

**NORTHAMPTON TOWN COUNCIL  
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of the meeting held at 18.00 on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2021 in the Godwin Room at  
Northampton Guildhall**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Stevens (Chair), Kilbride (Deputy Chair), Alwahabi, Hallam, Haque, Meredith, Soan and Tarasiewicz

Also present: Cllr J Birch

Officers: Mr S Carter (Town Clerk) and Mrs J Thorneycroft (Assistant Town Clerk)

Mr J Crick from Living Streets Northampton

**17. APOLOGIES**

Apologies had been submitted by Cllrs Joyce, Miah and Ashraf.

**18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Meredith declared a non-pecuniary interest in minutes 23 and 24, as he was an allotment holder.

**19. TO AUTHORISE THE CHAIR TO SIGN THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD 25<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2021**

**RESOLVED:** That THE Vice Chair be authorised to sign the minutes as a true and correct record of the meeting.

**20. BRIEF ON THE COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE WITH CIRCULAR ECONOMY CHANGES EVENT HELD AT NORTHAMPTON UNIVERSITY**

Cllr Stevens briefed the committee on the recent event he attended at Northampton University to coincide with the COP 26 summit held in Glasgow.

Cllr Stevens explained that the Circular Economy uses research to design out waste, almost defining waste as a resource. The circular economy is based on three principles, driven by design. These being, eliminate waste and pollution, circulate products and materials (at their highest value) and regenerate nature. Many organisations were represented and gave presentations including Margaret Bates, Executive Director, OPRL and Visiting Professor, University of Northampton and Robin Burgess who spoke about sustainable food for all.

Also speaking at the event was Mr J Crick from Living Streets Northampton who spoke about active travel.

**21. ACTIVE TRAVEL**

Mr J Crick from Living Streets Northampton was welcomed to the meeting.

Mr Crick spoke about active travel in relation to Northampton. He explained that there had been a 33% increase in side street traffic since 2008. The traditional response to this was to build more roads, but this was changing. There was now a focus to get people out of their cars and part of doing this was to make walking and cycling safer. Mr Crick stated that government statistics showed that 40% of car journeys were less than 2 miles and half of primary school children were driven to school. It was explained that transport was the biggest emitter of CO2 in the UK, so reducing these car journeys would be good for everyone. It would improve air quality, improve health and reduce traffic.

The government's safer streets initiative, Gear Change, set out three key changes segregated cycle lanes, low traffic neighbourhoods and school streets. Government funding was to principle councils to bid for to introduce these schemes. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycling-and-walking-plan-for-england>.

It was explained that School Streets closed streets around a school to all traffic (except those that lived there) for drop off and pick-up. In response to a question about whether this pushed traffic out further, Mr Crick stated that the experience in London was that it did not and that people soon adapted and realised that walking was the better option.

With regards to segregated cycle lanes, Mr Crick stated that evidence showed that cycle lanes only worked when they were coherent and continuous.

In response to a question about E scooters and how we could support their use, Mr Crick stated that we needed to look at how we allocate space on the roads for them and this linked to coherent cycle lanes. Scooters presented an opportunity to reduce car use and therefore traffic and CO2 emissions.

In response to a question about reliable public transport, Mr Crick stated that Gear Change plan did not touch on it, however he agreed that public transport was a key component.

It was commented that schools in Castle Ward could be suitable for the school streets initiative.

Mr Crick was thanked for giving his time and presenting to the committee and that the committee looked forward to working with Living Streets going forward.

Mr Crick left the meeting.

## **22. NORTHAMPTON IN BLOOM UPDATE**

Circulated with the agenda was a report on Northampton in Bloom.

It explained that the Northampton in Bloom working party (Cllrs Birch, Stevens, Kilbride and Meredith and Administration Officer, Julie Thorneycroft) had met twice, 23<sup>rd</sup> September and 15<sup>th</sup> November. Further to the positive feedback following the summer Bloom 2021 project all ward members had been invited to make suggestions as to how they would like to be a part of Bloom in their own area for next summer. Optional themes discussed by the Bloom working party had included traditional floral planting, encouraging community gardening, tree planting and consideration had been given to future sustainable planting and wild flower schemes. The suggested total budget to enhance the Bloom scheme as per 2021 is £30,000 (approx. £20,000 planting and £10,000 watering/maintenance). The working party were keen to see Bloom efforts shared across all the Town Council wards, this equates to approx. £1,000 in each area.

