

**MINUTES
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Monday 29 September 2014

Councillor Mike Hope (Chair)

Councillor Gary Gregory	Councillor Lynda Pearson
Councillor Patricia Andrews	Councillor Stephen Poole
Councillor Sandra Barnes	Councillor Colin Powell
Councillor Paul Feeney	Councillor Suzanne Prew-Smith
Councillor Cheryl Hewlett	
Councillor Paul Hughes	Councillor John Truscott

Apologies for absence:

Officers in Attendance: J Ansell, S Bray and H Lee

Guests in Attendance P Barnes and D Wakelin

53 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS.

None received.

54 TO APPROVE, AS A CORRECT RECORD, THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 JULY 2014.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the above meeting, having been circulated, be approved as a correct record.

55 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS.

None received.

56 2014/15 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME REPORT 2013/14

1. Rolling Programme of Portfolio Holder Holding to Account

The chair welcomed Councillor Barnes, Portfolio Holder, Environment, and David Wakelin, Corporate Director, who had been invited to respond to questions on the following areas of the Environment Portfolio:

Maintenance and Development of the public realm, including parks, open spaces, cemeteries and allotments, with specific reference to the Gedling Country Park.

Advance questions received from Members:

1. An overview and update on the Gedling Country Park.
2. What protection/bye laws are to be established to curb such things as: Scrambles and Quad Bikes?
3. Environmentally, what plans are in place to foster and protect the future development of wild life?
4. Re: Ley St Field in Netherfield: I understand that the land originally belonged to Notts. County Council Education Department however Gedling BC had installed a football pitch and changing facility. There has been a notice on the site stating that, under an agreement, Gedling Borough Council is taking over responsibility for the field. The area is deteriorating and the changing facility is locked and unavailable for general use – could the Portfolio Holder provide an update on future plans for this site?
5. Re: Conway Road Pavilion, tennis courts and golf facility: The tennis courts and golf course are deteriorating and under used – could the Portfolio Holder give details of future intentions for the site?
6. What criteria are used to determine whether grass is cut or left to grow in parks and open spaces? There has been some concern that grass has been left to grow near to children's play areas thereby encouraging misuse by irresponsible dog owners.
7. Is any consultation undertaken with nearby local residents before grassed areas are left to grow?
8. Have any other options been considered by the Council with regard to saving money on maintaining small pieces of open land in residential areas such as selling of land; offering 'licences to occupy' or undertaking 'informal agreements to cultivate' (as used in recent years by the County Council's Highway Authority)?

Response of Portfolio Holder and Corporate Director:

Before answering specific questions raised by Scrutiny the Corporate Director updated Members on the progress of the Gedling Country Park with a presentation which answered some of the questions raised by Members.

- Stage 1 which consisted of remediation work on the drainage system and works to ensure the safety of the public were signed off on the 10 September 2014.
- Notts. County Council has assisted in the project management and their help and expertise has been invaluable.
- There have been some issues around public access expectations but currently this is a working site and warning notices have been erected. Safety is less of an issue now that the paths have been completed. All paths are DDA compliant. There will be no perimeter fence but where access issues have been a problem drainage ditches have been re-established which stop vehicles accessing the park from non - designated entrances.
- Stage 2 has now commenced and construction of the Solar Panel Farm will begin at the end of September and should be completed by December.
- To date the work has been financed by HCA and Gedling Homes, the authority does have a budget for completion of the project but thus far it has not been necessary to use. Section 106 money has been allocated for the project.
- A Friends of Gedling Country Park group has been formed and it is envisaged that in the future they will have a major role in the running of the park assisting with marketing, education, funding in addition to more practical issues like patrolling and maintenance. This group will be able to access funding streams to enhance the facilities in the Park that are not available to the authority.
- There will be space for 40 cars on Lambley Lane and a similar number on Spring Lane. This is will be reviewed to ensure it is sufficient.
- A Landscape and Wildlife Management Plan has been completed by EMEC Ecologists and a five year management plan is currently being developed.
- The park will be a centre for recreation and education for the community with many activities. Currently work is being undertaken with APSE to establish a community ranger's course for volunteer rangers, two schools have already visited the site and the educational potential of the facility will be developed.
- A play area located near the car park will be provided when funding is identified.
- The current Public Liability Insurance is sufficient to cover for any issues that arise.
- The lagoons will not be fenced off but warning signs and life jackets will be visible.
- When funding can be identified it is projected that a visitors' centre will to be built on the park.
- Sufficient signage and dog and litter bins will be located around the park.
- It is considered that the park will become self-policing and the activities of the Friends of Gedling Park may minimise the need

for bye laws to be passed to stop the use of quad bikes etc. This will be kept under review.

The Portfolio Holder and the Corporate Director had answered in the presentation the three specific questions related to the Country Park and responded to the remaining questions raised by Scrutiny as follows:

Question 4

Response: Corporate Director

- **Ley St Field.** This is a well utilised facility and the pitches and the changing rooms are in high demand from local football teams.
- The County Council is currently undertaking a comprehensive review of its play areas strategy. Once the findings from this are reported the future of the facility will become clearer.

