

REPORT ON A MEETING OF THE POLICY, DEVELOPMENT, FINANCE AND STAFFING COMMITTEE HELD AT 7.00PM ON TUESDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2013 IN THE ASSEMBLY ROOMS, THORNE.

Present: Cllr. M.Houlbrook (Chair)

Cllrs. K Abell, C.Blackham, G Derx, R S Durant, S J Durant and R.Porter.

There were two members of the public present.

2391. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:

Cllr. J Blackham – other commitment

Cllr. A Farrand - illness.

Cllr. A Jones – illness.

Cllr. R Powell – illness.

Cllr. K Redmile – illness.

Non-attendance

The Clerk reported that Cllr. Redmile had requested an extension to the time permitted for non-attendance at Council meetings and had submitted a note from her Doctor. Councillors noted that Cllr. Redmile had not attended a Council meeting since September 11<sup>th</sup> 2012 and would be over the 6 month period as stated in the standing orders.

Resolved: That the apologies be accepted but that no extension for non-attendance be granted for Cllr. Redmile

2392. INTERESTS AND DECLARATIONS

None.

2393. ST LEGER HOMES

Jane Davies of St Leger Homes updated the Council on the new reforms coming into force in relation to Council and Private Tenants.

The Council thanked Ms. Davies for her informative presentation.

2394. MINUTES

i) Council

Consideration was given to signing the minutes of the Council meeting held on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2013, pages 4064–4071.

The Clerk informed Councillors that following the representation of youths at the last Council meeting football sessions had been organised at Trinity Academy which the Mayor had agreed to finance.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be signed.

2394. MATTERS RAISED BY THE PUBLIC

None.

2395. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

i) 13/00003/REF

Erection of 1 dwelling on 0.15 ha of land at 3 The Paddock, Bailey Lane, Kirton Lane, Thorne for Mr M. Chandler.

RESOLVED: No comment.

ii) 13/00140/FUL

Formation of first floor external stairway to rear of 26 Alexandra Street, Thorne for Mr B. Ahmed.

RESOLVED: No observations.

iii) 13/00136/FUL

Change of use of land for siting of mobile home for commercial letting at Moorends Hotel, 156 Marshland Road, Moorends for Mr J. McGuinness.

RESOLVED: No observations but requested that further information be obtained.

iv) 13/00176/FUL

Erection of new roof and formation of rooms in roofspace at 79A South End, Thorne for Mr J. Hinchliffe.

RESOLVED: No observations.

v) Extra planning application raised at the meeting – don't have the details – housing at South End

RESOLVED: No observations.

2396. ACCOUNTS PAYABLE

Consideration was given to the Accounts Payable to the Accounts Payable to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2011.

RESOLVED: That the accounts payable be noted.

2397. FINANCIAL REPORT

Consideration was given to the financial report to the end of month 9 which included a table showing the revised budget previously approved together with an updated forecast. The Clerk reported that the forecast outturn was similar to the previous month, and the overall budget remained reasonably on target.

The Clerk reported that Grants and Section 137, and allotments expenditure have slightly exceeded the current approved budget and proposed that the revised forecast is adopted as a revised budget.

### Precept

The Clerk reported that the precept proposal had been submitted to Doncaster MBC as agreed at Council including the "grant" element of £82,055 to cover the reduction in tax base caused by changes to Council tax benefit.

Some concerns have been raised that this grant element may be withdrawn in the future. This would have a major impact on the Council as an increase in the precept of 28% would be required merely to maintain expenditure at the current level. The Clerk reported that he has raised this with DMBC who have advised that they "have no intentions to penalise Parish Councils if this grant was removed and would endeavour to maintain current levels". Whilst this gives some reassurance at a local level, NALC and SLCC are lobbying government on the issue.

There is an expectation that a referendum requirement will be introduced by government to parallel the current arrangements in Principal Authorities. If this was introduced a referendum would be compulsory before an increase overall set figure could be introduced (for Principal Authorities the figure this year was 2%). In practice it acts as capping as the cost of a referendum, plus the need to introduce contingencies should it be lost makes the exercise difficult to justify.