The report went on to explain that to date members from the following wards had responded with their ideas and suggestions as detailed below. Ward Councillors who had not yet responded were encouraged to send their ideas/thought by the end of November as it was important to place a planting order prior to the end of the year.

Ward	Councillor	Idea
Boothville	Cllr Lane	As per Summer 21 - lamppost baskets around the mini roundabout by the Lumbertubs pub and it's approaches - Kettering Road North - Booth Rise etc.
Briar Hill	Cllr Connolly	2 square floral planters on the roundabout leading to Briar Hill.
Castle	Cllr Alwahabi	Planters in Wellingborough road and park avenue south areas
Castle	Cllr Haque	Corner of St Georges street off Barack road, Pocket park in Spring Boroughs, corner of Lorne Road and top of Cowper street
Headlands	Cllr Miah	Floral planter outside the Headlands pub, 2nd priority is on the lamppost baskets outside the coop and parade of shops at Broadway East
Park	Cllr Kilbride	lamppost baskets or planter at Bridgewater Drive near shops, wild flower areas at 2 x pocket parks
Parklands	Cllr Hallam	planter near Tesco express in coppice drive/Kettering road, by Lumbertubs pub, anything by Morrison's on Kettering road
Phippsville	Cllr Stevens	As per Summer 21 hanging baskets on the barrier opposite the White Elephant pub on Kingsley Park Terrace
Rectory Farm	Cllr Holland-Delamere	Floral lamppost or barrier baskets various areas suggested
Rushmills	Cllr Soan	Billing Road East area and surrounding area
Semilong	Cllr. Les Marriott	3 tier planter at Hester Street outside Co Op, Investigate the possibility of hanging baskets at Doctors Surgery. Hanging baskets at Alliston Gardens community centre
Spencer	Cllr G Eales	as per last year the five existing planters and areas around the shops on the Gladstone Road
St James	Cllr Ashraf	As per Summer 21, Planters and plants on the railings plus planters in St James Square
Trinity	Cllr Birch	10x Barrier boxes, 3 x three tier planters - various areas suggested

It was explained that the list of ideas would be considered and costed for each area taking into account the following factors:

- likelihood of obtaining permission from the highways department – vicinity of nearby road junctions, will the planter obstruct any pavements or drivers view?
- ease of watering/maintenance

- visibility
- how busy/what footfall is there in different locations
- height of floral containers – will people notice them?
- are the planters likely to get damaged or stolen?

Regarding the Abington Street planters, it was explained that quotes were being sought from 3 local companies for the planting of the 8 large planters (including the Cobblers Last statue) in Abington Street. The working group had agreed the planters were a focal point in the town centre, match funding had been agreed with the Town Centre Business Improvement District.

The Assistant Town Clerk was thanked for her report.

### **23. COMPOSTING TOILETS AT ALLOTMENTS**

A report was circulated regarding composting toilets. It explained that composting toilets were possible but there were lots of considerations to be taken into account. Costs were in the region of £15,000.

It was commented that the committee did not know what the priorities were on each site, composting toilets may be less of a priority compared to security or fencing or something else.

**RESOLVED:** to set up an Allotments working group to consider allotment issues, liaise with allotment holders and establish their views on composting toilets and find out what their priorities are. The Working Group consists of Councillors Stevens and Meredith and the Town Clerk.

Cllr Alwahabi left the meeting due to another engagement.

### **24. ALLOTMENTS MANAGEMENT – AGENCY AGREEMENT WITH WNC**

Circulated with the agenda was a report detailing a proposed agency agreement between the Council and WNC regarding allotment management.

