absence, with reasons, were received from Councillors D Darmon and J Thomas.

3. **Notes from the meetings held on 18th January 2022**

The notes which had already been presented to Full Council on 16th February 2022, were noted.

Officers were thanked for presenting an excellent set of minutes.

4. **Service Team**

The Services Team Leader had provided a written report giving an update on the work carried since the last panel meeting, which included:

- Cemetery – clearing out old area reducing yew trees to let light in
- Chipping green waste
- Tidying of footpath from Carre Arms Hotel to Railway Crossing
- Depot: Installation of Sink and unit and Contractor installation of additional plug sockets and 1 Heater
- Planting 1000 snowdrops
- Litter / Street cleaning – issue at Museum toilet with human defaecation in the sink
- Bristol Water Fountain cleaned, and training awaited from NKDC before being re-commissioned
- Emergency repair to LCC bus shelter on Southgate due to high winds
- Maintenance to machinery
- Playground checks weekly and report faults to contractor
- Liaison with Carre Trust to remove dead tree at Castlefield

- Removal of hazardous goal netting at Boston Road Recreation Ground
- Meeting Hill Holt Wood for potential future projects
- George Street Playing Field – Hedge maintenance and reduction to a safe manageable height
- Castle Field – Removed self-seeded trees, allowing for a better view of the Castle from the roadside

As well as the planned work listed below, the Deputy Clerk reported on the recent vandalism at Money's Yard toilets where the window has been smashed and the floor has been flooded.

- Restart of grass cutting season
- Evicting problematic Allotment Tennant
- Clearing Allotment plot ready to be let out.
- Meeting with Green Machine

Panel Members were informed that a tree at the Boston Road Recreation Ground had been damaged by recent winds, causing a large branch to break off. NKDC have been notified as the tree is subject to a Tree Preservation Order (TPO).

Previous Clerks had, in the past, allowed wood to be taken by members of the public for their own use. This practice is now causing problems with reports from the public. The Panel were informed that it is a criminal act – theft – to take logs/wood which has been left from tree surgery and these remain the property of the landowner and should be left to provide a wildlife habitat.

Final verbal updates given by the Deputy Clerk included:

- Following a Full Council Resolution, a new services vehicle has been purchased and is now in operation;
- Quarterly meeting with STC's security company reported back that their patrols are going well. Two incidents of drug taking in the museum toilets with which they have dealt with.
- The Service Team have been one full time operative down since November 2020. The Deputy Clerk would be seeking to fill the vacancy.

Councillor L Edwards-Shea asked for it to be recorded that the Castlefield Site is now looking great following maintenance work carried out by the Services Team and thanked them for their hard work.

5. **Request for a Decorative Wooden**

A request has been received from the Sleaford Islamic Centre for a decorative wooded arch to be erected at the entrance of the Islamic section of the Cemetery, to provide a welcome and a comforting inscription to people visiting the area.

The Sleaford Islamic Centre is a registered Charity and would be honored if the Town Council is willing to contribute towards the cost of the arch.

The Deputy Clerk reported that a previous Clerk had agreed with the Islamic Community Leader, a certain level of maintenance works in this area. Some works are maintenance and are ongoing which include re-siting of a bench, putting paving slabs around the tap and making good the boundary hedge and a breach in the Hawthorn Hedge.

It was reported that there is signage together with a plan of the cemetery directing visitors to the Islamic section of the Cemetery.

A brief discussion took place regarding all potential costs involved with an arch, including the purchase, installation and future maintenance.

All members agreed in principle to a decorative wooden arch but agreed that more information as to the design, exact siting and all purchase, installation and maintenance costs are sought before a recommendation can be made to Full Council.

Action:

- 1) This project to be added to the list of ongoing projects.
- 2) Officers to inform the Islamic Community Leader that their request has been discussed at a Services Panel Meeting and that the Panel have requested a design specification, purchase costs, installation costs and ongoing maintenance costs.
- 3) Siting of the arch to be agreed.
- 4) The work will not be progressed until a new Town Clerk is in post

6. **Complaint about Mature Sycamore Tree at Woodside Playing Field**

Panel members discussed the report which outlined a complaint about a tree on STC land, which grows into gardens over the boundary. The residents have been informed that they have the right to remove growth overhanging their property, at their own expense. The tree in question is not subject to a TPO and has been assessed as healthy and safe in the 2019 triennial inspection by NKDC tree officer.

There was a brief discussion regarding the height of the tree.

Recommendation: Not to remove the healthy tree in question, as to do so would set a precedent for further requests and would exhaust the Council's tree surgery budget. Therefore, the resident can trim and cut back the tree that is overhanging their garden, if they wish to do so. No action to be taken and the Sycamore Tree is not to be added to STC's removal list, as per the Sleaford Town Council Tree Policy.

7. **Vandalism – Public Toilets**

It was reported that the Service Team, in the past six months, have had to deal with the cleaning of human excrement off the walls and floor in Money's Yard male toilets, resulting in temporarily closing them from the public use.

In addition, one of the toilets at the Cemetery has been vandalised to that it is out of use and anti-vax stickers have been plastered over the inside of both toilet units at Boston Road.

It was further reported that although the Service Team are equipped with disposable coveralls, gloves etc., specialist equipment is needed to deal with such incidents. Also, the Service Team are trained to clean but these situations require a more professional cleaning response. The staff are exposed to hazards which could cause potential health problems.

Members discussed the welfare of the Service Team and the condition of the cemetery toilet building, which is old, basic and is not DDA compliant. Through the discussion, members were made aware that to find alternative toilet provision would be a lengthy project.

Panel Members were clear in their response that they wanted public toilets to remain open at the Cemetery and that a temporary unit needs to be sited there whilst the existing toilet block is closed to the public.

Action: The Deputy Clerk to work with the Services Team Leader to seek interim temporary toilet facilities for members of the public to use and for the staff to continue to use the toilet block.

Recommendation:

- 1) Council to commit to contract out the cleaning and maintenance of all the Council's Public Toilets as soon as the contracting process allows**
- 2) Council to close the Cemetery toilets to the public, leaving the facilities for staff only and to look into providing a temporary toilet unit for the public**
- 3) F&S to look into potential replacement toilet facilities at the cemetery**
- 4) HR to discuss and consider appropriate training for the Service Team to carry out their duties under the correct Health and Safety requirements.**

8. Cemetery – DeFRA water contamination proposals

The Panel were made aware of proposed burial regulation changes by DEFRA related to groundwater contamination.

DEFRA have proposed introducing regulations to existing cemeteries that could significantly and adversely affect the operation of existing cemeteries across England.

DEFRA has said that the new regulations will be laid before Parliament in the summer and apply from Autumn 2022. The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) responded to the consultation on behalf of Parish and Town Councils, both objecting strongly against the proposals.

In January 2022, the Deputy Clerk responded to directly to Lincolnshire Association for Local Councils (LALC) on behalf of the Council.

Recommendation: That the local MP be contacted and asked to speak to DeFRA on behalf of Sleaford Town Council.

This item was noted .