### Financial Regulations

A query had been raised regarding the revised Financial Regulations that were approved in November regarding the role of Committees. The Regulations state that:

"Each Committee (if any) shall formulate and submit proposals to the Council in respect of revenue and capital costs for the following financial year not later than the end of November each year.

Detailed estimates of all income and expenditure for the year shall be prepared each year by the RFO.

The Council shall review the estimates not later than the end of January each year and shall fix the Precept to be levied for the ensuing financial year. The RFO shall supply each member with a copy of the approved estimates."

The Clerk said that in practice there is no need in the case of Thorne-Moorends Town Council to separate the budget process between Committees and Council, as all Councillors are Members of all Committees. My interpretation of these Regulations is that if a Committee doesn't propose a budget then it falls to Council to review the estimates (prepared by the Clerk) and set the precept.

These regulations are drawn from standard NALC documentation, and can be amended to suit the needs of each Council. Whilst I believe that the process has been within Standing Orders, I accept that there is an element of ambiguity, and I would propose removing the first paragraph above.

RESOLVED: That the Standing Orders be amended to remove the following paragraph:

"Each Committee (if any) shall formulate and submit proposals to the Council in respect of revenue and capital costs for the following financial year not **later than the end of November each year.**

## 2398. REVISED HALL CHARGES

At the last Council meeting Hall Charges for 2013-14 were agreed, subject to further consideration by the Community Buildings Sub Group. This has taken place, and an amended approach to Hall Charges is proposed. This report summarised the current issues, and made a number of recommendations

### Current letting arrangements

The majority of our users pay in accordance with the hire rates which are agreed annually by Council. However there are a number of individual arrangements that in the main are historic, inconsistent, and lack formal documentation. These fall into 3 categories:

- (i) Long term lease and hire arrangements.
- (ii) Individual discount rates previously agreed.
- (iii) Users where no charge has been agreed.

### Hall Hire Charges

The basis for current room hire charges has been in place for some time. They include the following principles:

- a. Minimum charge based on a 3 hour let – this takes into account that the basic costs to the Council in opening/ heating/cleaning etc is similar for a shorter time period. This seems to cause few problems as the majority of users require the buildings for at least 2 hours.
- b. Variable charges for different users – currently daytime Hall charges are :
  - £40 – Business/ Large Public Sector Organisation, or where admission is charged
  - £25 – Children's parties
  - £17 – Club Meetings, Discussion Groups, Voluntary Organisations not run as a business
- c. Higher rates for weekend use (except Parties)
- d. Annual adjustment of rates roughly in line with inflation

There are a number of factors that can be considered when reviewing current charges:

- a. Comparison rates – a review of charges in similar venues in Yorkshire had been undertaken. These ranged from £7.50 to £20 per hour for Community use. Most venues have a single rate without the variables in our charges. Where there is a Council/ private rate it tends to be slightly more than double the community rate. One Town Council charges £77 per hour for commercial users. Unsurprisingly they receive no bookings.

- b. Contribution to Council costs – this will vary from building to building. To use an example of the Community Centre we are currently “selling” c 25 hours per week. This fully recover costs this would give a charge of c £14.50 per hour. A similar exercise for the Winning Post (allowing for the rents identified above) gives a recovery cost of £27.50 per hour. These hourly rates would be lower if usage increased.
- c. Categories – the use of categories is sensible as it allows voluntary and community use to be explicitly supported by precept. There are, however, some grey areas – for example the Zumba classes formerly at the Assembly Rooms were being charged a community rate, but this has now developed into a business. In future constitutions should be checked to ensure that users are eligible for discounts.
- d. Demand – the peak demand for hire tends to be between 4pm and 9 pm, rather than weekends. Currently there is very little usage from the Business/ Large Public Sector Organisation etc.

