



# Battle Town Council



**MINUTES of a SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING  
held on TUESDAY, 9 JULY 2013  
at The Almonry, High Street, Battle at 7.30pm**

**Present:** Cllrs R Bye, J Eldridge, Mrs M Howell, Mrs M Kiloh, Ms J Ormonde-Butler and D Wilson.

**1. Election of Chairman**

Cllr Bye proposed that Cllr Mrs Kiloh be elected as Chairman. This was seconded by Cllr Mrs Howell and with no other nominations Cllr Mrs Kiloh was duly elected as Chairman for the ensuing year.

**2. Election of Vice Chairman**

Cllr Bye proposed that Cllr Wilson be elected as Vice Chairman. This was seconded by Cllr Eldridge and with no other nominations Cllr Wilson was duly elected as Vice Chairman for the ensuing year.

**3. Apologies for Absence** – Cllrs C Bishop, Mrs J Gyngell and Mrs S Pry. Cllr M Palmer was absent.

**4. Disclosure of Interest** - None.

**5. Minutes of the previous meeting** held on 30 April 2013. Cllr Bye proposed approval of the minutes, seconded by Cllr Ms Ormonde-Butler. This was agreed and they were duly signed.

**6. Matters Arising from Previous Meetings** – None.

**7. Correspondence & Communications** – None.

**8. Allotments**

Following a recent flurry of new lettings the number of **vacant plots** across all sites is 11, the majority being at Watch Oak.

Cllr Wilson had carried out his latest inspection and circulated his report. This confirmed that the **general condition of allotments** is poorer than at the same time last year, the main concern being the fact that unlet sites had become particularly overgrown. The Clerk explained the current system of warning letters which is normally in 3 stages culminating in the cancellation of the agreement. The Committee felt that this is a longer drawn out process than necessary and that, in future, the second letter should indicate that the agreement would be cancelled unless there are signs of immediate improvement. In the course of the general discussion about the condition of allotments the Committee noted the inability of the Council's workforce to dedicate time to preventing sites becoming overgrown. The need to find additional staff resources to deal with this, and other matters of concern to the Committee, should form part of the discussion about a 3 year plan.

In the light of Cllr Wilson's inspection reports and the latest site meeting by Committee Members the following recommendations for Awards were made and agreed.

Best Large Allotment – 38 Cherry Gardens  
Best Runner Up – 12 Cherry Gardens  
Best Small Allotment – 7a Virgins Croft

# *Battle Town Council*

Best Runner Up – 6 Netherfield Hill  
Most Improved Allotment – 5 Netherfield Hill  
Best Allotment at Watch Oak – 17

Concluding the discussion Cllr Bye proposed a vote of thanks for the very helpful reports prepared by Cllr Wilson.

## **9. Street Lighting Issues**

The Clerk confirmed that the **repair and replacement programme** has now started, the sequence being based on the proposed programme attached to the Committee minutes of 26 February. As each column is repaired or replaced the part night lighting arrangements will also be introduced.

Regarding the **County taking on the few remaining lights** for which the Council is responsible on the main routes, their initial reaction is that they would only do so if they are satisfied that each column is in good working order and that they form part of a system rather than being isolated, individual units. In effect, this means that they would need to meet County standards, for example, in terms of spacing.

The Clerk had chased up the **Netherfield Road vehicle accident insurance claim** and discovered that the papers sent to the insurers had been mislaid. He has resent them.

The existing **agreement with the maintenance contractor** expired on 31 March. During the period of the previous 3 year agreement a very satisfactory service had been received and the cost increase kept to under 10%. Bearing in mind the cost of materials and fuel this seemed perfectly reasonable. **Cllr Bye therefore proposed Council be recommended to renew the contract for a further 3 years. This was seconded by Cllr Wilson and agreed unanimously.**

## **10. Cemetery**

The recently completed **tree survey** had highlighted one sycamore, close to the Norman Close boundary where urgent action is required, probably by felling. A number of other trees are recommended for significant crown reduction over the next 12 months. Cllr Mrs Kiloh said that another tree close to the mortuary chapel is leaning heavily and should also be considered for removal. The Clerk was authorised to progress this action.

Regarding the **groundwater audit** the Tier 1 report has been received which contains both reassuring and worrying comments about the potential risks about using the extension land for full burials. The consultants have suggested further work to complete a Tier 2 assessment and will provide a quote for this work. In the meantime, the Clerk has spoken to the Environment Agency who have asked to see the Tier 1 report in case they need to input to any follow up work.

Apart from the extension itself, Cllr Mrs Kiloh felt that, as a matter of urgency, improved facilities for both the staff and for garaging the new equipment should be provided. She has had discussions with a potential provider of a new building in order to obtain some idea of cost, probably in the region of £20,000. The Clerk is checking with the District Council whether the cemetery extension and any new building will require planning permission or can be regarded as permitted development by a local authority required for operational reasons. In addition to the proposed new structure Cllr Mrs Kiloh said that she would like to see public toilets installed in the space currently occupied by the staff within the workshop/chapel building. In terms of funding, it may be possible to construct a business plan for all this activity which would justify a loan from the Public Works Loan Board. Alternatively, and depending on progress, she would

# *Battle Town Council*

wish to include in the 2014-15 budget sufficient funds for the new structure. Whilst there was some discussion about the use of buildings at the recreation ground for storage it was agreed that for operational reasons keeping all the maintenance equipment at the cemetery would be preferable.

Looking ahead to the judging arrangements for the **South & South East in Bloom competition** on 18 July the Clerk confirmed that the 2 judges will be Jean Griffin and Sally Pavey. Cllr Mrs Kiloh will meet and greet as well as introducing the judges to the Council groundsmen. In preparation for the inspection some work has already been done, particularly clearing weeds from the garden of remembrance areas. Cllr Mrs Kiloh thanked those who had helped with this and confirmed that a further working party will meet on 15 July at 6pm.

## **11. Budget Report 2013-14**

In circulating the attached report, although not yet forecasting a figure above budget, the Clerk highlighted that income from cemetery fees is already well up on this time last year. On the expenditure side an overspend on the professional fees budget at the cemetery reflects not only the spend on the groundwater audit but also a share of the tree survey cost.

Cllr Mrs Kiloh hoped that additional money can be found to enable fingerpost replacement to go ahead in the current year if at all possible together with the start of a comprehensive seat repair programme.

## **12. 3 Year Plan**

In formulating plans for the future the Committee acknowledged the priority which needs to be given to maintaining existing assets and the implications of this for staff resources, not least in relation to the necessary grounds maintenance work at the cemetery and allotments. Equally other assets should not be forgotten including the 6 bus shelters and the numerous public seats. Apart from the cemetery development plan already touched on under item 10 Cllr Mrs Kiloh hoped that creative ideas for the future management of the allotments could be developed. For example, she was aware of examples of community allotments being created and drew particular attention to such a scheme in Lewes. The Clerk also mentioned something similar in Sidley. In order to better understand wishes of allotment holders it was agreed that they should be invited to a meeting to take place at 6pm to immediately precede the next Committee meeting on 1 October. For the purposes of financial planning it was agreed that a provisional figure should be included over the next 3 years in order to improve the condition of allotments, especially the pathways and to also fund the cost of a water supply at Netherfield Hill.

**13. Matters for Information and Future Agenda Items – None.**

**14. Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday, 1 October 2013**

The meeting closed at 9.25pm

CLLR MRS M KILOH  
Chairman

