



Devizes Town Council

www.devizes-tc.gov.uk

RECREATION AND PROPERTIES COMMITTEE

You are summonsed to attend a meeting of the Recreation & Properties Committee at the following, place and date.

Date: 3 OCTOBER 2017

Time: Immediately following Planning Committee

Venue: ASSEMBLY ROOM, Town Hall, Devizes

Enquiries: 01380 722160

The Town Mayor: (Councillor Carter)

Councillors:	Burton	S Evans	Gay
	Geddes	Giraud-Saunders	Greenwood
	Johnson	Parsons	Rowland
	Shaw	Wooldridge	

AGENDA

1. MINUTES

To approve as a correct record and authorise the Chairman to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 22 August 2017 and which have been circulated alongside the agenda.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

3. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

To receive any disclosure(s) of interest by a Councillor or an officer in matters to be considered at this meeting, in accordance with provisions of Sections 94 or 117 of the Local Government Act 1972 or the National Code of Local Government Conduct.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

At the Chairman's discretion, members of the public attending the meeting will be allowed to ask questions, make a statement or address the Council upon a matter of concern to that person which is relevant to the Council. A time limit of 5 minutes per person will be permitted, but this may be extended at the Chairman's discretion and a maximum period of 20 minutes has been allocated by the Council for this item of business

5 REPORT FOR INFORMATION – VENUES INCOME FIGURES

Documents will be issued under separate cover.

6. REPORT FOR INFORMATION – VENUES - CUSTOMER SATISFACTION FEEDBACK, VENUES OCCUPANCY FIGURES & MARKETING INFORMATION

See attached.

7. REPORT FOR INFORMATION – HILLWORTH PARK CAFE

A Wiltshire Council food hygiene officer visited the Hillworth Park Café on 6th September to assess its hygiene and cleanliness. The café was awarded a food hygiene rating of Five Stars and the officer was very impressed with how the café was run, staff training and the health and safety paperwork in place.

8. REPORT FOR INFORMATION – SUPERLOOS

The Superloos have been entered into the Loo of the Year Awards. Judging took place last month and the results will be announced in December.

9. REPORT FOR INFORMATION – CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

The Christmas Lights Working Party have agreed to extend the current lighting scheme again this year, with new column displays in Maryport Street and new curtain lighting in the Little Brittox. Officers have gained approval to site three large displays on the Poundland apron, which is now the start of the Christmas Lantern Parade.

10. REPORT FOR INFORMATION – CHRISTMAS TREES

Councillor Sarah Bridewell accompanied officers to the Longleat Forestry Department at the end of August to choose the Market Place and Albion Place Christmas trees. As in previous years, the trees will be delivered by Dave Wyatt the Friday before the Christmas lights switch on and Lantern Parade (17th November).