Consideration – there are a number of changes that could be considered:

- 2. Charges for the Council/ Private Sector users – increases in these rates would have limited impact on overall income due to the low level of bookings of this type.
- 3. Standard rate – it would be best to set a standard rate, and then identify discounts for other users. A standard rate of £15 per hour (£20 at weekends) would seem in line with other similar buildings. Discounts could be say c30% for parties, and c60% for voluntary/ community groups. This would give rates of £45, £30 and £18 for the current weekday 3 hour letting period.
- 4. Standard booking time – there is no strong reason why lettings have to be for a minimum of 3 hours. A change to hourly rates would have little impact on income and may attract additional users. Lettings should include setting up time, so in most circumstances a minimum let would be 2 hours.
- 5. Peak and Off Peak – the weekend premium doesn't entirely make sense, but its loss would affect income. Daytime discounts should be trialled to encourage additional users.
- 6. Individual Letting Arrangements - All these should be reviewed to ensure consistency. As they are long-term agreements it is legitimate to consider discount, but all users should pay rent.
- 7. VAT at Coulman–bookings at Coulman Pavilion are liable to VAT, which is currently charged on top of the current hire charge. This could be charged gross to bring it in line with other centres.
- 8. Discounts–at the moment there is little daytime use of the building. The introduction of a temporary discount for new users before 4pm may encourage some new business.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. A revised charging system be introduced from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 based on a standard hourly rate and discounts (attached)

2. All existing individual letting arrangements should be reviewed by the Clerk to ensure consistency and reported back to Council. These should relate to standard rates/ discounts agreed by the Council.
3. The charge for use of Coulman Pavilion should be inclusive of VAT so they are in line with other buildings
4. A 20% discount for a 3 month period should be offered to new users who wish to hire the buildings on a regular basis before 4:00 pm.

#### 2399. LOCAL BUSINESS FORUM, CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND BUSINESS DIRECTORY

Councillors discussed how the Council would move forward with the Local Business Forum. It was proposed that events be held in Thorne and Moorends to discuss the issues and problems faced by local businesses, it was also suggested that local farmers and outlying businesses be invited to attend.

RESOLVED: that a meeting of the Neighbourhood Working Group be held on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2013 at 7.00pm.

Further that Cllrs. K. Abell, J. Blackham and C Blackham be members of the Working Group.

#### 2400. APPRENTICES

##### Background

1. The Council has agreed in principle to employ 2 Apprentices during 2013, one to support the Grounds maintenance team, and one to support the Office team. This would help enhance the current services, but also to allow the opportunity to train up young staff so they can replace other staff in the future. Provision has been made within the 2013-14 budget for the apprenticeships.
2. The principle behind apprentices is that it is work based learning supported by a training provider who will provide a structured course and qualification. This can take c 12-24 months. During this period the Council would need to decide whether they wish to convert the post into a permanent position, though the expectation is that they would be retained if they are satisfactory.
3. The Clerk reported that he had contacted the Skills Funding agency who had identified suppliers who would support the recruitment process and the training.
4. If the apprentice is under 19 the Council would receive a subsidy of £1,500 per apprentice, and training would be fully subsidised. There would be additional costs to the Council if a 19-25 year old was recruited. I would therefore recommend that the Council recruits apprentices who are under 19.
5. The national minimum wage for Apprentices is £2.65 per hour, but employers are a liberty to pay more. (Doncaster MBC currently pays the minimum rate which they describe as a "Training Allowance"). Minimum hours are 30 per week.

## Apprentices

6. The most suitable training courses for the 2 apprentices would be Work-based Horticulture – Parks, Gardens and Green Spaces, and Business Administration, both NVQ Level 3. I would see the roles as:
  - a. Parks Gardens and Green Spaces – this is seen as an opportunity to enhance the management of the Cemetery, but there would be opportunities on other sites particularly the Park.
  - b. Business Administration – working on the finance and administration systems of the Council. This additional support would allow time to progress issues such as putting Cemetery records into a computerised system. There would also be the opportunity to assist with project work.
7. On the basis of the minimum wage, the first year cost of an apprentice would be c £5,100 plus on costs. Allowing for the subsidy above and the potential for offering a slightly higher wage, a Year1 budget of c £10,000 would be reasonable. Provision has been made within the 2013-14 budget to cover this.