Question 5

Response: Corporate Director

- **Conway Road** During the summer months the Bowling Green is used and maintained in good condition by two bowling clubs. There had been complaints about football being played on the bowling green which is causing problems for the bowls club. It was agreed that this would be looked into.
- The tennis courts are well used but have been subjected to some vandalism and to resolve this used of solid netting is being considered. The 'pitch and putt' course that was formally on the site has become overgrown.
- Members wanted to know if this could be reinstated and it was agreed that this would be considered.

Question 6, 7, 8

Response Portfolio Holder

- Due to the high cost of cutting grass in parks and open spaces a decision was taken to reduce the number of cuts each year. As an alternative to grass cutting there has been a move, where suitable, to cut paths for walking and the plant the remaining areas with wild flowers. This year, this has in the main been 'Cosmos', which will have to be cut back after it has flowered, but in future years this should be a variety of wild flowers. There are issues where grassland is next to City Council land as they continue to cut theirs, and in future there may need to be liaison

between the two authorities in order to better synergise works to grassland.

- Consultation takes place through the local ward councillors and during the Gedling Conversation.
- Small areas of land which may be able to be used for small building plots or allotments would possibly be available for sale. Currently plots of this size attract fly tipping. Very small pieces of land that could possibly have some other system of maintenance need identifying and it was agreed that Members should speak to officers about any such small areas of land that they are aware of.

2. Council Plan 2014/2015: Overview Quarter 1 Performance

Stephen Bray, Corporate Director provided the following overview of Quarter 1 2014/2015 performance:

- It is very early in the year and, in the main, performance is positive.
- There are 10 red indicators and two amber. The amber indicators relate to attendance in leisure centres which is nearly on target and performance in recycling just off target.
- The target for Apprenticeships hasn't been met but this is due to young people obtaining temporary or permanent positions with the authority.
- Recorded crime and anti-social behaviour fell last year in comparison to other local authorities but this has now begun to rise.
- Sickness absence continues to be below target, although this has continued to improve. New measures to bring down the figure will take a full year to show an impact on the data. Another indicator which will run in parallel with the current indicator and track periods and frequency of sickness is currently being devised.

3. Future Programme of Portfolio Holder attendance

The Chair reminded Members of the attendance of Councillor Payne, Portfolio Holder, Public Protection and Communications at the next Overview and Scrutiny meeting and raised the importance of Members submitting questions in advance.

4) In depth Scrutiny updates

The Senior Members Services Officer updated Members on the progress of the current Scrutiny Reviews as follows:

4.1 Reducing unemployment in the Borough

No further meetings will be held; the final report and recommendations are pending.

4.2 Homelessness and hardship in the Borough

Nearing completion, no further evidence gathering meetings. The final report and recommendations are being developed.

4.3 Transport links to, and within Gedling Borough

The working group has scoped the review and has held two meetings.

Members were informed that the reports and recommendations of the completed reviews at 4.1 and 4.2 will be tabled at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 15th December.

Follow up on completed reviews

- **The Council's engagement with the voluntary sector**
- **Taxi Licensing**
- **Inclusion and Equalities** – to be presented at the December meeting.

RESOLVED to:

- i. Thank the Portfolio Holder and Corporate Director for their attendance
- ii. Request an update on Ley St Field when the County Council report is available
- iii. Receive information in due course about the possible reinstatement of the 'pitch and putt' course at Conway Road
- iv. Note the Q 4 2013/2014 additional information
- v. Request information about how the target for residual waste is devised
- vi. Receive information about the new sickness tracking indicator when it is implemented, and an update on

absence when the new measures have been in place a year

- vii. Note the updates received on the progress of the in depth Scrutiny Working Groups
- viii. Note the follow-up responses received in respect of the Council's Taxi Licensing and Engagement with the Voluntary Sector review
- ix. Request that the Portfolio Holder, Communications and Public Protection attend in nine months' time to update on the progress of the implementation of the topography test and what could possibly be done in future to improve on current procedures
- x. Receive an update on the progress of the agreed recommendations of the Inclusion and Equalities Review at the December meeting.

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ITEMS REFERRED TO THE CHAIR OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AS REQUIRED UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OR LAW

Members considered the standing report detailing items referred to the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny under the Constitution or Law as follows:

1. Items referred to the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee under Contract Standing orders and Standing orders for dealing with Land

- i. Notifications received where it has not been possible to obtain 3 quotations for a contract estimated to be between £10,000 and £50,000.**
 - Entry into a contract with Heineken UK for the provision of Bar Supplies for the supplies of Beer, Cider and Soft drinks for those Leisure Centres within the Borough that have bars, on the same terms as the previous contract, from 1st November to 31st January, with the option to extend for a maximum of one further month.
- ii. Notification of decision to dispose of land or property other than the sale of council houses to sitting tenants pursuant to the right to buy.**
 - Entry into an option agreement for the future sale of land at Florence Road, Gedling (the Land) to Maximus Projects Limited without using the tender process as defined in the Standing Orders for Dealings with Land.

2. Items referred to Scrutiny under the Budget and Policy Framework

- Addition of an item to the Forward Plan. The item related to the “Response to the Inspector’s report on the Aligned Core Strategy” and would be tabled for discussion at an additional meeting of Cabinet on Thursday 28 August 2014.

RESOLVED:

To note the information

58 ANY OTHER ITEM WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT.

None.

The meeting finished at 19.05 pm.

Signed by Chair:
Date: