

**WESTON-SUPER- MARE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE
HELD AT GROVE HOUSE ON
MONDAY 9TH NOVEMBER 2020**

Meeting Commenced: 7.03 pm

Meeting Concluded: 9.08 pm

PRESENT: Councillors James Clayton (Chairman), Mark Aplin, Roger Bailey, Sarah Codling, John Crockford-Hawley, Ciaran Cronnelly, David Dash (S), Peter Fox, Peter McAleer, and Helen Thornton, Ella Sayce and Roz Willis.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Marcia Pepperall, Sonia Russe and Robert Payne, Malcolm Nicholson (Town Clerk), Sarah Pearse (Deputy Town Clerk), Fay Powell (Grounds Manager) and Samantha Bishop (Committee Officer).

The Chairman was having technical difficulties joining the meeting, and so in his absence, the Vice Chairman chaired the meeting

74	<p>Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutions</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gillian Carpenter who was substituted by Councillor David Dash, Councillor Gill Bute with no substitution and the Community and Grounds Administrator.</p>
75	<p>To receive Declarations of Interest</p> <p>Councillor Sarah Codling declared a personal interest in item 6 as used to be a volunteer Street Pastors.</p> <p>Councillors John Crockford-Hawley and Robert Payne declared a personal interest in item 6 as a trustee of Birnbeck Regeneration Trust.</p> <p>Councillor Roger Bailey declared a personal interest in item 9 as a holder of an allotment.</p>
76	<p>To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the Community Service Committee meeting held on 14th September 2020</p> <p>The minutes of the last meeting had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Roger Bailey SECONDED BY: Councillor John Crockford-Hawley</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record of the meeting.</p>
77	<p>References from other Committees</p> <p>77.1 Toilet Working Group</p>

The Grounds Manager briefly summarised that a very serious incident of criminal behaviour at the Grove Park toilet had led to the need to close the toilet in the interests of staff and public safety. The toilets had been reopened for half term but discussions at the Toilets Working Group had discussed whether the Grove Park toilet should be closed until further notice.

Councillor James Clayton joined the meeting at 7.12 pm.

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that there had been an increase in antisocial behavior problems in Grove Park and especially around the toilet area over the last 15 years. To the point where members of the public and staff avoid walking through this area. A situation occurred last year where she administered CPR to an individual until the ambulance arrived. The activity and behavior was very distressing for the cleaning contractors and staff. The safety of staff/contractors and members of the public was a serious issue.

Members were in agreement the council had a duty of care.

The Town Clerk advised that a final decision whether to close the Grove Park toilets could be made by full council on the 23rd November and that committee members views were requested at this point.

The Chairman of the toilet working party reported that the subject had been discussed at length. Much effort had gone into addressing the anti-social behavior problems such as getting the hedgerows cut to expose the area. It was time for the council as a whole to look at the possibility of closing the toilets and he would like group leaders to come up with some long-term suggestions for the future of the toilets.

Debate ensued. It was queried whether the toilets were marked as high risk on the council's risk register as she had concerns regarding the council's liability.

A question was asked whether the toilets were still open at present. The Town Clerk clarified that they were but recommended that they should close for at least the Winter, however the long term position was up to members to decide.

Members felt that it was a wider antisocial behaviour problem that needed addressing and required consistent Police intervention.

The Grounds Manager informed that the incident had failed to be immediately reported to the police by the cleaning contractors. If they had been, the Police would have been in attendance at the time. She was working with the Police to target this and the contractors had been instructed to call 999 if they encounter any threatening antisocial behavior incidents. The Street Wardens were patrolling the park every day which seemed to deter this behavior for a while and then it would return. This was a frequent pattern experienced.

The Deputy Town Clerk in answer to the earlier question confirmed that the toilets were scored as high (7) on the risk register, with a medium impact as scored across all toilet sites.

It was therefore

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Roz Willis

SECONDED BY: Sarah Codling

That the Grove Park toilets be closed with immediate effect until a better solution could be found and the council had a duty to protect the public, contactors and staff.

Further debate ensued. A member was concerned about the impacts this would have on disabled people, children and the elderly and questioned what provision would be in place for them if the toilets were closed. Other members felt it was a case of balancing the risks and that the risks for protecting the public, contactors and staff were greater in the present situation.

It was suggested to position a CCTV camera to help tackle the problems. The Grounds Manager informed that she had a meeting the following day to discuss achieving a CCTV direct link.

An **AMENDMENT** was proposed that the toilets be temporarily closed until it was reviewed and voted on at full council on 23rd November.

The AMENDMENT was accepted by the proposer and seconder and became the substantive motion.

