

## HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Environment and General Purposes Committee** held on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2011

**Mrs J Keel (Chairman)\*\***  
**S Bedding (Vice Chairman)**  
**D Bedding\*\***  
**Mrs C Furminger\*\***  
**R Goddard**  
**S Griffin**  
**G Wall**  
**Mrs M Baker (Town Mayor)**

Apologies \*\* Absent \*

**Also present:** Cllrs V Northorpe, C Jones and R Bates

**Cllr S Bedding took the Chair in the absence of Cllr Mrs Keel.**

**50. Apologies**

J Keel – Ill Health  
C Furminger – Ill Health  
D Bedding – Work Commitments

**51. Minutes**

The meeting of the Environment and General Purposes Committee held on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2011 were taken as read, confirmed as a true record and duly signed.

**52. Substitutes**

None

**53. Declarations of Interest**

None.

**54. Vale Road Allotment Site - Licence**

Members were informed that there was no record of a formal agreement being in place between the Town Council and Vale Road Allotment Association to regulate the management of Vale Road Allotment Site. Members agreed that as the owner of the land that a licence should be progressed as a matter of urgency. Members considered the draft licence presented by the Clerk, which had been drawn up in negotiation with the Chairman of Vale Road Allotment Association and had no concerns relating to the documents contents and then;

Members **RESOLVED** to;

**Issue Vale Road Allotment Association with a revised licence to occupy the site and instruct the Mayor and Town Clerk to execute the licence.**

**55. Friends of Beech Hurst Steering Group**

The Clerk informed Members that Mid Sussex District Council was facilitating the formation of a Friends of Beech Hurst Gardens Group to assist with

routine maintenance and initiatives to promote the gardens. The group would be made up of volunteers and be formally constituted so that grant funding and other assistance that the Mid Sussex District Council would not normally have access to could be applied for through the group. As part of the process to form the Friends Group Haywards Heath Town Council had been invited to sit on the Group and attend meetings. Members welcomed the development of a Friends Group as initiatives of this kind prove to be very successful and were an excellent way to engage the community in the future development of one the Town's most important green lungs. Members also agreed that the Clerk in liaison with the Chairman of the South and South East in Bloom Committee should attend meetings of the group when appropriate.

Members **AGREED** to;

**Note the Clerks update.**

**56. Hanging Baskets and Christmas Lights on Town Centre Lamp Posts**

Members raised concerns in relation to Tay Valley Lighting/West Sussex County Council's insistence that street lighting columns, within the Town Centre, which historically had hanging baskets attached to them had to be stress tested before permission would be granted this year and that Christmas lights could not be hung from the lighting columns as of this year.

The Clerk informed Members that the cost of these works would be £1,250 and that the lighting columns in question were concrete but, if they had been metal the issue would not have arisen. In addition there was a programme to replace the lighting columns in questions but this would take place until 2014. The lights were not in the ownership of the Town Council but the Council had hung baskets and Christmas Lights on the lighting columns without question for over 15 years.

Members felt in asking the Town Council to pay for the testing of the lighting columns that Tay Valley Lighting/West Sussex County Council were saying that they did not know whether their lighting columns were of sound structure.

Members questioned the need for the testing. It was suggested that technical information be sought to ascertain the minimum standard and weights that would be allowed to be placed on the columns. Gather information relating to the last time the lights were tested on safety grounds and what tests were undertaken.

In addition it was noted that the policy of no Christmas lights on concrete columns would leave the Town Council in an impossible position if it was enforced. The Town Council would have no other choice but to cancel the lights on Sussex Road and around Commercial Square. The cost to Town Council for its Christmas lights is £15,000 per year with these costs being unrecoverable as the Town Council was tied to a three year contract.

It was hoped all parties could come to a satisfactory arrangement where either special dispensation to put hanging baskets up under Town Council insurance could be agreed or the possibility of replacing them with metal poles and bringing part of the 2014 upgrade scheme forward. It was felt that the negotiation in relation to Christmas lights could be progressed over the longer term.

