

NAILSWORTH TOWN COUNCIL  
**ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**  
 Minutes of a meeting held on 1 July 2014

Present		Cllr MP Robinson (Town Mayor) Cllr JL Duckworth * Cllr A Elliott * Cllr NI Kay Cllr MJ Kelly Cllr MM Rahman Cllr S Robinson Cllr SM Thorpe
Present for part of the meeting		Cllr P Carter Cllr JD Duckworth Cllr A Elliott Ms Sue Bushell, Guide Dogs Community Engagement Officer 4 members of the public
Apologies		Cllr M P Robinson
	*	denotes absence from part of the meeting

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**PRESENTATION BY MS SUE BUSHELL OF GUIDE DOGS**

The Chair welcomed Ms Bushell, Community Engagement Officer of Guide Dogs (GD), (formerly known as Guide Dogs for the Blind), to the meeting. Cllr Kelly introduced Ms Bushell, who described the work of GD, a registered national charity aiming to assist blind and partially sighted people in achieving independence through the provision and training of guide dogs. Ms Bushell explained that the charity, which currently employed over 1200 paid staff, bred its own puppies, assessed their suitability as guide dogs and trained both the dogs and their owners. Over 12,000 volunteers assisted the charity with tasks such as puppy-walking and boarding the dogs during their training. GD also worked in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies as part of its ongoing campaign to increase independence for blind and partially sighted people. One example of this was the Association's 'Streets Ahead' campaign which aimed to highlight the various barriers to accessibility in cities, towns and villages and offer guidance to local people, planners and designers on how to make streets safer and more accessible to people with sight loss, for example by reducing 'street clutter'. Traders' 'A' Boards, wheelie bins and cars parking on pavements could be particularly hazardous. With regard to 'A' Boards, Ms Bushell explained that GD favoured a compromise approach over an outright ban. The organisation provided educational materials to support its campaign and she had brought information packs which were distributed to members of the Committee and the Market Street Improvements Working Party.

Ms Bushell had been pleased to tour the town centre with members of Nailsworth Access Group at Cllr Kelly's invitation and was aware that NTC had set up a Working Party to investigate the early stage feasibility of pedestrian priority improvements to the Market Street area. She stated that she was keen to work with NTC and other relevant bodies from the outset on any project which may emerge as she felt that there was considerable potential for this area to be made safer and more accessible for visually impaired people. Cllr Kelly outlined recent activities of the Working Party which had included meetings with Cllr Chris Brine Mayor of Stonehouse Town Council and Andrew Tubb CEO Cirencester Town Council and reported that he hoped to arrange a meeting with GCC Highways contractors Amey, John Kay GCC and County Cllr Binns with a view to holding an 'aspirations workshop' to begin the process of developing an initial design brief for the Market Street area in consultation with town centre traders and residents. Cllr Thorpe expressed concern that the Working Party appeared to have no clear parameters which

could lead to unfocussed discussion. Cllr Kelly considered the Working Party was at a fact finding stage and precise terms of reference were unnecessary at this point

In response to questions, Ms Bushell confirmed that GD was not against the concept of shared space/inclusive streets, but that experience in other towns and cities had shown that they could present hazards for visually impaired people unless very carefully designed. She reported that Worcester and Birmingham City Councils had adopted licensing schemes for 'A' Boards, and that GD worked with local police and traffic control enforcement teams to address the problem of cars parking on pavements. GD could also organise community awareness events involving activities such as blindfolded walks for sighted people.

The Chair thanked Ms Bushell for her useful and informative input.

*\* Cllrs Carter, Duckworth, Elliott and Kelly left the meeting at this point.*

*\* Cllr Kay joined the meeting during discussion of the above item.*

### **CO-OPTION OF CLLR DART TO ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

Cllr Kay proposed that Cllr Dart be co-opted to the Environment Committee for this and subsequent meetings and with Cllr Dart's agreement this was approved.

### **WAY FORWARD FOR IMPROVING TOWN CENTRE ACCESSIBILITY**

Members expressed concern at the lack of clarity in the terms of reference for the Market Street Working Party. They felt that its remit appeared to be widening to include the whole of the town centre. Cllr Thorpe suggested that, in the light of GCC budget restrictions, a way forward could be to work on small scale improvements which could be achieved at a relatively low cost, such as licensing 'A' boards, tackling pavement parking and introducing a 20 mph speed limit on the town centre.

After further discussion, it was agreed to recommend **that precise terms of reference** for the Market Street Working Party be drafted for approval by Council as soon as practicable and that Cllr Kelly be asked to keep the Environment Committee updated on the Working Party's progress.

