



Devizes Town Council

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RECREATION AND PROPERTIES COMMITTEE

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

Date: Tuesday 17th August 2021

Time: Immediately following Planning Committee

Place: Ceres Hall, The Corn Exchange

Enquiries: 01380 723333

The Town Mayor: Councillor Gay

Chairman: Councillor Giraud-Saunders

Councillors:	Britten	Brown	Corbett
	Greenwood	Ormerod	Pennington
	Rose	Stevens	Wallis
	Wooldridge		

AGENDA

1. MINUTES

To approve as a correct record and authorise the Chairman to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 6th July 2021 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 – DREWS POND WOOD PROJECT

As part of the asset transfer and services delegation agreement with Wiltshire Council, the ownership of Drews Pond Wood transferred to the ownership of Devizes Town Council

Alongside the transfer came the management arrangements, which have been developed and are delivered by the Drews Pond Wood Project.

The Drews Pond Wood group are an autonomous organisation but receive an annual grant from the Town Council.

As part of their agreement, they need to send a short annual report, which is attached to this agenda for members' information ([doc 5/1](#))

6. REPORT FOR INFORMATION – PARK CAFÉ PERFORMANCE AND MARKETING UPDATE

Officers continue to provide members with progress reports relating to the performance of the Café at Hillworth Park. A financial summary ([doc 6/1](#)) is attached. The Park Café continues to operate from the hatch at the side of the café and only offers card payments.

Income for the initial four months of 2021/22 was £17,399 with a Net Loss after costs, including direct payroll costs of £2,765. This is compared to income of £9,751 with a Net loss of £639 in the initial four months of 2019/20. Members are reminded that the café was closed during the 6-week period from 1 April 2020 with the resultant impact on sales and payroll costs.

Gross profit percentage has increased significantly during June and July which officers believe is due to a higher ratio of selling high margin goods in these two months than in April and May.

Officers will shortly be undertaking a review of direct and indirect payroll costs associated with the café.

Events normally provided to support the usage of Hillworth Park and as a consequence of the Park Café, have been severely impacted by Coronavirus and ongoing government guidelines relating to numbers. The twilight screening of The Greatest Showman is still planned to go ahead on Saturday the 4th of September 2021.

7. REPORT FOR DECISION – INITIAL VENUES WORKING PARTY OUTCOMES

Recommendation

That the Committee agrees the recommendations of the Venues working party

Purpose of the Report

To agree policies and next steps as agreed by the Venues working party.

Background

At a meeting of this committee on the 6th July 2021 it was agreed that a Venues working party should be set up to review the Grace and Favour policy; catering arrangements for the venues; venues' operations following the lifting of Coronavirus restrictions; and the use of the Corn Exchange by NHS services for Coronavirus vaccinations. Set out below is a summary of the initial meeting.

1. Grace and Favour and Free Use Policy

It is recommended that the Policies as written should continue, but should be continually monitored for their effectiveness.

2. Catering

It is recommended that the committee supports the principle of a single catering franchise rather than the current multi-caterer arrangement, but giving hirers the option to bring in their own caterer, whereupon direct charges will then apply.

3. Venues' Operation Following the Lifting of Coronavirus Restrictions.

The working party agreed that whilst restrictions for venues such as the Town Hall and Corn Exchange have been lifted, each booking should be considered on its own merit and where there was higher risk of transmission, discussion should be had with hirers to mitigate them. Where this cannot be achieved, the event should not go ahead.

4. Use of the Corn Exchange for Vaccine Clinics

The working party agreed that officers needed to reach agreement for a discounted hire charge with the NHS, to balance the important work being carried out in the building against commercial pressures.

Options Considered

The committee are asked to agree points 1 and 2 and note points 3 and 4.

Implications and Risks

Financial and Resource Implications

The full financial or resource implication for the Council associated with this decision are not known, but they are anticipated to be in line with the current policy.

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.

8. REPORT FOR DECISION – COUNCIL BIODIVERSITY PROJECTS

Recommendation

That the committee starts to develop a strategy and service level standard for increasing biodiversity within Town Council-maintained open spaces.

Purpose of the Report

For the committee to commence a conversation to develop a policy on increasing biodiversity within Council-maintained open spaces. At this stage the conversation is limited to developing the policy intent and strategy to deliver that policy intents to be agreed at a future meeting.

Background

Over the last few years there have been significant levels of national publicity to promote more biodiversity in our gardens, parks and open spaces by creating wildlife habitats and feeding corridors.

Local authorities have not been immune to this, with pressure being brought by residents questioning how we manage our open spaces.

Over the past years the Open Spaces team, supported by officers, have developed a number of projects with some success, to better understand the implications of different management methods. However, there is no overall corporate strategy for this and therefore in some areas, changes

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have not been universally popular, and as such could be open to interpretation.

The Open Spaces team are starting to plan the planting and management Schedule for 2022, and whilst there may be greater pressure to roll out changes to the way we manage some of our open spaces, it is becoming increasingly important that the Council has a policy for this.

Changing the way we deliver our open spaces management to one that has a greater emphasis on biodiversity does not come without cost and the need for different skills, but it does provide opportunities and challenges for partnership working.