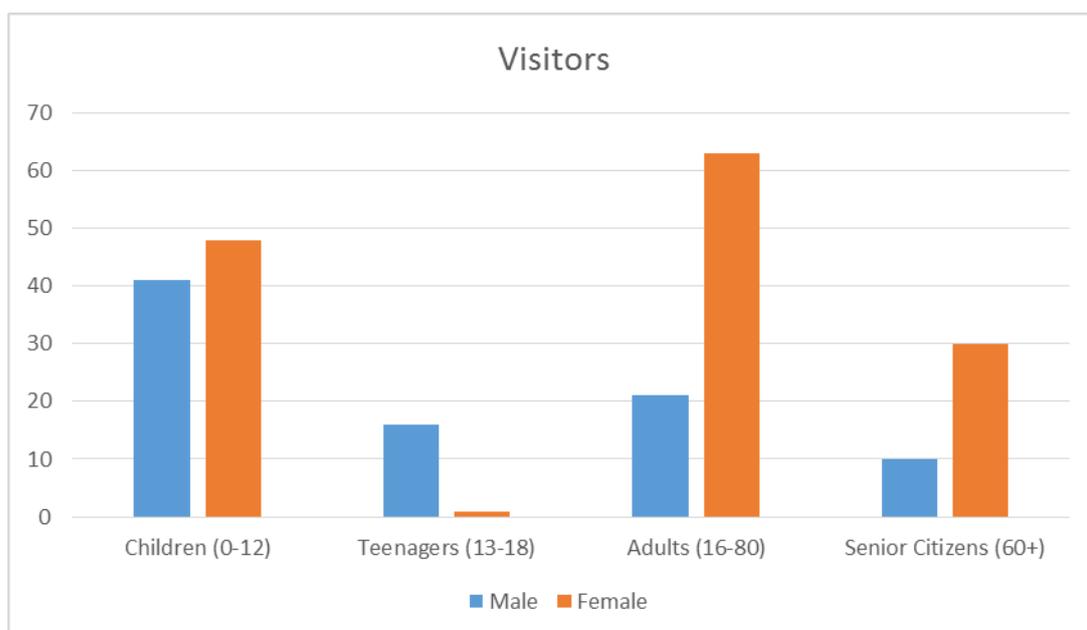
11. REPORT FOR INFORMATION – GREEN LANE PLAYING FIELD IMPROVEMENTS

As part of the ongoing development plans for Green Lane Playing Field, there is a funding window of opportunity to include a new full size artificial all-weather pitch within the scheme. However, there is a prescribed framework for assessing any scheme and site suitability which has to be completed before the project can be considered for funding.

Officers have commissioned this work, which will cost in the region of £5000 and will be funded from the project budget.

12. REPORT FOR INFORMATION – GREEN STAT SURVEY RESULTS 2017

Visitor's Profile During Survey



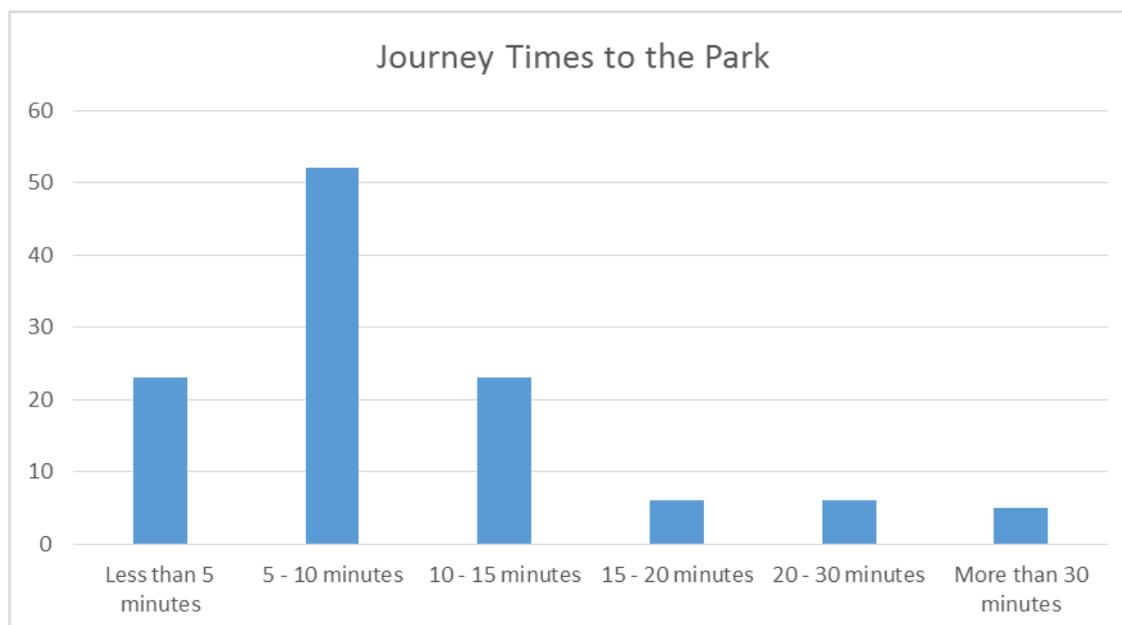
- 4.6% considered they had a disability.
- 86% white/British.
- 82% resident to this local authority area.

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- Why have you visited the Park today?

To relax or think	24	Visit the play area	161
For peace and quiet	35	Picnic/barbecue	35
Enjoy flowers/trees	72	To eat/drink	10
See birds & wildlife	64	Enjoy entertainment	24
Feed the birds/ducks	16	Attend events	25
Enjoy the beauty of the surroundings	83	To keep fit	15
Get some fresh air	88	To improve my health	7
For a walk	54	Organised educational visit	1
Take a shortcut	49	Guided walks & talks	0
Ride a bike	8	Play sports or games	36
Walk the dog	34	Watch sport or games	3
Children/family outing	52	Other	0
Meet friends	29		

- 77% visit the Park more than 2/3 times per year.
- 18% visit most days in the winter, rising to 19% in the summer.
- The majority stay less than 30 minutes during both the winter and between half an hour to an hour in the summer.
- 91% have travelled from home. 57% on foot and 39% by car. The amount of people walking and cycling to the Park has slightly increased from 2014.



