



BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Assets Committee held in the Council Chamber at Arms Everytyn House on Tuesday 2nd December 2014 at 6.30pm.

Present:

Councillors:

Councillor K Ellis (Chair), Councillor O Potts (Vice-Chair), Councillor J R Potts, Councillor B W Elliott and Councillor M Parker.

Non Committee Members:

Councillor R Parker.

Officers:

Town Clerk (Corporate Services) – Sue Noddings
Assets Officer – Sean Robinson
Committee Clerk – Liam Forsyth

Members of the Public: 1

085/14/01: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D Rutter and Councillor L Rickerby.

086/14/02: DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND GRANT OF DISPENSATIONS

None.

087/14/03: MINUTES OF THE ASSETS COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 9TH OCTOBER 2014

The Minutes of the Assets Committee held on the 9th October 2014 were **AGREED** by the Council and signed by the Chair.

088/14/04: BUDGETARY DISCUSSIONS FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2015/16

The Town Clerk (Corporate Services) opened the discussion of this item by highlighting proposals whilst also noting that the Council has promised to keep the precept at cost of living increase only.

An outline of the partnership board was also provided by the Town Clerk (Corporate Services). It was noted that discussion had been held regarding Blyth's success in Northumbria in Bloom.

The Committee wished to thank the Office Manager and other Officers for their work in supporting the Northumbria in Bloom scheme.

It was noted that the Committee would like to expand funding to this scheme from £7,500 to £20,000. This expansion would help to expand the project to gateway roundabouts.

It was further commented that the Office Manager had met with Jimmy Reith (Northumberland County Council) to discuss a proposed planting scheme for the Town.

It was commented that planters are to be transferred from the Market Place to the Quayside and that Northumberland County Council is to improve its enforcement of traffic violations around Blyth Market Place.

Discussions were also held regarding the new arrangements for Newsham and Beach gateway roundabout.

The Town Clerk (Corporate Services) also opened discussion regarding potential expansion of partners and how this could enhance the partnership agreement.

Enquiries were made as to whether hydrants could be used for watering. The Assets Officer commented that he was to investigate further.

Councillor K Ellis commented that he wished to arrange an informal meeting and buffet for early February in order to provide a small thank you for the work of the volunteers associated with Northumbria in Bloom.

It was **AGREED** that Councillors were to be sent a copy of the documents associated with the Northumbria in Bloom (portfolio available upon request) including the feedback from the judges.

Councillor B W Elliott enquired as to the Assets Register and the amount of play areas in need of urgent repair.

Councillor K Ellis commented that the Officers are to present short, medium and long term objectives at a future Meeting of the Assets Committee.

089/14/05: ASSETS OFFICER'S UPDATE REPORT

(See attached report)

Regarding the Town Council's bins, Councillor O Potts commented on the new blue bins at Broadway, noting that she was pleased to see the new bins in place.

The Town Clerk (Corporate Services) commented that there may be scope for the Town Council's insurance company to provide a supporting inspection service. The Assets Officer commented that this was to be investigated further. **Action: SR.**

Councillor K Ellis outlined to the Council that other areas have placed 4 small feet in the vicinity of bins and that this has improved the cleanliness of the surrounding area.

The Assets Officer's recommendation that a fence be provided at the play area at the Briardale was **AGREED** by the Committee.

Discussion was then held as to the toilets, MUGAs and new bus stop consultation.

A request was made that the costings for areas such as the toilets be provided upon request to Councillors.

090/14/06: BLYTH PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

Councillor K Ellis provided an update for this item. It was noted that a monthly report is to be circulated to all Councillors.

Councillor B W Elliott expressed concern that progress has been slow and that the standards promised have not been met, nor have the standards expected for Blyth been demonstrated.

It was noted that issues have arisen due to Northumberland County Council restructuring and that this process has represented a learning curve for both parties.

Councillor O Potts wished to comment on the improvement in the relationship that she has experienced as the partnership developed whilst acknowledging the issues experienced.

Councillor J R Potts commented that the inability to receive an accurate breakdown of figures at the moment, does not help in the budget setting process.

091/14/07: ANY OTHER BUSINESS AND ITEMS FOR URGENT ATTENTION

The Committee Clerk provided an outline for the Christmas Event being organised by the Briardale Community Centre. It was noted that they are seeking support in providing foodstuffs and donations for hampers to be distributed to guests on Christmas Day.

The Committee Clerk further noted that if Councillors, Officers and Members of the Public would find it more convenient to drop off any donations to the Office, that himself and the Office Manager would be willing to deliver them.

092/14/08: DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was **AGREED** that the next meeting of the Assets Committee is to be held on Thursday 5th February 2015 at 6.30pm in the Council Chamber.