Should the Council decide that the time is right to provide greater biodiversity within the Council's open space management regime, then currently we do not have all the skills necessary in-house to deliver such a strategy.

Any strategy will need to consider the following:

- The benefits of moving away from intensive grass cutting and maintenance practices;
- Should we be including budgetary provision for more diverse wildlife planting within open spaces, including wildlife meadows;
- How - and should we - develop a community engagement strategy to help deliver biodiversity projects and what happens when the enthusiasm wanes?

In delivering any strategy officers may need to seek the support of specialists to:

1. Identify potential areas for biodiversity enhancement;
2. Propose improvement plans and costings;
3. Carry out and/or coordinate implementation services to include:
 - Specification and mapping
 - Ground preparation
 - Seed sourcing, sowing and maintenance
 - Meadow management
 - Coordination and project management
 - Tree planting events
 - Bulb planting events
 - Wildlife border planting
 - Education and training
 - Outreach and liaison.

The "Greening" Working party are keen to extend some of the trial areas to other locations as part of the Council's programme roll-out and will seek to work with local neighbourhoods to see how improving bio-diversity will enhance their local environment.

Options Considered

To progress this, the committee is asked if it wishes:

- Officers to draft an initial policy for members' consideration;
- To ask the Sustainability Working Party or Greening Working Party to develop a policy before the autumn;
- To set up a new working party with the mandate of developing a policy for managing biodiversity within Town Council-maintained land by the autumn of this year.

Implications and Risks

Financial and Resource Implications

At this time, it is not possible for officers to provide any financial or resource implication for the Council associated with this decision.

Legal Implications and Legislative Powers

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

Environmental Implications

At this time, officers are unaware of the environmental implication for the Council associated with developing this policy.

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.

9. EXEMPT REPORT FOR INFORMATION – RELATING TO COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES

10. 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 Town Clerk

TOWN CLERK



Drews Pond Wood Report 2020 – 2021

The Covid restrictions have made it difficult for the volunteer group. Normal group activities including organised workdays have been suspended for most of the year, apart from a few small groups when restrictions were lifted in the summer. It was decided to delay coppice management last winter.

Infrastructure

During the pandemic a rise in footfall, greatly increased the wear and tear on the infrastructure. It was important to keep the site safe for the public, and the majority of maintenance and repair has been a solo effort carried out by one of the co-ordinators. It has only been possible to carry out the minimum of work necessary to ensure health and safety.

Management of watercourse

Twice daily visits to manage the watercourse and keep it flowing have been required. Drainage at Drews Pond has caused issues with maintaining the flow of the stream.

Management of trees

The paths have been cleared of fallen trees and limbs when necessary. A large fallen limb caused damage to the building again. The offending tree was unsafe and removed. The cost for this work was £2,000 and was shared with adjacent landowner.

Evidence of Ash dieback has been found on site and will need to be assessed and monitored.

Funding

Usual sources of funding have been seriously affected by the pandemic. The Southgate Inn has not been open to hold fundraising events. Donation collection days were not held on site. It has not been possible to sell firewood to raise funds.

Planning issues and Local Green Space designation

Many hours have been required to respond to the Local Plan public consultation, and highlight issues that could impact on the LNR.

A great deal of time has been put into researching and preparing a proposal for the area around the LNR to be designated as Local Green Space. It is hoped that the designation will be taken forward through the Neighbourhood plan review process to help protect the whole area.

Future Plans

As Covid restrictions ease, we hope to gradually resume organised workdays. Resuming volunteer work will be reintroduced cautiously to ensure that project members are kept safe. Extensive input will be required to catch up with work to the paths and return them to previous high standards

We would like to thank the Council for continued financial support by paying for insurance and helping with running costs. The £500 grant was put towards repairing the projects ride-on mower.

<u>PARK CAFE 2021/22</u>	<u>APR</u>	<u>MAY</u>	<u>JUNE</u>	<u>JULY</u>	<u>AUGUST</u>	<u>SEPT</u>	<u>OCT</u>	<u>NOV</u>	<u>DEC</u>	<u>JAN</u>	<u>FEB</u>	<u>MAR</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>											
ACTUAL INCOME	6177	3004	3950	4268	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	17399											
CINEMA INCOME	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0											
BUDGETED INCOME	3402	3591	3591	5141	6124	3667	2986	1436	1134	1550	2797	2382	37800											
SPECIFIC PURCHASES	2400	1178	1270	1767	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6615											
CINEMA EXPENDITURE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0											
CONSUMABLES	407	228	0	239	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	873											
STOCKTAKE +/-	200	11	78	-353	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-63											
GROSS PROFIT	3170	51.3%	1587	52.8%	2602	65.9%	2615	61.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	9974	57.3%
UTILITIES	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0											
CHIP & PIN	100	54	68	74	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	296											
BT	42	42	42	42	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	168											
MISC	764	0	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	780											
PAYROLL *	2815	2822	3164	2694	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11495											
	-551	-1331	-688	-195	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-2765											

Doc6/1

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