The report explained that when Northampton Town Council officially came into being the ownership of 8 allotment sites within the boundary passed to the town council from the former borough. Councils had a statutory obligation to provide allotments where there was demand as set out in the Small Holding and Allotments Act 1908. It was usual that these allotments were passed/owned by the Parish Council where one exists, hence the transfer on 1 April 2021. The allotments within the NTC boundary and now under the town council's ownership/responsibility were located at Billing Road, Broadmead Avenue, Glebeland Road, Graspin Lane, Harlestone Road, Parklands, Rothersthorpe Road and Southfields.

Management and the day to day running of the allotments was carried out by IdeVerde, as part of their contract with West Northamptonshire Council (WNC). This for the town council seemed like a practical arrangement at least for the duration of the IdeVerde contract as allotment administration and site management took up considerable resource. When the contract was nearing the end then it would be for the Town Council to consider what to do next, i.e. bring management in house, tender, extend the contract etc.

As previously discussed WNC had drawn up an agency agreement to formalise the relationship between them and NTC, the agreement was attached to the agenda.

It was explained that the costs of day to day management of the allotments were currently met by WNC. In return they kept all income generated from the allotments as detailed in 5.1 of the agreement.

Both the Clerk, and the Clerk of Far Cotton and Delapre have raised concern over the section in 5.3 referring to 'Special Expenses'. It detailed that under the agreement WNC reserved the right to charge local residents a "special expense" to cover associated costs. It was explained that "Special expenses were charged to parts rather than the whole authority and were normally associated with covering the costs of maintaining parks and other open spaces not covered by parish councils". Under the agreement the NTC also had the option to negate the introduction of any proposed special expense by making a contribution to WNC for the running costs of the allotments. WNC officers had stated that these costs might be administration costs of the WNC officer(s) managing the sub-contract with idverde. They had also said that there was no current intention for WNC to recharge any of the expenses of running the allotments, however the agency agreement did include the provision to charge, therefore making it a possibility.

On this issue, the Clerk contacted the officer at WNC on Special Expenses and its inclusion who stated:

*"For clarity, the point of the provision in the draft agreements is to provide a mechanism for the PC to prevent WNC levying a special expenses charge, should it do so in the future. It would entirely be the PC's choice whether it used those provisions or not. As long as WNC is providing services to the allotments there is an unavoidable risk it might decide to levy a special expenses charge. This is built into the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and none of us can change it.*

*The only way of avoiding any risk of WNC levying a special expenses charge would be for the PCs to decline to enter into any agreement with WNC, and WNC to stop providing services for the allotments. That is the PCs' sovereign choice, and WNC would not try and prevent them doing so. However, obviously the PCs would then immediately have to pay for those services."*

Members agreed that the Clerk should get some legal advice. They also wanted further information from WNC including:

- How much notice would they give if they intended to charge special expenses
- What is the timescale for determining this
- What has WNC invested in the allotments over the past 5 years

This item would come back to the committee once further information was known

**NOTED**

Cllr Meredith left the meeting

## **25. REPORT FROM NORTHAMPTONSHIRE LARGER COUNCIL PARTNERSHIP CLIMATE CHANGE FORUM**

The report of the latest briefing from the partnership was circulated with the agenda.

The Clerk was asked to find out from the landlord if the gas and electricity supplier to the guildhall used sustainable energy.

**NOTED**

Cllr Birch left the meeting

**26. BUDGET PRINCIPLES 2022/23 – ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE ELEMENT**

The committee considered the budget for next year and looked at expenditure in the current year. Given that there had been minimal expenditure some members were of the opinion that the budget for 22/23 should be reduced.

An increase in the bloom budget of £20,000 was supported, this had been a successful and popular project and could be supported further with more funding.

It was noted that the Council had agreed to earmark unspent monies in the current year and that this would be used next year allowing the budget for next year to be cut. It was noted that the committee had underspent in the Climate emergency budget heading and this could be rolled over.

The committee asked the Policy and Finance committee to consider reducing the Climate Emergency budget heading in light of the underspend in the present year.

**NOTED**

There being no more business, the meeting ended at 20.04 hours.

Signed.....Chair