Those travelling more than 30 minutes to the Park has slightly increased from the 2014 survey. This is evidenced through the number of people who travel from Swindon, Pewsey, Marlborough and further afield who attend Park events.

Cleanliness/Maintenance

- 100% rate the Park's standard of cleanliness and maintenance as very good or good.
- 99% rate the standard and maintenance of the trees, shrubs etc as very good or good.
- 100% rate the design and appearance as very good or good.

Comments include:

- ✓ Always clean and everything works.
 - ✓ It's just an added bonus for Devizes - it's a beautiful place which can be enjoyed by all generations.
 - ✓ It's a pleasure to walk through and the area with the reflection pool is very good. The exercise apparatus is very encouraging.
 - ✓ 10 out of 10 – perfect! I've never come here and thought it was grubby. The park keepers do a fantastic job and they are always friendly.
 - ✓ I get ideas for my own small garden from here. They've used small railway sleepers and I'm thinking of using some myself to make a raised bed.
-
- It's a shame there isn't a bigger car park.
 - The water area by the café needs to be properly fenced off.
 - The small children's play area could do with a bit of a tidy up. The safety surface is coming away.
 - It can be a mess first thing in the morning, but that is not to criticise the staff. I come in at 5.45am very often.

Accessibility

- 100% stated that they found it very good or good to get around the Park.

Comments include:

- ✓ Paths are good for wheelchairs and double buggies.
- When it is sunny, parking is a nightmare, even if you do have a disabled badge.

Visitor Facilities

- 96% felt the range of visitor facilities were very good or good.
- 68% rated the sports facilities as very good or good – 32% had no opinion/didn't know.
- 100% were very satisfied or satisfied with their overall impression of the Park.

Comments include:

- ✓ How lovely to have a tennis court.
- ✓ They do picnics and events, Easter Egg Hunt etc. There's lots for the children to do.
- ✓ Best Park around - something for everyone.
- ✓ It's nice and open and you can see where the children are.
- ✓ We love the birds.
- ✓ The Park is 'excellent'/a credit to Devizes.
- ✓ Almost nowhere is out of sight and the children have a lot of freedom.
- ✓ It's a fantastic use of space, the events are great and it's really good for Devizes.
- ✓ It's an oasis of peace/the Park is calm and tranquil.
- Perhaps more climbing stuff would be good.
- Could do with a couple of more swings.
- Park seems primarily for children. As a dog walker it is a shame not to be able to let dog off lead but I understand the reasons. There are a lot of children about.
- Safety surface needs attention - especially by the swings.
- The surface of the ship thing in the under 5's area is very slippery when it rains. I don't come here if it has been raining.
- Parking is rubbish/sometimes we can't park.

'Can you think of anything that would encourage you to use the Park more often, or stay for longer?'

General:

- Shelter.
- Water Fountain.

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- More car parking.
- Dogs off leads for part of the day, e.g. early morning, late evening.

Children:

- More play equipment for the younger children.
- Repairs to the Under 5s area safety surface.

‘Are there any more comments you would like to make about the way this park is managed or maintained, the facilities that are available, or the activities that take place?’

- ✓ It’s a lovely park and we are lucky to have it.
- ✓ Keep up the good work and don't take away any resources.
- ✓ Whatever they're doing keep doing the same.
- ✓ Activities here are brilliant. Came to a planting activity for children a couple of weeks ago.
- ✓ Keep up the good work - I love it here.
- My only complaint is the parking.
- Car parking is difficult at busy times.
- I would like dogs to be off leads.
- I would like the Park to be dog-free.

For the first time, two questions were asked specifically relating to the café.

‘What do you think about the café facilities?’

- ✓ Always friendly staff.
- ✓ Good coffee.
- ✓ Always very friendly and welcoming, even with noisy children.
- ✓ Excellent coffee and very friendly staff. Toys and books available. We go in if it's wet and it's open however quiet the park is.
- ✓ Very good - my book club meet here.
- ✓ Always nice and clean.
- Limited choice/variety.
- Would be good if it opened earlier/closed later.

‘What do you think of the range of products on offer at the café?’

- ✓ The gluten free bits are good.
- ✓ Good value and good portion sizes.
- More veggie options.
- More hot food would be good.
- They could do simple hot snacks, chips etc.
- It could have variation on lunches e.g. jacket potatoes not just panini & sandwiches.