MEMBERS OF THE ASSETS COMMITTEE:

Councillor K Ellis (Chair)
Councillor B W Elliott
Councillor M Parker
Councillor J R Potts
Councillor O Potts (Vice-Chair)
Councillor J Reid
Councillor L Rickerby
Councillor D Rutter
Councillor A Turnbull

Date:

Signed:

BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

Assets Committee

02 Dec 2014

Report of the Assets Officer

Litter Bins

The ground fixed litter bins have been installed in the following areas:

Junction 6th Avenue/Broadway
Broadway Field
Broadway Toilets
Keel Row car park behind Blyth & Tyne Public House
Cowpen Road adjacent to Cemetery
Priory Grange adjacent to school
Chase Farm Drive entrance to Crofton Grange
Tynedale Drive near Tynedale House
Wensleydale Terrace

The NEAT team have now taking over from the Highways Department in installing the ground fixed litter bins. NCC is reviewing the litter bin collection schedule in order to improve the service. This may lead to installing more ground fixed litter bins than post mounted litter bins.

20 x Ground Fixed and 20x Post Mounted litter bins were delivered to NCC 31Oct 14. The current stock level of both litter bins are:

Ground Fixed Litter Bin: 47

Post Mounted Litter Bin: 33

We are also in the process of replacing the old "BVBC" square litter bins with the ground fixed litter bins. The red square litter bins at the play areas at the Isabella and Briardale will also be replaced. This is due to difficulty in putting an adequate liner inside the bin to ease refuse collection.

Play Areas

Play Area Inspections:

The weekly inspection that are been carried out by NCC through the Partnership arrangement is to continue. This is to include minor repairs where necessary and the reporting procedure is to remain unchanged. The weekly inspections carried out since the last Assets Committee meeting, the following defects were recorded and rectified:

Ogle Drive: Play surface repaired
New cradle swing seat fitted

Briardale: Play surface repaired

Broadway: Rotating Rocker – Bearing worn out

The quarterly play area inspections will be complete by 28 Nov 14 with a verbal update to follow at the Assets Committee meeting. A subsequent written report will follow.

South Beach Play Area:

There have been concerns raised from residents adjacent to the play area with regards to the excess litter and older children hanging around preventing younger children accessing the equipment. There have been additional litter bins installed and the NEAT team have been made aware to monitor the area more regularly to litter pick where necessary. The Neighbourhood policing team have been made aware of the older youths hanging around and they are monitoring the area with regular patrols.

Mulberry Close:

The planning application for the new play area adjacent to Mulberry Close has now been submitted. This has been registered as being valid on 11 Nov 14 and we should receive a reply within 20 working days from the valid date (09 Dec 14).

The play equipment for the project has now been provisionally ordered.

Axwell Drive:

The Initial Design meeting to place on 24 Oct 14 with the Play Practice presenting the plans of the refurbishment of Axwell Drive Play area. The design was agreed by all stakeholders and the project has now moved forward to the installation phase. At the meeting it was discussed that there was an issue with the drainage towards the bottom of the field. There has been a further on-site meeting (13 Nov 14) with myself, Play Practice, NCC & Active Northumberland to seek a solution to the problem. From this meeting NCC Technical Services will install drainage and will also meet the costs of this work. The work is to be carried out w/c 24 Nov 14. The installation of the Play Area will then commence on 01 Dec 14 (weather dependant) and will take approximately 3 to 4 weeks to complete.

For information Cllr R Parker has used his Councillor's allowance of £1000 plant trees around the new play area on completion of the refurbishment.

Briardale Play Area:

The new play area installed at the Briardale was officially opened on 29 Oct 14. The initial inspection and handover was carried out on 05 Nov 14 by myself and representative from Wicksteed's. All the play equipment is functioning correctly and the play area has now been formally handed over to the control of Blyth Town Council. When we receive all the paperwork for the guarantees/maintenance schedules & instructions I will add it to the Assets Register.

From the installation of the play area only the adult gym area has been fenced. I have raised concerns that the play area should also be fenced which is recommended as good practice from RoSPA to protect users from dogs and dog fouling. I have received a quote from the Play Practice for the installation of the fence. The cost of the installation is £6,309.00 + vat.

Recommendation: That approval is given to install the fence around the play area.

Broadway:

The gate is to be replaced by COP 25 Nov 14.

For information: There is a drilling rig present on Broadway field adjacent to the play area. This is for preliminary investigations into ground conditions for the building of new changing rooms.

From the last Partnership Board meeting held on 20 Nov 14 it was confirmed by Paul Jones, Head of Neighbourhood Services (NCC) that BTC are responsible for the maintenance of the MUGA's at St John's Park and Ogle Drive. This was included in the transfer of services document signed in Mar 12.