A vote was taken and accordingly it was **carried** (7 for; 3 against; 1 abstention)

RESOLVED: That Grove Park toilets be temporarily closed with immediate effect until a better solution could be found and the matter be reviewed and voted on at full council on 23rd November.

A member then requested to propose that the toilets close during the week and open on weekends.

The Town Clerk advised the chairman that it was not good practice to reopen debate after a resolution had been carried and that in any event the item would be discussed again at full council on 23rd November.

The member then requested that members of the public be signposted to alternative toilet facilities during the closure.

The Grounds Manager confirmed that she would arrange for this to be actioned.

At this point in the meeting, the Vice Chairman handed the Chairmanship over to the Chairman, who took his place as Chairman of the meeting.

77.2 Literary Festival Working Group (to follow)

The Town Clerk informed that a meeting had not yet taken place.

RESOLVED: That a meeting take place before the next Community Services meeting.

78

Management Reports:

78.1 Youth Services

The report of the Operations Manager – YMCA had been previously circulated.

The Operations Manager was not in attendance.

RESOLVED: That the report of the Operations Manager - YMCA be noted.

78.2 Grounds

The Grounds Manager verbally reported that the grounds team were worked well within their bubbles; the toilets were taking up a lot of the team's time; the cemetery had been cut and was looking very good; winter planting had commenced and had been a real team effort; allotments were ticking over nicely and tree surveys undertaken and the Allotment Club Chairman was happy not to meet virtually; dog bins were working well and a replacement agency member of staff was in place and being trained on the emptying routes; the cemetery was busy and people are visiting the trees in the cemetery as a result of the video posted on YouTube.

A member referred to a letter of complaint in the Mercury from a parishioner with regards to a request for a dog bin made over a year ago, which the council needed to respond to.

The Grounds Manager informed that she was not aware of the request and that she would respond to the complainant.

The Town Clerk reassured that the complaint would be looked into and added that the ground team were considerably short staffed at present.

A member complimented on how good the Cemetery was looking and informed that Weston In Bloom had been busy planting but were in need of more plants to finish the donkey.

The Grounds Manager advised that the grounds team could not pursue any more leads for external dog bin emptying contracts at present as they were understaffed, but they would do so in due course once the team was fully staffed.

In response to a question regarding progress at Uphill play area, the Grounds Manager reported that fences and equipment were being replaced and looked on track for completion in two weeks' time. There had been a delay in the sourcing of the wood for the fencing. Uphill Village Society had agreed to fund the replacement of bins and benches in the park, which would be sourced through the council.

RESOLVED: That the report of the Grounds Manager be noted.

79 Grant applications

Grant applications for grant funding from community groups and the report of the Deputy Town Clerk had been previously circulated.

The Chairman informed that there was £6,068 left in the 2020/21 grants budget and that the applications before committee totaled £12,527.

It was noted that there were an increasing amount of applications being made from national organisations.

The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that all the applications met the grant criteria.

Councillor Sarah Codling had declared an interest as an employee of one of the applications. The grant was for an event which did not go ahead. The suggested limit for a grant was £1,000 and some applications were in excess of this. There were also applications from the same organisation applying every year which was not compliant with the grant criteria. For example, the PRIDE had applied every year for the past few years. The Town Council should support them but through another channel of funding and suggested that the Town Council budget £2,000 per year for PRIDE.

Debate ensued and it was raised how the council would justify committing itself to a £2,000 annual grant rather than with other organisations and large events.

It was stated that PRIDE had brought successful events to the town over the past seven years which bring people into the town and help local businesses. The council should be seen to support this and the national event that had been postponed to 2021.

A member suggested investigating the possibility of an SLA with PRIDE as part of the council's Equality & Diversity policy.

The Town Clerk advised that whilst he encouraged the council to support PRIDE, there was doubt over the current application as it was for an event that was due for September that hadn't happened. He added that the council tended not to support national organisations with employment costs as they are well funded. He encouraged members to look at local organisations seeking funding.

The Deputy Town Clerk informed that all applicants had been contacted in June asking if they still required the funding of which all applications before the committee had been confirmed. PRIDE would like to use the funding for an event that had been postponed to later in the financial year.

It was then

PROPOSED BY Councillor Roger Bailey
SECONDED BY Councillor Roz Willis

That in view of limited funds not to approve grants for the Great Western Air Ambulance, Marie Curie, or Birnbeck Regeneration Trust

A vote was taken and the motion was **LOST** by 2 votes to 7.

To aid debate the Deputy Town Clerk queried which grants did the committee want to discuss.