Summary

As with previous surveys, consistently, the park is seen as a clean, safe, welcoming space for adults, children and those with accessibility issues. The Parks and Open Spaces teams are recognised as hard working and friendly, on hand to offer advice where necessary and the Café team is also seen as welcoming. This year, the events have also garnered praise with park-goers stating that they travel to attend them and are full of praise for the fact that they are free to attend.

A number of issues run through the survey and, as in 2014, car parking is still high on people's agendas. The lack of car parking aggrieves some, as does the inconsiderate parking which inconveniences local residents, particularly when events are being held.

To help ease the problem, all promotional materials state that there is limited parking and asks park-goers to walk if they can. Wiltshire Council has agreed to provide additional double yellow lines in Queens Road, however, this still has not happened, despite pressure being applied by the Deputy Town Clerk. The Park Wardens put out cones along the road during events and when the weather is good, however, those parking often ignore them and have, on occasions, driven over them or thrown them into the drives of the houses they have parked in front of. This issue needs, therefore, to be re-visited as a matter of importance by officers who will then report back to council. In the meantime, officers will continue to engage with local residents on this issue.

A number of other comments around the state of the wet-pour flooring in the Under 5's play area were also made. This area has passed its annual, external play inspection, however, officers are in the process of looking at this area.

Since the last questionnaire was undertaken in 2014, the café has become council run, therefore, officers thought it prudent to ask two specific questions relating to its provision. The café is seen as an excellent addition to the park and there were no references to sporadic opening times which were mentioned during the last survey.

The week the survey was undertaken was rainy and overcast. Only 8.4% of respondents stated that they had visited the café whilst they were in the park, which suggests the café is still weather dependant and not seen as a destination point. The limited menu is frequently mentioned and a correlation could be made between this and the reason the café is seen as a coffee shop, rather than a food outlet. Members have already identified this and are beginning to work with officers on ways to increase the menu provision.

13. REPORT FOR INFORMATION – SOUTH WEST IN BLOOM

Hillworth Park was judged on Tuesday 12th September as part of the Pride in Parks competition.

The judge who had not visited the park before commented on its overall cleanliness, high standards of horticulture, park events, community involvement and compost making. The results will be announced in the Spring.

The results for the main South West in Bloom competition will be announced at an awards ceremony in Torquay on Thursday 5th October. Councillor Nigel Carter will attend the ceremony alongside the chair of Devizes In Bloom Zena Robson and council officers.

14. REPORT FOR INFORMATION – EXCHANGE NIGHTLCUB

The Merchant Suite re-opened on the 24th August as the Exchange Nightclub following an extensive modernisation and refurbishment programme. As part of its commitment to the refurbishment, officers organised new flooring to be fitted in the basement toilets and in the ground floor disabled toilet. All external woodwork and railings have also been repainted, including the main front doors.

15. REPORT FOR INFORMATION – TOWN HALL OFFICE COSTS

Members will recall a question raised by Councillor Corbett regarding the utilisation of the front part of the Town Hall as office accommodation and the impact of that usage on the overall costs attributed to the Town Hall in the budget.

The Council's Admin & Finance manager has analysed and apportioned the costs associated with the location of an office in the Town Hall to include, rent, commercial rates, water rates, electricity, gas, maintenance contracts, cleaning and waste management.

An amount of £21,257 to include a 3% provision for inflation has been agreed between Councillor Corbett and the Council's Admin & Finance Manager to be included within the 2018/19 estimates.

The overall effect to the 2018/19 estimates will be cash neutral.

16. REPORT FOR INFORMATION – FIRE RISK ASSESSMENTS FOR COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES

Officers reported to members at the meeting of this committee held on 22 August 2017 that a local firm of fire consultants had been commissioned to review the level of risk of harm to human life, due to fire, within its commercial property portfolio.

The company have agreed a schedule of assessments to be undertaken over a period of 6 months with between 3 and 5 properties being assessed per month.

The first 3 properties assessed were Bengal Bite, 1 Sheep Street, Acropolis, 26 Sidmouth Street and Brogans including flats above, 26 The Brittox on the 11th of September, 2017.

The relevant fire risk assessments have now been received by officers and tenants will be contacted shortly with details of the assessments with particular reference to a summary of the action plans to be undertaken and a target date for those actions.

The next assessment dates are due to be performed on the 16th of October with 4 properties being assessed.