## Other Implications

8. The Parks Gardens and Green Spaces apprentice will need to be supervised by a member of the outdoor staff. This may justify a temporary pay adjustment which would need to be separately considered by the Council.
9. The Business Administration apprentice would be supervised by the Clerk. There would need to be a physical reorganisation of the office, and the purchase of some new equipment.

## Next Steps

10. The next steps will be to develop job descriptions, and to recruit the staff with a view to the new staff being in post early next financial year. To make progress I would recommend that this is delegated to the Clerk in consultation with the Chair of Policy and Resources and Leisure and Amenities Committees, who would also form the interview panel.

RESOLVED: that

1. The Council recruit 2 apprentices, one for Parks, Gardens and Open Spaces, and one for Business Administration
2. The detailed arrangements for this recruitment be delegated to the Clerk, in consultation with Chair of Policy and Resources and Leisure and Amenities Committees

## 2401. THORNE FAIR

The Clerk reported that he had received a request from Tuby's for Thorne Fair to be held from Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> June to Monday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2013 at Wyke Gate Park. The Fair would need access to the Park from Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> June and that there are no other commitments in the Park during this period.

RESOLVED: That consent be granted for the Fair to use Wyke Gate Park from 3<sup>rd</sup> June to 10<sup>th</sup> June 2013.

## 2402. MEETING DATES 2013-204

The proposed meeting schedule for 2013-14 was presented to the Council. This followed the standard meeting pattern (2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month) with the following exceptions:

- (i) There is no meeting in August.
- (ii) The September meeting is a week later than normal to avoid a holiday commitment of the Clerk
- (iii) The January meeting is later to allow preparation time after the Christmas break; there is therefore no February meeting.

The May meeting has to be a full Council to meet statutory requirements. The January meeting also has to be a full Council for precept purposes. Legally there needs to be at least 2 other Council meetings.

The Clerk reported that this gives a schedule of 10 formal meetings (4 Council and 3 of each Committee). A lot of detailed work is also being progressed by sub groups.

THORNE MOORENDS TOWN COUNCIL – MEETING SCHEDULE 2013-14

11th June	Planning and Amenities
9 <sup>th</sup> July	Policy and Resources
17th September	Council
8th October	Planning and Amenities
12th November	Council
10th December	Policy and Resources
28th January	Council (precept meeting)
11th March	Planning and Amenities
8th April	Policy and Resources
13th May	Annual Council
20th May	Annual Electors Meeting

RESOLVED: That the proposed meeting schedule be agreed.

## 2403. EVENTS AND FESTIVALS SUBGROUP

It was announced that two events were proposed for 2013 – a Sports Event to be held in August at Moorends Welfare Ground, and the Christmas Event in December. It was suggested that an event be held to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Queen's Coronation in July this year and that a sub-group containing the following Councillors be formed: Cllr. A. Farrand, S. Durant, R. Durant, G. Derx, C. Blackham, J. Porter, R. Powell and M. Houlbrook.

RESOLVED: That a meeting be held on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2013 at 8.00pm.

#### 2404. STANDING ORDER 58

Consideration was given to Standing Order 58 in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted.

RESOLVED: That Standing Order 58 be invoked to allow Councillors to consider confidential matters.

#### 2405. CCTV SYSTEM

At the January Council meeting the Clerk was asked to undertake a review of the effectiveness of the current CCTV system.