The Town Clerk declared a personal interest as his wife was a volunteer with Read Easy.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Sarah Codling
SECONDED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly

A vote was taken and accordingly it was carried

RESOLVED: That under power: Local Government Act 1972 section 137 that the following be granted from the 2020/2021 Community Grants budget.

	<p>Birnbeck Regeneration Trust £0</p> <p>Great Western Air Ambulance £0</p> <p>Marie Curie £0</p> <p>NS People First Withdrawn</p> <p>Read Easy WsM £400</p> <p>Revitalise £500</p> <p>Somerset Storyfest £500</p> <p>That Creative Thingy Wotsit CIC £600</p> <p>WsM Street Pastors £500</p> <p>Worle Wind Band £500</p>
80	<p>Application to Weston Town Council for events support</p> <p>The Deputy Town Clerk had distributed the supporting application from Culture Weston earlier that day, requesting the sum of £32,000 for three large events. The item straddled over two committees and therefore would also be discussed at the Heritage Arts and Culture (HAC) committee on Thursday. The award of the money would need to be approved by this Committee but the implementation would need direction from HAC committee.</p> <p>The council had budgeted £50,000 for community events in January and the only brief for the expenditure of the money had been to help boost the economic growth of the town.</p> <p>Meetings had been had with Richard Blows and Fiona Matthews of Culture Weston to see if there was any synergy between organisations in putting on events which had resulted in the proposal before members.</p> <p>Both the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk had no recommendation and sought direction from members. Tourism grants had ranged between £7,000-12,000 and had gone through a grant process.</p> <p>The Chairman of the HAC committee was perplexed by the process for considering the application. If the committee decided not to award the grant, then there would be much point discussing it at HAC. It would also be embarrassing for members as Fiona Matthews would be in attendance at the HAC meeting. He noted concerns over the amount of the grant sought but argued that if the events were good then it would be money well spent.</p> <p>The Deputy Town Clerk advised that there were no issues with budget provision, but direction was needed on how to spend the £50,000.</p> <p>Debate ensued. Some members felt more information on the events was required and that officers should be given more direction in the budget setting process. Others who had read the proposals were impressed and felt that the events would be good for the town. Some had concerns regarding the impact of COVID-19.</p> <p>The Deputy Town Clerk clarified that the application stated that the events were COVID-19 secure. Page 10 of the application stated that the Winter Wonderland event would not happen without the council's funding. The funding would boost the town economy and the events could be considered individually.</p>

	<p>It was argued that delaying consideration of the application until January would make it difficult for events to go ahead.</p> <p>It was therefore</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor John Crockford-Hawley SECONDED BY: Councillor Peter Fox</p> <p>A vote was taken and was carried (7 for; 1 against; 2 abstentions)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Council award £20,000 towards the Winter Lights and that the remaining £12,000 application be considered at a future Community Services or Town Council meeting.</p> <p>The Deputy Town Clerk queried if members were happy for HAC to have the ability to assess the success.</p> <p>The Town Clerk clarified that the HAC committee would assess the success of the grant and make recommendations to the Town Council.</p>
<p>81</p>	<p>Public Toilets Procurement for a full maintained and cleaning contract</p> <p>The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the tender evaluation report was unavailable as the current contactor had withdrawn from the tender process. A full report would be submitted subsequently to Policy and Finance or the Town Council because the deadline had had to be extended due to late arrival of information regarding the TUPE transfer of staff.</p> <p>RESOLVED: Noted.</p>
<p>82</p>	<p>Allotment Management Sub Committee Meetings</p> <p>A report outlining proposals from the Chairman of the Allotment Management Sub Committee had been previously circulated.</p> <p>The proposals would reduce the cost of having evening committee meetings and the cost of officer involvement whilst maintaining a good measure of control.</p> <p>It was noted that the council had resolved to review its committee structure and terms of reference at the Town Council meeting in March. Some members felt that the item should be postponed for consideration at the Town Council meeting.</p> <p>To aid discussion, the Town Clerk advised that the Allotment Management Sub Committee used to meet on an ad-hoc basis and had only been included within the council committee schedule to meet quarterly in recent years. He suggested that if there was no need to meet so often then it was at the Chairman's discretion to cancel meetings until the proposals could be reviewed by the full Town Council meeting in March.</p> <p>It was therefore</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Helen Thornton SECONDED BY: Councillor Roger Bailey</p>

	<p>A vote was taken and was carried</p> <p>RESOLVED: That proposals from the Chairman of the Allotment Management Sub Committee be considered amongst the committee structure review at the Town Council meeting in March.</p>
	<p>There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.08 pm.</p> <p>Signed: Dated:</p> <p>Chairman of the Community Services Committee</p>