17. REPORT FOR INFORMATION – PARK CAFÉ PERFORMANCE

Officers have continued to provide members with progress reports relating to the performance of the Café at Hillworth Park.

Officers also advised that although the objective is to at least break even, the café is a community service that sits alongside the delivery of the park.

Café performance data has been updated (Doc 17/1) to include actual data for the first five months of the 2017/18 financial year and projected income data based on previous year data and updated payroll costs after the recruitment of a number of part time employees in order to minimise the use and impact of utilising Town Council venues staff.

Projected income for the full financial year is £51,776 with a Net Loss after costs of £7,048. This data is accurate as at the time of the preparation of this report.

Income in July 2017 was £6,104 compared to £7,153 in July 2016 whilst August 2017 was £8,709 compared to £9,309 in August 2016. Gross margin for the first five months stood at 51.8% with estimates assuming a 52% gross margin.

The Café is extremely vulnerable to poor weather conditions and should activities fall on a wet day this has a negative impact on Café performance.

Payroll costs in July 2017 were £232 below estimates however in August payroll costs were up by £385 due to the Bank Holiday and the impact on Café staffing.

The 2017/18 estimates were agreed on the assumption that the Café would produce a net loss of £14,886.

18. REPORT FOR DECISION – GRASS CUTTING FOR AVON FIELD PLAYING FIELD

This agenda item has been submitted by Councillor Judy Rose.

Recommendation

That the committee considers agreeing a policy for Avon Road playing field where it collects the grass cutting after the area is mowed.

Purpose of the Report

To review grass cutting standards for Avon Road Play Area.

Background

In her request for a change to the service standard for Avon Road grass cutting Councillor Mrs Rose states that; *“Avon Road Recreational Ground is largely a football pitch and open grass area. Grass cuttings left after mowing are not only a nuisance for users whose feet and shoes get covered with them but also they present a safety issues as they create a slippery surface for those running across the grass. Residents have complained many times about this and with the increasing use of the area it has become a problem.”*

Currently the policy for cutting grass in all its area with the exception of the main lawn in Hillworth Park is to cut and drop.

As part of the Council’s risk assessment analysis, grass is seen as a safe otherwise significant adjustments would need to be made in how we would allow the community to access these areas.

Currently the Council does not have the necessary equipment to collect grass cutting therefore this element of the task would need to be contracted out. As it would be important to ensure that grass collecting was done at the same time a cutting it may be necessary to contract the whole task. The cost of clearing grass cuttings only from Avon Road was £270.00 plus VAT for the current year. To cut the grass as well will be in the region of a further £200.

In the current year is expected the grass will be cut approximately 12 times.

No direct complaint has been received in the office but the issue has been raised by Councillor Mrs Rose.

Options Considered

The committee needs to decide if it wishes to create a new service standard for Avon Road by collecting grass cuttings after mowing.

In making this policy change, the committee needs to agree the following.

- Is this a universal policy change for all grass cut areas?
- Is the decision to collect grass on safety grounds and if it is, what is the risk and is collecting cuttings sufficient mitigation?
- If a separate policy is to be made for Avon Road, what is the basis of the policy and how will officers be able to differentiate it from other areas?

Implications and Risks

Financial and Resource Implications

Whilst the project has not been specifically tendered, in the summer of 2017 grass cuttings were collected on one occasion at a cost of £270.00

Legal Implications and Legislative Powers

The Council will be considering this matter under its General Power of Competence.

Environmental Implications

Officers are unaware of any environmental implication for the Council associated with this decision.

Risk Assessment

Officers are unaware of any risk implication for the Council associated with this decision.

Crime and Disorder

Officers are not aware of any issues the Council should consider under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder act 1998.

19. REPORT FOR DECISION – VENUES MARKETING RETAINER

Recommendation

That the committee confirm they are satisfied with the marketing being undertaken by Resolution Design for a minimum of six months.

Purpose of the Report

To bring the Committee up to date with the work carried out by Resolution Design and officers since June 2017.

Background

During the autumn of 2016, officers analysed the business performance of the Venues and this was further explored with members at a Forward Planning session on 29 November 2016.

Officers observed that the marketing employed thus far has been successful, but that we have now reached the edge of our expertise to deliver further.

A clear skills gap was identified which requires a specialist skill set to help the Council move the business forward.