Bus Shelters

Ogle Drive & West Court:

With regards to the installation of bus shelters at the above locations I have been informed that I will need a resident's consultation in order to proceed with this project. I have now sent out a letter to all nearby residents outlining our proposal with a deadline of Friday 19 December 2014 to make any comments. So far we have received one email and one telephone call stating their concerns of potential vandalism and anti-social behaviour. However, the telephone caller stated that they still would like a bus shelter installed.

Bebside:

We have now received permission to install the two bus shelters on Front Street, Bebside from NCC. The westbound bus shelter will be a cantilever type shelter due to the width of the footpath as the land behind the bus stop is not within the adopted highway and also not in county ownership. We also need to take care on the correct positioning of the bus shelter on the eastbound side so not to impede the warning signs for the level crossing.

Bus Shelter Defects:

From the last Partnership Management Board meeting, NCC has agreed to carry out all the outstanding repairs which have been highlighted from the recent

survey. Morrison's Glazing Services have been contracted by NCC to carry out the work and it will take approximately 3 to 4 weeks to complete.

Seating

The 12 seats that were ordered in September have now been delivered to Cowley Road. These will be installed over the next few weeks in the following areas:

Broadway Circle	x 2
Plessey Road (Opposite Seahorse Pub)	x 1
Briardale Play Area	x 2
Cottingwood Green Play Area	x 2
Axwell Drive Play Area	x 2

War Memorials

All three War Memorials were cleaned prior to the November Ceremonies. New turf was laid at the Ridley Park and Newsham & New Deleval memorials and the flower bed replanted with a "1914 – 2014" display. The hedges and shrubbery at the Cowpen Memorial have been trimmed back and tidied up. When inspecting the Memorial prior to November Ceremonies with Jimmy Reith (NCC) it has been suggested that the area surrounding the Memorial needs updating and I would welcome any suggestions or ideas.

Toilets

Broadway:

The cistern in the male toilets has now been repaired. There have been two broken windows which have been reported. They will be repaired as soon as possible.

Cowpen Road:

The toilet block has now been demolished (completed 07 Nov 14).

Sean Robinson
Assets Officer

02 Dec 14

BLYTH PARTNERSHIP: REPORT FROM THE MANAGEMENT BOARD

The Chair of the Assets Committee and the Management Board, Councillor Ken Ellis, has requested that an update be prepared for the attention of the Assets Committee meeting scheduled for Tuesday 2nd December 2014.

BACKGROUND:

- The Blyth Partnership was created by Northumberland County Council and Blyth Town Council and commenced on 1st April 2014.
- The Blyth Partnership was to have a Management Board and initially Blyth Town Council was represented by the Chair or Vice Chair of Assets and the Town Clerk (Corporate Services) along with a nominated County Councillor and the NCC Routine/Winter Maintenance Manager (Urban) Highways and Neighbourhood Services Manager.
- Because of issues around decision making the number of Blyth Town Councillors has now been increased to three.
- Four Aims were agreed for the Partnership: -
 1. The Parties wish to work together in partnership to form a jointly funded team with its own identity dedicated to Blyth with the aim of delivering enhanced environmental services to the standards set in this agreement.
 2. The aim is to provide a high quality environment which is maintained to the highest standards by an instantly recognisable, skilled and dedicated workforce using state of the art equipment.
 3. The partnership will also seek to provide training, apprenticeships and work experience for the young and inhabitants of Blyth.
 4. The partnership will draw on the skills and knowledge of each partner where each has a direct input into the activities of the team.
- Both parties made a commitment to contribute not less than £250,000 per year for the term of the agreement.
- Blyth Town Council's contribution consists of £200,000 for the provision of the dedicated team and the necessary equipment plus £50,000 for additional items such as floral displays, gateway roundabouts, etc.
- Blyth Town Council also made a commitment to look at potentially funding specific projects.
- Both Councils agreed to ring-fence their funding so that any surplus would be carried forward and used to further enhance the Aims.

THE REALITY:

- The “beach hut” branding was agreed prior to 1st April 2014 and there has been a roll out of branding on uniforms, equipment, etc.
- The dedicated team was appointed and operational shortly after the 1st April 2014.
- Induction and training has been provided to ensure safe working and improving standards.
- Instead of the team of 10 people for Blyth that the Partnership Agreement stated the reality has been a team of 33 people including 10 seasonal workers. Some of the seasonal workers have been kept on during the winter to cover identified areas of need.
- Some issues have been highlighted regarding the analysis of expenditure as a result of NCC changing their financial software but information has been requested to identify the following: -
 1. Employment Costs
 2. Hire of Equipment
 3. Repairs and Parts
 4. Fuel Costs
 5. And any unexpected costs
- A Schedule of Services was developed and this incorporated all services thought to be covered by the Partnership Agreement. There has been the need to continually review and discuss the schedule but agreement has now been reached on the content.
- The Schedule of Services was based on “Inputs” such as 26-34 grass cuts per annum and has been found to reduce flexibility to respond to needs.
- At the last meeting of the Management Board it was proposed that we move to “Output” specifications which would allow for more focus on work that actually needs to be done.
- This approach would shift the focus of service delivery to the quality (output) rather than on quantities and timeframes (input).
- NCC has started to put together photographic standards of Unacceptable and Acceptable Standards covering all of the service areas.