**Action: Cllr Kelly**

Cllr Reed suggested that it might be helpful for the **Committee to review the 2008 Nailsworth Town Centre Design Statement** and it was agreed that the Market Street Working Party be invited to be part of this process.

### **CARS PARKING ON NYMPFIELD ROAD**

Complaints had been received from residents that several cars were routinely parked on Nymphsfield Road near its junction with Barnfield Approach. Councillors agreed that this presented a hazard by reducing visibility for drivers exiting Barnfield Approach and impeding traffic flow on the main road. Whilst there were no parking restrictions in this area, it was understood that the Highway Code prohibited parking less than 15 yards from a road junction. The Clerk was asked to **contact the Neighbourhood Warden** to discuss possible ways of tackling the problem and to write, if appropriate, to the police and GCC to request that parking restrictions be introduced in this area.

**Action: Clerk**

Cllr Thorpe agreed to raise the matter at the next meeting of the Police Liaison Committee on which she and Cllr S Robinson were NTC representatives and to email the minutes of the last meeting to the Clerk for circulation.

**Action: Cllr Thorpe**

### **FOOTPATHS UPDATE**

The Clerk reported that she had forwarded a complaint from a local resident about **overgrowing vegetation in Arnolds Lane** to GCC. The Town Groundsman had recently undertaken some clearance on a section of the footpath behind the Town Hall following another complaint. The Clerk had also received a complaint about a car being parked on

the grass triangle at the top end of Frying Pan Alley, off Fewster Road, which had been making access to this foot path difficult. She had passed this on to GCC together with a complaint about an overgrown hedge at Clarendon House on Spring Hill.

Cllr Kay reported that a section of footpath behind Shortwood Football Club was perpetually waterlogged and stated that he intended to approach the club to suggest they might wish to take on the maintenance of this section on a voluntary basis.

It was agreed that local Cotswold Warden Mike Brinkworth be invited to a future meeting of the Committee to discuss the current state of footpaths in the parish and possible ways of recruiting volunteers to help maintain them.

**Action: Clerk**

### **SHORTWOOD CHURCHYARD**

The Clerk agreed to liaise with Town Groundsman and Cllr Reed to organise a date in August for the **annual 'push test' of gravestones** in the churchyard and inform the Parish Church accordingly.

**Action: Clerk**

### **NORTON WOOD UPDATE**

The Clerk was asked to invite Mr Will Wilkinson of Charlton Abbots Forestry to the next meeting of the Committee to update councillors on the progress of the **5 year maintenance plan for Norton Wood**. It was agreed to invite Mrs Marilyn Miles of the Norton Wood Orchard Group also to attend the meeting and if possible to provide a short written report on the group's activities.

**Action: Clerk**

The Clerk confirmed that she was in the process of obtaining advice and quotes from Charlton Abbots Forestry for possible **adaptations to the wooden field gate to Norton Wood** adjacent to Norton Ridge in order to control access by motorised vehicles. It was noted that NTC's dog fouling policy stipulated that dogs should be kept on leads in the wood.

The Clerk reported that she had been contacted by a resident of Colliers Wood complaining that bindweed from the perimeter of Norton Wood had encroached over the fence into her garden and requesting that NTC remove it. Councillors appreciated that bindweed was a nuisance but agreed that as the bindweed did not present a hazard this would not be an appropriate use of Council resources and the Clerk was asked to respond accordingly.

The Clerk reported that she had received a query about recent tree maintenance work carried out by Charlton Abbots Forestry from a resident of Windy Ridge whose garden bordered the wood. She would forward this to Charlton Abbots.

**Action: Clerk**

### **ARRANGEMENTS FOR CHRISTMAS LIGHTS**

The Chair reported that Cllr S Robinson planned to give a progress report on the Christmas lights to the September Committee meeting.

### **UPDATE ON PROVISION OF ADDITIONAL LITTER AND DOG WASTE BINS**

The Clerk reported that she had been informed by Jenni Parsons SDC that owing to budget restrictions SDC had put a blanket stop on the provision of any further dog waste bins or additional emptying of existing bins in the district in the current financial year, and would be unable to repair any dog waste bins which had been subject to vandalism. Ms Parsons had provided a list of existing dog waste bins in the parish. Additional emptying of bins might be considered if requested and funded by parish councils

Members expressed concern at SDC's policy as the general litter bin outside the Arkell Centre frequently overflowed with dog waste, creating a potential health hazard. The Clerk

reported that Ms Parsons had suggested that NTC consider purchasing a larger floor-mounted general waste bin at this location but councillors were uncertain that there would be sufficient space at this location. After discussion, the Clerk was **asked to seek costings for a dog waste bin and an additional litter bin** and to discuss with the Dog Warden the possibility of SDC emptying these bins.

