

LOUGHTON TOWN COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Wednesday 11 April 2018 at 7.45pm at Loughton Library & Town Hall.

Present

Councillors: C C Pond (in the Chair)
P Beales T Cochrane C Davies
T Owen C P Pond
D Wixley (as substitute for Cllr Pewsey)

Officers: E K Walsh (Town Clerk)
P Hoy (Services Manager)

EH80 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Pewsey. The Town Clerk reported that Cllr Wixley had been nominated as Cllr Pewsey's substitute for this meeting.

EH81 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

EH82 Confirmation of Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2017 were CONFIRMED as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

EH83 Public Representations

None were received.

EH84 Matters for Report

84.1 Willingale Road Allotments

84.1.1 Status report – April 2018:

The Committee NOTED the status report for the period up to April 2018 and that the Community Pay Back team had been working to clear overgrown plots at the allotments on five days during April, May and June.

Consideration was being given to changing the entrance padlocks for this site to help prevent unauthorised entry. The cost to provide the new padlocks and keys for existing tenants was estimated to be in the region of £1,000. An underspend in the budget for 2017/18 would be transferred to earmarked reserves to cover this expenditure.

Mrs Bryce was thanked for her report.

84.1.2 Best Allotment 2018 – Min no EH66.1.2

The Committee NOTED that arrangements for this annual award scheme held in July were in hand and that a suitable judge was being sought.

It was also proposed that the new Loughton Horticultural Show be held in The Murray Hall on Saturday 1 September 2018, with free

entry to the public from 2pm – 4pm. Classes would include fruit, vegetable, flower arrangements, cakes, jams and preserves.

The Committee CONFIRMED that:

- i. exhibitors in the horticultural show should pay a nominal entry fee of 20p per class (only 1 entry per class);
- ii. certificates would be presented to the class winners; and
- iii. the presentations to the Best Allotment award winners would take place during the show.

The terms and conditions and judging arrangements were to be finalised with representatives from the three allotments sites. Sponsorship was also to be sought.

84.2 Heritage Plaques – Min no EH57.3

The Committee NOTED that arrangements for the supply and installation of a plaque to commemorate the Oriolet Hospital and its chief, Josiah Oldfield, on a property in Staples Road were being finalised.

Cllr C C Pond declared a non-pecuniary interest in the following item as a member of Essex County Council.

84.3 Bus Services – Min no EH57.4

The Chairman provided a general update on bus services including service no 87 that visited the Epping Forest Shopping Park in Langston Road.

84.4 Bus Shelters – Min no EH57.6

The Committee NOTED that officers were endeavouring to resolve issues that had delayed the installation of the new bus shelter in Traps Hill.

84.5 Community Speedwatch – Min no EH57.9

It was reported that The Safer Essex Roads Partnership (SERP) and local police had continued to undertake speed and motorists checks in the district. Cllr Wixley advised that the SERP were to be invited to address the Larger Local Councils Forum in Essex to provide an opportunity to question them on their work.

84.6 Local List – Min no EH74.7

The Committee thanked the Conservation Officer at EFDC who had offered to include the former Brook School site gates in Roding Road on her list of buildings/structures to be added to the Local List ready for when it was next updated. The Town Clerk was asked to enquire whether the Officer had any other Loughton properties on her provisional list.

Members were invited to bring forward any new suggestions for buildings or structures worthy of inclusion in the Local List.

84.7 Heritage Open Days

The Committee NOTED that arrangements were in hand for the 2018 events in Loughton which would include a classic car rally on Sunday 9 September.

84.8 Christmas Windows Competition 2017

The Committee thanked Mrs Paris for her report.

84.9 Community Tree Strategy

The Committee NOTED that the Services Manager was in contact with a representative from the online Mark II Curio project to map special and favourite trees.

84.10 Flower Baskets

The Committee NOTED that an order for the summer flower baskets in The Broadway, High Road and Old Station Road had been placed with PHS Greenleaf at a net cost of £6,988.80. The displays should be installed by the end of May.

84.11 Light up a Life

The Committee NOTED that the 2018 ceremony, to be held in partnership with St Clare Hospice, had been arranged for Saturday 1 December 2018.

84.12 Local Highways Panel

The Chairman provided an update at the meeting and confirmed that junction protection schemes by means of yellow lining had been deemed to be outside the Panel's remit.

EH85 Financial Position

The Committee NOTED the report.

EH86 Christmas Lighting

The Committee discussed options for a seasonal lighting scheme in the shopping centres for December 2018.

The following preferences were expressed and the final decision delegated to the Town Clerk and Services Manager in discussion with the Chairman and Vice Chairman so that the costs could be negotiated on a three-year contract:

- i. To wrap up to 49 lamp columns with nets of at least 200 LED lights;
- ii. To install coloured motives on a number of columns to create a feature in the High Road and The Broadway;
- iii. To install a larger 5m display panel above Brickclamps Path in The Broadway.
- iv. To continue to light the large Lime tree on Kings Green and the Horse Chestnut by Standard Green; and
- v. To consider the re-use of the miniature pre-lit artificial Christmas trees on columns in Old Station Road.
- vi. To allow for a budget of £15,000 for 2018/19 and the two following years to enable a three-year contract to be finalised.

EH87 Loughton Cemetery

The detailed report on plans to implement a memorial safety testing exercise later this year was NOTED. The Committee appreciated that whilst this was a highly sensitive issue for the public the Council's responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Occupiers Liability Act 1957 to assess and manage the risks from the memorials must be addressed.

The Committee AGREED the following policy based on the experiences of other burial authorities and the latest advice from the Ministry of Justice and the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Managers:

MEMORIAL SAFETY POLICY

Introduction

Since Loughton Cemetery opened for burials in 1888, memorials have been erected on graves as a permanent reminder of those buried within. It is often wrongly assumed that memorials are permanent structures, installed to the highest standards, which will last forever without any need for repair.

