

PETERLEE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PARKS &
CEMETERY COMMITTEE

HELD ON MONDAY 10th DECEMBER 2012

PRESENT: COUN. C J METCALFE (CHAIR)

Messrs: D Milsom, R Huitson, R Curtis,
W M Jeffrey, C Austin, D Langan,
C Watkins, T Jones, L Cook,
& E W Hall

**MEMBERS WERE REMINDED OF THE NEED TO
DISCLOSE ANY INTEREST, PREJUDICIAL OR PERSONAL,
IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CODE OF CONDUCT.**

37. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors:- J Hardy (poorly), J Alvey (Council duty), R Kyle (Mayoral duty), L Wood (poorly), H Bennett MBE (holiday), G Cowie (holiday) & R Jones (poorly).

38. THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were approved.

39. REPORT OF THE HORTICULTURAL SUPERVISOR

a) Eden Lane Pony Fields Site

Members were advised that large holes had once again appeared across the Pony Fields site following the last spell of heavy rain.

It was important to stress that in trying to resolve the situation the Council were working off anecdotal evidence only and would be actively seeking advice and support from the following agencies:

English Heritage (Ancient Monuments Division)
Northumbrian Water Board

Durham County Council (Flood Defence Team)
Mine Workings Agency (former National Coal Board)

It would be necessary to continue to monitor the areas in question on a weekly basis and formally record any observations. The Parks Department would more importantly secure and make safe the areas as and when required. As an additional measure the Supervisor intended to contact our insurers (Zurich Municipal) in an attempt to seek professional Risk Management advice due to the risk of injury.

Northumbrian Water had inspected the site on 6th December 2012. Photographs of the holes in question were circulated to members. The Supervisor advised he would keep Members updated with progress.

RECOMMENDED that any costs associated with this current investigation and safety measures be agreed and budgeted as emergency works.

(b) Ancient Monument Site

Whilst researching the Ancient Monument site (Yoden Village) the Supervisor had come across a payment scheme for long term management of ancient monument sites and he had made contact with English Heritage to arrange a site visit to the area with the possible intention of reviewing the current payment scheme. Although payments were relatively small at present this could lead to additional sources of management income due to the special significance of the site in question and the problems occurring there.

RECOMMENDED that the Horticultural Supervisor keep Members updated on progress.

b) Tree Failures (Dene Parks (South))

The Supervisor advised Members of the failure of two large conifer trees within the Dene Parks South, close to the Northumbrian Water Pump House. The trees in question appeared to be in good condition above ground level, however, problems had occurred below ground due to a combination of poor root growth, saturated ground conditions and excessive winds throughout the area at the time of the failures.

The area in question was well used by shoppers, dog walkers etc. and was adjacent to several public pathways leading to the lower levels of the Dene Parks itself. The failures had created an additional problem to the tarmacadam pedestrian footpath area which would need specialist attention by an approved Contractor. This damage was caused by the root ball of the tree being torn out of the ground and leaving a three to four foot deep hole which had filled with water.

Due to the potential health and safety implications and also the fact that the tree failures occurred with no indication of any outward signs of stress, disease, or decay to the affected trees, the Supervisor suggested a second survey of trees within this area, with particular emphasis on areas adjacent to footpaths and pedestrian routes.

This survey would need to be undertaken after removal of the affected trees and before repair of the holes. The Supervisor advised that he would erect signage and information to inform the public of ownership and to assist in problems reporting to the Council's Parks Department by members of the public.

RECOMMENDED that:-

- i) a tree survey be carried out within this financial year applicable to the Dene Parks South;**
 - ii) suitably qualified contractors be invited to supply a quotation for the repair of the damaged footpath;**
 - iii) suitable signs be erected.**
- c) Hampshire Place Play area (complaints)

There had been a number of problems associated with the play area at Hampshire Place, which were a cause of concern to nearby residents. The Supervisor had advised the residents to phone 101 (Police) and other agencies so that all incidents could be logged. The problems being reported were youths congregating in the play area, broken glass, noise and minor vandalism.

Residents had suggested that the situation would improve if the Park was locked again on an evening.

RECOMMENDED that:-

- i) The Supervisor and Town Clerk liaise with the Police and the residents as to their complaints, with a view to these issues being resolved;**
 - ii) The issues be raised at a meeting with all the relevant bodies to be held on Friday 14th December 2012. Members to be updated on the outcome and potential solutions to the problem at the next Parks Committee.**
- d) Helford Road Playing Fields (Sports Surveys)
The Supervisor advised Members that surveys/feasibility studies had been conducted on the Helford Road sports pitch areas notably on pitch two and three. This work had been carried out by Consultants on behalf of the Rugby Football League, without any prior consent or liaison with the Horticultural Supervisor.

RECOMMENDED that:-

the Town Clerk correspond with Mr Rob Laverick advising him he had breached Town Council protocols in not obtaining consent for such an exercise to take place on the council's pitches. The letter would also request that the Rugby Football League explain their actions in writing to the Town Council, and this be further discussed at the next Parks Meeting.

- e) Vehicle Itinerary - Current Register

An updated vehicle itinerary for 2012 had been circulated to Member's for their information. Members were asked to note that the figures as mentioned in the 2012 itinerary make reference to the actual replacement cost of the machinery and not to the actual value of the machinery at present.

The information contained was in a basic Excel format for identification purposes, age of equipment together with replacement values which were forecasted on present machine prices. Suggested replacement dates were based on current usage of machine, together with a running total of the current repairs to date and also included down time (length of time a vehicle was non operational) due to time waiting for parts etc.

Other considerations were taken into account such as whether machines had been superseded with more up to date safety features or whether vehicles still complied with current legislation e.g Engine emissions or noise output.

RECOMMENDED that the vehicle register, be accepted.

f) Disposal of redundant machinery

Due to the high repair costs of PTC 10A and also PTC 11 and also because of being replaced by more appropriate equipment the Supervisor sought permission to dispose of both of these machines and other miscellaneous horticultural items such as tractor tyres. He gave Members details of two alternative methods of disposal for their consideration.

The exercise was expected to be completed by February 2013.

RECOMMENDED that Method 1 be followed as this would also save on advertisement costs for the redundant machinery and fully satisfy audit requirements.

MINUTES OF THE PARKS & CEMETERY COMMITTEE OF THE 10TH DECEMBER
2012