The consensus at this Forward Planning session was that budget would be made available within the 2017-18 estimates to buy in specialist expertise to draw together a Marketing Strategy aimed at assessing and analysing markets and then, further to deliver that strategy. This was agreed at the meeting of the Full Council on 15 December 2016.

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The Direct Services Manager, Sarah Williams, explored the market for this expertise and sought quotations with a brief to increase the number of bookings across both venues, particularly wedding ceremonies and wedding receptions in the Town Hall. Companies were asked for a four step process:

Stage 1 – Review and Audit*¹

- a. Where are we now? Where do we want to be?
- b. Meet with Venues Team to review existing processes and systems, our best practice etc.
- c. What is our current marketing activity (spend and process).
- d. What is our customer journey?
- e. How much money do we take and how much do we make!
- f. What is our market, are we selling to the right sectors etc.

Stage 2 – Strategy Development

- g. A detailed Marketing Plan to be drawn together, which defines what we should do to improve, how we should do it and how much it will cost.

Stage 3 - Delivery of Strategy*²

- h. What would their role be in this process?
- i. What would they offer e.g. training the team/branding/sales/social media marketing etc.

Stage 4 – Review and Analysis

- j. Delivery of KPI reports etc to measure performance.

A number of external marketing companies were approached, particularly focusing on those who have already worked with venues. Three proposals were received from companies who seemed to provide “best fit” for the Town Council business:

Company Name	Total Cost p/a
Modus Operandi	£28,762.50
Liz Wood Associates	£33,210.00
Resolution Design	£12,000.00*

*Initial proposal issued alongside

It was agreed at the Governance Committee on 11th April that Resolution Design be commissioned to undertake the delivery and development of a marketing strategy. Following this, officers met with Richard Jaggs and Louise Buscombe at Resolution Design to enable them to more fully understand the venues and their potential markets and a Summary Marketing Plan was agreed (issued alongside).

Sarah Williams has worked closely with Resolution Design to deliver the plan as agreed, meeting regularly with various members of their team and also engaging with website designers, printers etc. Monthly reports are drawn together by Resolution Design, which are issued alongside for June, July and August) and these are fully discussed.

The initial three month plan concentrated mainly on introducing new marketing materials, which has been achieved. We now have a corporate feel across both venues, updated website, new brochures and adverts, postcards and external, temporary banners. Resolution have designed all new material and, as part of the package, taken new photographs of both venues.

During September, social media avenues have been set-up, including an email newsletter and again these are being designed to reflect the new look. Officers have also been exploring which Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are most suitable for the Town Council and are looking at ways in which to capture and present this information to members. This is the biggest change in how we currently work and is something that has to be introduced in an appropriate manner.

Officers are now looking at direct marketing and will shortly begin to send out emails and offer promotions on both weddings and conferences/meetings.

Options Considered

The committee needs to decide if they are happy for the Marketing Retainer to be carried on until the end of November 2017 (6 months).

Implications and Risks

Financial and Resource Implications

The financial implications are met by the budget provided for within estimates.

The resource implications are reduced by the introduction of specialist expertise.

Legal Implications and Legislative Powers

The Council will be considering this matter under its General Power of Competence.

Environmental Implications

Officers are unaware of any environmental implication for the Council associated with this decision.

Risk Assessment

Without employing some specialist expertise there is the risk that the Council will not develop the full potential of the market.

Crime and Disorder

Officers are not aware of any issues the Council should consider under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder act 1998.

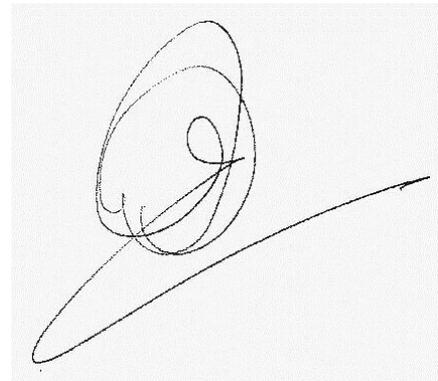
20. EXEMPT REPORT FOR INFORMATION – RELATING TO COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES

21. EXEMPT REPORT FOR DECISION – RELATING TO COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES

22. QUESTION TIME

A short time is allowed at the discretion of the Chairman for councillors to ask questions on matters which are not on the current agenda but which are related to matters which have been previously discussed on an agenda relevant to the committee.

At least 24 hours' notice must be given to officers of the intended question. All other matters should be raised on an agenda and the request should be submitted through the Deputy Town Clerk

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

DEPUTY TOWN CLERK