1. The CCTV system in Thorne and Moorends was largely installed in the late 1990's, though this partially replaced a previous system. It consists of 10 locations in Thorne, and 6 in Moorends.
2. The total cost of installation was in the order of £120,000. The annual cost to the Council is c£11,000 which covers DMBC management and maintenance costs, IT and electricity.
3. In Thorne there are 7 cameras covering the Town Centre, one in the Park, one next to the Canal Tavern and one at Wyke Gate Park. 3 of the Town Centre cameras are wall mounted; the remainder are on posts. There are 6 cameras in Moorends, all post mounted.
4. The information from the cameras is fed into Doncaster MBC's CCTV monitoring station. Whilst images are recorded they are only monitored on request, when there is an incident. There is a monitoring station for the Thorne cameras in the Assembly Rooms, but this is no longer used and the majority of equipment can be removed. There is a similar arrangement for Moorends at the Hedgerow Centre.
5. Whilst I do not monitor the cameras on a regular basis I am aware that certain cameras have been non-operational at times for lengthy periods.

#### Consultation

6. The Clerk reported that he had consulted DMBC and the Police with regard to the current systems and received the following responses:

#### DMBC CCTV

"All cameras offer good image clarity day & night.

The latest upgrade on the market would be to change all cameras to 360 degree Vision Technology Predator cameras, 36x zoom offering excellent images in low level light as low as 0.1 lux.

The quality of your current camera images show good clarity and are sufficient for prosecutions.

We do receive requests on a frequent basis to monitor situations and to review and download evidence where applicable."

#### POLICE

"Staff in CCTV room are always very helpful.

We have had periods last year where the CCTV has been down for lengthy periods of time for no apparent reason. This in itself is not too much of a problem but we were always getting conflicting reports of whether it was operational or not, and when it was out of order not being informed of that. I was told on one occasion it was due to the floods!

I have also had an example when I have asked if a theft of cycle was captured on CCTV, and told it was not directly by CCTV operators. A few weeks later following the complainant making his own enquiries been told that there was footage that had been burnt to disc for him to collect, and to give to the Police. (the crime was re-opened, and this was then circulated to no gain)

The other issue for me is that the operators are aware of the lack of lighting to obtain good footage, or the incorrect placing of light. For example the CCTV camera looking into the memorial park is useless as it was always obscured by the glare of a flood light on the side of the band stand.

The cameras can also be seen rotating by kids which means they can move around freely knowing they cannot be caught on camera. Hide camera heads would be better (inside a sphere).

The system could be better, but it is better than nothing.

We have used the CCTV in Thorne in recent times to monitor youth nuisance in Finkle Street. Footage has been obtained which we have used to identify culprits via Thorne Academy etc. giving names to go with faces etc. Public order issues in the Market Place have also been captured in the past, however this is historical evidence, I cannot recall anything being done with the cameras recently."

### Observations

7. I have a number of observations.
  - (i) The comments of the police would imply that they are currently making limited use of the current system, and as such it does not seem to represent value for money.
  - (ii) Current deficiencies of the scheme have also been identified by the police, notably the amount of "down" time, and the ability to hide.
  - (iii) The cameras are only monitored by the CCTV team if they are informed of an incident. In other cases it would be luck if useful images were captured.
  - (iv) The system would benefit from upgrading.
  - (v) CCTV systems can have a deterrent effect, even when they are not being extensively used.
  - (vi) The removal of any cameras may be viewed negatively by the community and businesses.
8. There are 3 broad options for the future of this system:
  - (i) Retain and upgrade the system. There would be a need to identify funds to achieve this.

(ii) Reduce the system and upgrade. Again resources would need to be found to upgrade, but there would be some revenue saving.

(iii) Remove the system – achieving a revenue saving.

9. There would be a cost with removing any of the cameras, as the camera posts are substantial structures.

10. My view is that it would be sensible to consider a reduction in the current system to more effectively target resources, but that a consultation exercise should be undertaken before any final decision is taken.

RESOLVED that:

The Clerk undertakes a consultation exercise on the future of the CCTV system in Thorne and Moorends and reports back to a future meeting.

End of meeting