**Action: Clerk**

### **UPDATE ON TOWN INFORMATION CENTRE (TIC)**

It was agreed that the TIC manager, Mrs Carole de Lacroix, be invited to attend a future meeting of the Committee to provide an update on its activities.

The Clerk reported that she had received notice that the TIC building had been re-assessed for business rates and had been re-classified as a shop, with a consequent sharp increase in the annual rate payable. The Clerk had contacted the District Valuer and had learned that the assessors had arrived to inspect the premises when the TIC was closed despite an arrangement that the Clerk would be invited to attend their visit. Their assessment had been based on looking through the window. Since the TIC was clearly not a shop, the Clerk would appeal against the assessment.

The Clerk reported that the Town Groundsman had cleared some brambles growing on the bank immediately behind the TIC and would continue to do this. She was researching ownership of the bank and had requested a copy of the definitive boundary plan from GCC.

### **TOWN GARDENING**

The Chair reported that she had been impressed with the **new planting in the Mortimer Garden and the new planters in Market Street** and extended her thanks to the volunteers and sponsors. The Clerk agreed to seek an update from Cllr S Robinson, who had been liaising with Ruskin Mill regarding its adopted beds around the Clock Tower, since it appeared that they were not currently being maintained.

**Action: Clerk**

### **UPDATE ON BUNTING HILL REGENERATION**

The Clerk reported that a small group of volunteers, led by Ros John, were continuing their excellent regeneration work at Bunting Hill. Volunteers from The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) continued to provide three days' labour each year at the location.

### **GRANT OF LICENCE FOR THE OLD COTTAGE, SHORTWOOD**

The Clerk reported that **the licence for the residents of the Old Cottage for access across Council land** had been agreed and signed. Cllr Kay reported that he had noted builders' vehicles being parked on Shortwood Green during recent building works to the property and expressed the hope that this practice would cease.

### **LAND AT WALKLEY WOOD – LICENCE FOR USE OF GARDEN LAND.**

The Clerk advised that the area in question should be inspected by NTC prior to the licence being finalised. Cllr Reed agreed to undertake an inspection with the Clerk.

**ACTION: Cllr Reed and Clerk**

### **TELEPHONE BOX AT HOMEFIELD, SHORTWOOD**

The Clerk had received a letter from Homefield Residents' Association stating that the residents were interested in 'adopting' the telephone box in Homefield, Shortwood, which was still operational but appeared to be rarely used, and refurbishing it for use as a small library.

Councillors discussed the request. Whilst appreciating that the telephone box was rarely used, they felt that it was important for it to remain operational to enable emergency calls to be made as it was adjacent to a children's play area. It would therefore be inappropriate for use as a small library. The Clerk was asked to respond accordingly. It was suggested

that the residents might still wish to clean and paint the box, and the Clerk was asked to write to inform BT that the telephone box was in a dilapidated state and to enquire if BT would be happy for this type of work to be carried out by volunteers.

**Action: Clerk**

**UPDATE ON LIME TREE A FOREST GREEN GREEN**

The Clerk reminded councillors that, following a complaint by a local resident, NTC had obtained a report several months ago on the condition of a lime tree on Forest Green green which had indicated that the tree did not present a hazard to the resident's property and that pruning was not a viable option. NTC had obtained a quotation for the tree's removal but had decided not to proceed. The resident had been informed accordingly and sent a copy of the report and his family had recently contacted the Council again to request its removal. The Mayor planned to meet with the family to discuss the situation. In response to a question, the Clerk confirmed that as far as she was aware the green was common land.

After discussion, it was agreed to recommend to Council that NTC would have no objection to the lime tree being removed at the householder's expense.

**QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

Cllr Thorpe reminded members that Stroud Valleys Project had previously offered free native tree saplings to the Council. She wondered whether this offer should be revisited. Councillors could not think of any suitable planting locations at the present time but it was agreed that the matter be kept under review.

Cllr Kay proposed that the Environment Committee be given delegated authority to spend up to £5000 on any item which lay within the Committee's budget headings. It was agreed that this should be recommended to Council.

.....  
Chair

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Date

**RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS FOR RATIFICATION BY FULL COUNCIL**

- RECOMMENDED      that the precise terms of reference of the Market Street Improvements Working Party be drafted for approval by Council as soon as practicable and that Cllr Kelly be asked to keep the Environment Committee updated on the Working Party's progress.
  
- RECOMMENDED      that NTC would raise no objection to the lime tree on common Land at Forest Green green being removed by the owner of the neighbouring property at his own expense.
  
- RECOMMENDED      that the Environment Committee be given delegated authority to spend up to £5000 on any item which lay within the Committee's budget headings.

