

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Committee held on 9 June 2015 at 6p.m. in the Council Chamber, 28 Fore Street, Wellington

Present: Councillors Barr, Copley, Critchard, Govier, Reed and Stock-Williams

Greg Dyke, Town Clerk and Debbie Bere, Assistant to the Town Clerk

1. Appointment of Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Copley be appointed Chair of the Committee.

2. Apologies

Councillors Biscoe and Lloyd

(Councillor Govier acted as substitute for Councillor Biscoe)

3. To give further consideration to the suggestion that responsibility for the Wellington Playing Field be devolved to the Town Council

In December last year TDBC Councillor Catherine Herbert, the portfolio holder for Sport, Parks and Leisure met the Council to talk informally about the possibility of devolving responsibility for the Playing Fields in Wellington. Further initial discussions were held with Alison North, Community Leisure Officer. Now that the elections had taken place, consideration was given to re-commencing this particular conversation.

It was felt that further discussions should take place in order to establish due diligence and obtain a full understanding of the implications for the Town Council. It was also considered essential that there was engagement from the principal users of the Playing Field as they would be affected by any proposals.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) discussions with TDBC regarding the possible devolution of responsibility for the operation of Wellington Playing Field continue;
- (b) the users of the Playing Field be consulted as to their views on any proposal;
- (c) a clear understanding of the likely responsibilities of the Town Council be established before any commitment was made;
- (d) discussions regarding only the Playing Field take place in the first instance. A phased approach be taken to any possible devolution of responsibility for the Recreation Ground and the Park.

4. Christmas Lights Switch On

At its May meeting, the Council agreed that the Christmas Lights be switched on on 28 November this year. It was anticipated that the arrangements would be much the same as previous years with a certain amount of free entertainment and activities taking place. The Switch On this year would be carried out by pupils of Wellington Prep School with the Holy Family being provided by St John Primary School.

Since the meeting of the Council, Councillor Govier had been approached by one trader, on behalf of a number of others, asking that re-consideration be given to the

Switch On date and that it take place on 21 November. Accordingly further detailed consideration was given to this request. Members were mindful of the fact that the decision to bring the date forward last year was not welcomed by some traders. Councillor Barr reported that he had recently spoken to a number of town centre traders and confirmed that the majority of those he had spoken to were in favour of the later date. The earlier date had also been too early to enable the usual Nativity scene. The Committee felt on balance that the Switch On should be held on the usual, later, date to coincide with the beginning of the traditional pre-Christmas free parking on Saturdays and to enable it to reflect the Nativity.

Members also discussed the possibility of a Street Market taking place at the same time as the Lights Switch On or on the following day. There were a number of logistical problems that would need to be overcome if this was to happen. It would also be necessary to find a group or organisation willing to take on the organisation of and responsibility for any market. In addition the provision of a Street Market was not always something that every local trader was in support of as it could adversely affect their business. Although there may be problems in its organisation, there were none that could not be overcome. It was felt that there might be an opportunity for a Christmas Street Market to take place.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the decision of the Council to have the Christmas Lights Switch On on 28 November 2015 be supported and confirmed;
- (b) approaches be made to community groups and organisations that already hold markets and street fairs to see if they were willing to take on responsibility for arranging a Christmas Street Fair.

5. Play equipment at Tonedale Play area

It was reported that the Town Council owned and maintained a Play Area at Tonedale. It was established as part of the Richards Close/Wardleworth Way development in 1985 and donated to the Town Council. The equipment, which was provided 30 years ago had become somewhat outdated. It was regularly inspected by the Town Clerk and by the Council's Insurers to ensure it remained safe to use. Consideration was given to its possible repair and/or replacement.

Attention was drawn to the nearby Play Area at Weavers Reach which was provided and maintained by developers. The type of equipment here was much more modern and appealed to the younger age group of children. It was felt that the current usage of the equipment at the Tonedale Play Area might benefit from some refurbishment but that it would not be value for money to carry out any wholesale replacement. The MUGA was located here and the area tended to be used by older children. It was therefore felt that the re-instatement of the zip wire (which had been removed for safety reasons) should be looked at.

RESOLVED that:

(a) rather than carry out a wholesale replacement of the play equipment, every effort be made to refurbish it. In the meantime TDBC be asked if it had any suitable redundant equipment from other play areas that might usefully be used at Tonedale;
(b) the reinstatement of the zip wire be explored further.

6. Dog Bins at Wellington Park

At a recent Council meeting Brian Hillier complained about dog mess in Beech Grove. He suggested that dog bins inside of the park could be re-positioned outside of the park to encourage dog walkers to use them when the park was closed.

There were three dog bins inside the park adjacent to each of the main entrances. There was also a dog bin inside the Recreation Ground near the southern entrance. There was also a dog bin at the entrance from Courtland Road to the car park next to the playing fields. So there were 5 dog bins within a very small area but only one was accessible at all times. The immediate Past Mayor had visited the area and looked at the possibility of re-siting the dog bin near the Easterly (Beech Grove entrance) but could not see how this could be done without causing an obstruction for anyone entering the park or placing it at the side of the roadway which would create a road safety hazard. There would be no point in moving the dog bin from inside the main entrance as there was already a bin within metres from it. It might be helpful to move the dog bin inside the park at the South Western entrance to the Park (The Black Path/Court Field School entrance). The approval of Taunton Deane would be needed to move this one or any others in the Park and there would be a cost involved.

RESOLVED that in the first instance the position of the dog bin in the car park be highlighted to dog walkers by putting a notice on the electricity pole at the entrance to the car park. In the event that the problem persisted, TDBC be asked to move the bin from inside the south western entrance to the Park and re-position it in the vicinity of Black Path.

7. Litter in the Park

Councillor Copley drew attention to litter in the Park. It was felt that this may have been caused by persons that had gained unauthorised entry to the Park after it had been locked. The Police were aware of the situation and were closely monitoring the area.

The meeting ended at 7.10p.m.