These options were based on the fact the lights have hung from the lamp posts for a number of years with no challenge and that it is unreasonable to enforce this issue at such short notice.

In conclusion, Members asked the Clerk to ascertain why the issue had never been brought to the Town Council's attention before this year and why local tax payers money should be spent on works to lamp posts the Town Council would presume would be maintained to a high standard on health and safety grounds by the County Council and Tay Valley Lighting, with this,

Members **RESOLVED** to;

**Not pay for stress testing on the light columns, which will hold hanging baskets until the Clerk had made further investigations into the matter with Tay Valley Lighting and West Sussex County Council.**

**57. Activities and Tasks Undertaken on Behalf of Third Parties**

Members noted the ever growing demand on the Town Council and its groundstaff to undertake works on pieces of land outside the jurisdiction of the Council. Members agreed that there needed to be a process to ensure that the expectations of the public where met and that where possible timescales could be estimated to deal with each matter. Most importantly due to the Council's groundstaff work schedule a designated time during the week would help them to forward plan their work. The clerk acknowledged that some tasks are priority as they may cause danger to residents but a list of tasks and investigations into who actually own the land in question should be undertaken to ensure those liable for the issue pay the costs of the works whether they do it themselves or pay the Council for the service it provides. The Clerk suggested that with Members approval he would implement a database and look to offer four groundstaff for half a day a week to undertake the tasks identified.

Members **AGREED** to;

**Authorise the Clerk to introduce a structured approach to dealing with requests for works on the land of third parties and to allocate groundstaff time to undertake tasks when appropriate.**

**58. Town Centre Greening Project**

The Clerk presented a verbal update on the matter. As reported previously Members were aware that Mid Sussex District Council's Better Mid Sussex Advisory group was driving forward the adopted Town Centre master plan for Haywards Heath Town, which included the objective to upgrade the public realm throughout the town centre. The roads included in the project were identified as Perrymount Road, The Broadway, Sussex Road and South Road.

As a result the Clerk has taken the lead on the matter and engaged with Mid Sussex District Council, West Sussex County Council, the Haywards Heath & District Business Association and Southern Rail to look at short term solutions such as the rationalisation of the existing furniture and to work on a long term vision for the aforementioned roads.

The Clerk reported that two project meetings have been held with partners with the most recent held in early April, which agreed the following actions.

- The database of existing street furniture to be developed further in line with West Sussex County Council's information to identify the agency tasked with undertaking works to the Town Centre. These works would include removal of unwanted furniture and a programme of maintenance. This would also include who was responsible for costs and the timeframes for delivery of the project.
- West Sussex County Council to agree a way forward to involve Haywards Heath Town Council in the implementation of the works.
- Consider a proposal to remove kerbside railings subject to public consultations.
- West Sussex County Council to identify elements (such as the railings) within the database that require a risk assessment to be undertaken.
- A meeting to be organised with the business community to consult and involve them in the project.
- Haywards Heath Town Council to progress the "A" board initiative with West Sussex County Council's support.

Members thanked the Clerk for his update, endorsed the project and the Town Council involvement then;

Members **AGREED** to;

**Note the Clerks update.**

**59. Urgent Business**

The Chairman had one urgent item. It had been brought to the Council's attention that the Fir Tree located on the corner of Victoria Park had been cut down by Mid Sussex District Council on the grounds that it was diseased. In addition to Mid Sussex District Council officers failing to consult the Town Council on the matter before the tree was felled the Town Council's Christmas lights were attached to the tree and were destroyed in the process. Due to the absence of any consultation, Town Council officers did not have the opportunity to remove the lights and felt that the liability for replacing the lights rested with either the District Council or their contractors. The Clerk suggested that he negotiate with officers at Mid Sussex District Council and ask that the lights be replaced and report back to the committee.

Members **AGREED** to;

**The Clerk seeking compensation for the destroyed Christmas lights.**

Meeting Closed at 8.24pm