THE FUTURE:

- The next phase of this approach would be to: -
 1. Complete the output specification and visual standards
 2. Agree performance and reporting arrangements
 3. Review working practices
 4. Staff briefings and training
- A copy of a presentation provided by Paul Jones on 20th November 2014 is attached for information.
- The development and introduction of Performance Reports would be the final step and a suggested format is attached for your information and comments.

IN SUMMARY:

It has been a period of accelerated learning for all parties but a lot has been achieved and very positive feedback has been received about the improvements being made in Blyth. The next few months will focus on building on these successes and agreeing a way forward for the Partnership to deliver even more.

SUE NODDINGS TOWN CLERK (CORPORATE SERVICES)

28th November 2014



Grounds Maintenance

Grass Cutting
19 grass cuts have been delivered from 1st April to mid October. It is anticipated that 2 further cuts will be delivered in 2014, with an option for one cut in early spring 2015, depending upon weather and grass growth rates.

Weed Spraying
Weed growth has been controlled by 2 applications of approved herbicide. Hot spot areas for secondary weed growth continue to be treated upon discovery.

Pruning
Hedge cutting operations commenced in October in line with the tailing off of the summer grass cutting season and programme work of the partnership team.

Service Requests
Service requests predominantly relate to overgrowth from hedges and shrub areas. Resources have been targeted to address requests in line with programme.

Tree Inspections
Tree inspections continue to be undertaken, prioritisation is given to highest risk areas.

Highway incidents
10 highway incidents reported since April 2014, all of which were investigated and offending obstructions removed.



Street Cleansing

Street Sweeping
Street sweeping is on target to deliver 4 planned kerb edge sweeps, with 2 sweeps completed. Leaf hot spot sweeping commenced earlier than planned due to leaf fall occurring as a result of weather conditions.

Litter bin emptying continues to be carried out on schedule in Blyth. A full audit of bin sizes, locations and frequency of emptying is currently being undertaken to review and optimise the bin emptying routes.

Litter Picks
Litter picking schedules are on target, hot spot area within Severnoaks park identified for increased visits and monitoring.
103 Fixed Penalty Notices issued. This figure is higher than normal as Blyth was targeted in June in a joint initiative. The main problem area targeted was the Town Centre / surrounding back streets.

Dog Fouling
Hot spot areas being targeted include the Colliery row streets in ICCO, Hodgsons Road/Cheshin Avenue, Newsham Farm and Blyth Beach areas. 11 Fixed Penalty Notices were issued during the period April - October 2014.

Fly Tipping
110 instances were reported during the period April - October 2014 resulting in 25 full investigations, 4 formal cautions, 27 warning letters and 9 advice letters.

Statutory Notices
7 statutory notices issued to private properties regards waste accumulations.

Graffiti
22 reports received since April, all of which were investigated and offending graffiti removed or painted over.



Public Realm

Public Toilets
All public conveniences in Blyth have been cleansed in line with the schedule. All programmed work is under review to achieve an improvement in standards.

Bus Shelter Cleaning
Bus shelters are cleaned once a month and there are 77 bus shelters in the programme at Blyth. We are well on track with bus shelter cleaning for October.

Public Seats
All seat inspections/cleansing are now completed.

Play Area Inspections
Inspections of play areas in Blyth are currently on target.

Floral Displays
Floral displays in Blyth contributed to a gold award for Kitley Park in the Northumbria in Bloom campaign.

Blyth Town Council and its partners were awarded a Silver gilt commendation for the town by the RHS judges.

All seasonal maintenance operations are on target.

Abandoned Vehicles
21 abandoned vehicle reports received during the period April - October 2014, 12 were removed by tracing owners and arranging removal, 9 were uplifted and removed using Avail and DVLA staff.



Customer Feedback

Compliments
We have received 14 compliments since April 2014. These are for a variety of reasons but the main themes are grass cutting and flower displays in Blyth.

Complaints
We received only one formal complaint during the period April - October 2014, which was regarding an issue reported on a number of occasions with overhanging/large bushes. The customer was contacted and the issue was resolved within two days of receiving the complaint.

Suggestions
A customer has commented that he would like to see more weed control in the centre of Blyth to improve visitors perception of the area.

Customer quote of the month:

"I very much liked the flower displays in Blyth Town centre when I visited on Sunday last. Very nice."