



# Battle Town Council



## MINUTES of a SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING held on TUESDAY, 2 OCTOBER 2012 at The Almonry, High Street, Battle at 7.30pm

**Present:** Cllr Mrs M Kiloh - Chairman  
Cllrs C Bishop, R Bye, J Eldridge and D Wilson.

- 1. Apologies for Absence** – Cllrs Mrs M Howell, M Palmer and Mrs S Pry.
- 2. Disclosure of Interest** - None.
- 3. Minutes of the previous meeting** held on 10 July 2012. Cllr Bye proposed approval of the minutes, seconded by Cllr Wilson. This was agreed and they were duly signed.

#### **4. Matters Arising from Previous Meetings**

The Clerk said that he had spoken with the District Council about their arrangements for undertaking **tree surveys**. These are undertaken on a fairly adhoc basic by one of their in-house parks department staff. Although he has no specific training in arboriculture it appears that his cursory inspections are adequate for the purpose. Whilst the Town Council's groundsmen occasionally report concerns about the condition of trees there is no formal reporting process. The Committee felt that a slightly more professional approach to this subject is necessary and, as a next step, the Clerk was asked to obtain a quote from a tree specialist.

#### **5. Correspondence & Communications**

The Clerk reported that the **bus shelter** outside the Abbey pub had been **hit by a bus**. He is pursuing this with the bus company's insurers but, in the meantime, has arranged for repairs to be carried out to prevent further damage.

#### **6. Allotments**

Cllr Wilson had circulated his latest inspection report for which he was thanked. The overall situation is that the general **condition of plots** at all sites has deteriorated over the summer months, perhaps due to the bad weather. In determining the tone of any letter to be sent to those whose plots that are in a poor condition the Clerk said that he would look back over the series of reports prepared by Cllr Wilson. In doing so he will attempt to produce a spreadsheet which records the results of each report so that condition over a period of time can be more easily identified. Regarding the **tenancy position** although the office records indicate very few vacancies, Cllr Wilson's report suggested that a number of plots may have been abandoned. The precise status of these will need to be established. In the knowledge that a good number of plots are therefore vacant, and that others are often given up at this time of year when rent letters are issued the Clerk was asked to advertise, both in the forthcoming newsletter and the local press, the fact that there are vacancies.

Cllr Wilson and the Clerk had done their best to **measure** the precise size of each of the plots at **Watch Oak**. The lack of clear boundaries had made this difficult but the Clerk had used these provisional results in order to report on the impact on rents of the different regime adopted by the District Council which simply separates plots into large and small. At present, on this basis the plots at Watch Oak would produce a rent of about £670 whereas if, as at the Town Council's other 3 sites, rent is paid on actual size income of about £2700 could be expected. The Committee agreed that an immediate transfer to the Town Council's system would be resisted. However, all new lettings of plots at Watch Oak should be based on actual size and the rent for ongoing lettings should be increased.

# *Battle Town Council*

## **7. Street Lighting and Street Furniture**

Cllr Mrs Kiloh reported on meetings with both the Council's street lighting maintenance contractor and the officer from the County Council in charge of changes to their **street lighting regime**. The maintenance contractor had produced a comprehensive report on the **condition of all the columns** for which the Council is responsible. This had indicated a range of repairs which will need to be prioritised according to their urgency. As noted at the Council meeting of 21 August the general aim will be to undertake all repairs in a particular area and implement changes to the lighting regime at the same time. The Clerk was asked to discuss this further with the maintenance contractor. Regarding **public consultation** arrangements about changes to the lighting regime, as agreed by the Communications Committee the proposals will be trailed on the website and in the forthcoming newsletter, to be followed by joint participation with the County in a public meeting to be held locally in January.

## **8. Cemetery**

A copy of the **comments** made by the **South & South East in Bloom judges** had been circulated to all Committee Members. In the main these were complimentary and the Committee Members were delighted with the Silver Gilt award. A discussion followed which attempted to separate those comments which are more relevant to the judging criteria for the competition from those which are of general interest in terms of the day to day management of the cemetery. Setting up an area for recycling such things as plant pots and the screening of the water tank could be undertaken quite quickly. Similarly, the provision of additional seating should be considered in the context of the budget exercise. More substantial work such as the improvement of toilet facilities should form part of a wider discussion about the future development of the cemetery. One specific comment was that it is not clear how to obtain information at the site as to where individual graves are located. Although visitors are invited by notices to contact the Town Council office the Committee asked the Clerk to investigate what more information could conveniently be provided at the site itself.

The Clerk will place a copy of the South & South East in Bloom certificate in the cemetery noticeboard.

## **9. Budget Report 2012-13**

In circulating his latest report, attached, the Clerk simply highlighted the main area of concern which is that income from cemetery fees is way below the budget. Even his forecast figure of £10,000 may prove to be optimistic.

## **10. Budget 2013-14 and 3 Year Plan**

The Clerk explained his anticipated approach to this exercise which is to present to F&GP, once all Committee recommendations are available, a report separating the cost of core activity as distinct from non-recurring items. The Committee acknowledged that, at this stage, it would be difficult to cost every item and that the initial prioritisation exercise should focus on activities. With that in mind a 3 year programme of repairs to street lighting columns, and work associated with any changes to the street lighting regime, would be the top priority. The other major area of focus is the cemetery which, in 3 years time, may be in need to extension requiring new infrastructure as well as basic landscaping. This will require more in-depth work and it was agreed that a small working group should be established for this purpose. Other non-recurring items to be prioritised would be the replacement of finger posts; the repair of the main fence along the footpath at the Cherry Gardens allotment; signs at both Netherfield and Watch Oak indicating Town Council ownership; the next round of memorial safety inspections at the cemetery and the possibility of converting the existing summer seasonal groundsman post into a permanent one. On this last point, the Committee accepted that it could not be justified in relation to the cemetery alone and would need to be considered in the wider context of the needs of the Estates Committee.

# *Battle Town Council*

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

**12. Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday, 11 December 2012**

The meeting closed at 8.50pm

CLLR MRS M KILOH  
Chairman