Sadly, this assumption has cost the lives of eight people nationally in recent years, most of whom have been children, and there have been countless accidents ranging from bruising to severe crush injuries and bone breakages. Local authorities have a responsibility to tackle the issue of neglect and in some cases poor workmanship.

The memorials do not belong to the Council; they remain the property of the Deed Holder to the Exclusive Rights of Burial or their successors in title.

Responsibilities

The following parties have responsibility for memorial safety in Loughton Cemetery:

- **The Council** has health and safety responsibilities to its employees, contractors and visitors.
- **Monumental masons** have the responsibility to work in accordance with the Council's conditions and specifications for memorials as laid down in the Cemetery's Rules.
- **An owner**, the Deed holder or successor in title, of a memorial has the responsibility to maintain it so as not to present a hazard.

Communication – Notice of Intent

To raise awareness and reduce the potential for adverse publicity and public distress, prior to any memorial inspection, the Council will take reasonable steps to inform grave owners, deed owners or successors in title, and members of the public, of the intention to inspect memorials and remove the danger from unsafe memorials.

This will involve:

- giving advance general notice in a local newspaper at least three months in advance of any inspection regime commencing;
- making further media announcements giving details of the methodology at least one month prior to commencement of any inspection;
- publishing details of the assessment and methodology on the Council's website and in the Council's quarterly newsletter 'Think Loughton';
- placing public notices in prominent locations in the cemetery and on noticeboards around the town; and
- informing all our regular funeral directors and stonemasons.

Memorial Inspection Procedure

1. Memorial safety inspections will be carried out by a specialist operative appointed by Loughton Town Council.
2. If required, a Faculty Notice will be obtained for consecrated areas of the Cemetery. This can be obtained from the Chelmsford Diocese. NB: a faculty is not necessary when the process of memorial testing is to be carried out by hand.
3. Assessment:

- a visual inspection of each memorial will be followed by
- a safety assessment to test whether memorials can withstand a reasonable hand force. This force has been arrived at scientifically and replicates the force of a person falling, pushing or pulling against a memorial.

Initial visual warning signs of memorial instability are as follows:

- Movement 5 degrees from vertical
- Cracks in headstone or base
- Movement if rocked
- Ground settlement
- Waterlogged ground
- Missing parts

4. At the completion of the testing of each memorial, the operative will identify memorials in one of the two following categories and record the results:
 - Category 1 – requires immediate attention to make safe.
 - Category 2 – stable and not dangerous in any way and to be reassessed in five years.

For Category 1 memorials, in line with the available official guidance from the Local Government Ombudsman and the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Managers, the options for **remedial action** are as follows:

- a) Braced with a stake and banded to provide support. This will be the primary method of making safe.
- b) Carefully laid flat within the grave space with the inscription visible. This method is considered to be a last resort and will only be used where the danger is acute and immediate and there is no other way of making safe.
- c) Dismantled to remove the danger (larger memorials, tiered crosses, obelisks etc). This method is also considered to be a last resort and will only be used when unavoidable.
- d) Any memorial found to be unsafe is to have a warning notice attached explaining the situation and giving contact details for further advice.
- e) An appropriate officer of the Council will determine in discussion with the operative which of the above options will be used to make the memorial safe.

Notification, Repair and Re-fixing

Where a memorial has been identified as being unsafe and action taken to remove the immediate danger, the following action will be taken:

- A warning notice will be displayed and attached to any memorial that has been assessed as dangerous. This notice will explain the situation and offer advice and contact details for further information.
- The Burial Clerk will endeavor to contact the owner of the memorial at the last known address**.
- Detailed lists of failed memorials will be published on the Council's website and available for viewing at the Town Council Offices in Loughton Library and Town Hall.

**Where the owner cannot be traced the Council will be asked to consider whether the memorial warrants the Council undertaking the repairs and placing a charge on the grave

record such that when an owner comes forward a reimbursement of these costs may be requested.

Memorial Owners

Loughton Town Council recognises that the assessment process may be upsetting for members of the public and regrets any distress that it may cause. However, it is better that the memorial is assessed rather than be left to pose a potential danger to other people.

If a memorial has to be made safe at the time of the inspection, Deed owners can choose to either:

- **Take no further action;** if a stake has been used to support the memorial it is considered to be safe. The stake may be replaced to re-stabilise the memorial during any further assessment in the next five-yearly round of assessments to stabilise it.
If the memorial has been laid flat, this action will have been taken only as a last resort. Once a memorial has been laid flat it is considered to be safe; or
- **Have the memorial repaired;** Deed owners will need to arrange the necessary remedial work with a memorial mason, for which the mason is likely to charge a fee. These memorial masons must undertake the repair up to a minimum standard as recommended by NAMM or equivalent. Repairs can only take place after a Memorial Application form has been authorised by Loughton Town Council – there is no fee for this authorisation. No attempt should be made to repair or remove any memorial except by a properly qualified memorial mason.

Informal visual inspections will continue to be carried out by council staff during their normal working routines i.e. locally to where graves are being dug and grounds maintenance operations are taking place; should any memorials fail these random visual tests the employee will report their findings to the Burial Clerk.

Information

Any concerns or questions about the memorial assessment process should be referred to the Burial Clerk by writing to Loughton Town Council, Loughton Library and Town Hall, Traps Hill Loughton, IG10 1HD or by email to contact@loughton-tc.gov.uk, telephone 020 8508 4200.

EH88 Environmental Issues

No issues were raised at this meeting.

EH89 Future Work of the Committee

No items were raised for future discussion.

Signed:
Date: 20 June 2018