

MINUTES

Committee: Amenities Committee
Date: Monday, 02 September 2024
Time: 7:00 pm
Venue: Younghayes Centre, 169 Younghayes Road EX5 7DR

Present

Cllr Kim Bloxham (Chair)
Cllr Les Bayliss
Cllr Kevin Blakey
Cllr Ray Bloxham
Cllr Vincent Wilton (Vice Chair)

Also Present

Andrew Chapman-New, Cranbrook Town Council
Alexandra Robinson, Cranbrook Town Council

A/24/50 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received on behalf of Cllrs Colin Buchan and Lisa Goudie.

A/24/51 DECLARATION OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATION

No interests were declared or dispensations granted.

A/24/52 MINUTES

It was proposed by Cllr Les Bayliss seconded by Cllr Ray Bloxham and **resolved** to accept and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2024 as a correct record.

A/24/53 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No Members of the public were in attendance.

A/24/54 AMENITIES MONITORING REPORT

The Committee reviewed the Amenities Monitoring Report and requested that the Ranger provided an update on the development of the Nature Reserve to the next meeting of the Committee. Cllr Ray Bloxham noted the receipt of the Habitat Management Plan from Devon Wildlife Consultants and suggested that it be considered in conjunction with the Country Park and Hedgerow Management Plans.

Following discussion, it was proposed by Cllr Ray Bloxham, seconded by Cllr Vincent Wilton and resolved that

1. the Amenities Monitoring Report be noted and
2. the Country Park Management Plan Working Group bring forward an update report to the next Committee meeting.

A/24/55 ANNUAL RoSPA PLAY PARK INSPECTIONS

The Committee noted the Annual RoSPA Play Park Inspection Reports for:
Crannaford, Hayes Square, Northwood Acres, Platinum and St Martin's Play Areas.

The Chairman requested that an update be provided to the Committee, to confirm that all items raised within the Annual Inspection Reports had been remediated and actioned.

A//24/56 PLAY STRATEGY WORKING GROUP

The Chairman reminded Members that the Committee had appointed a Play Strategy Working Group to investigate the wider considerations of play park maintenance at its meeting on 8th April 2024. The working group had met and brought forward its covering report and draft strategy following its investigations.

The Working Group considered the framework by which the Council could manage the maintenance of its Play Parks and early on it was determined that it was necessary to develop a Strategy that would cover the aims and objectives for play area provision in the town together with a Risk Strategy that aligned with the Council's existing Risk Management incorporating the maintenance requirements. Together these elements would enable the Council to manage existing play parks and those brought forward under future development.

The Committee discussed two aspects raised by the working group seeking a steer from the Members on the maintenance of gates and management of graffiti. Members considered the costly maintenance of self-closing gates and welcomed the introduction of gravity hinged gates as and when gates failed and needed replacement. Members expressed concern at the increase in graffiti and considered where and when it should be cleaned or over-sprayed. Members of the working group welcomed the suggestions from the Committee and would take into consideration at the next meeting of the Play Strategy Working Group.

Following a lengthy discussion, it was proposed by Cllr Vincent Wilton seconded by Cllr Ray Bloxham and **resolved** to

1. Note the update report from the Working Group.
2. Agree in principle to the Council's Proposed Play Strategy and Risk Assessment.
3. Inform East Devon District Council that the Town Council would welcome the District Authority's capital funding support for the refurbishment of St Martin's Play Park as part of the 'flagship' provision in each town in East Devon, on the understanding that the Town Council will manage the procurement, installation and delivery. Once installed the Town Council would be responsible for ownership and future maintenance.
4. Agree the Working Group's recommendation for the treatment of access gates in the Council's play parks.
5. Recommend an increase in budget for Play Park Maintenance for year 2025-26 subject to consideration of wider financial constraints for the Council as part of the Council's annual review in the autumn 2024.
6. Approve the continuation of the Play Strategy Working Group as needed.

A//24/57 PUBLIC OPEN SPACE – ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR REPORT

The Chairman referred to the report which highlighted the increased antisocial behaviour and consequential damage to equipment in the town's play areas and wider public open space. The report reflected the impact on the Council's resources and deployment of its staff to remediate and repair damage. Members expressed concern on the increasing demand for limited resources and the impact such behaviour had on the town.

Following discussion, it was proposed by Cllr Ray Bloxham seconded by Cllr Vincent Wilton and **resolved** to

1. To note the report.
2. Uphold a zero tolerance to all acts of vandalism, ensure all incidents are reported to the police, seek compensation/consequences if offenders are identified.
3. Raise progress of Skatepark Ambassadors with representatives from the Education Campus at the next meeting of the Community Safety Group.
4. Monitor staff capacity to react to incidents of vandalism and antisocial behaviour.

A//24/58 CRANNAFORD PLAY AREA – PATH REMEDIATION

The Chairman reminded members that the Committee had previously considered path remediation at Crannaford Play Area in July 2023, approving the removal of the loose gravel and replacement of finer compacted gravel to prevent migration onto the wet pour safer surface. The Committee noted that following Officer training earlier in 2024 and a comment in the Annual RoSPA Inspection Report an issue with the boundary edge of the wet pour had been highlighted for remediation. The Committee considered the options for remediation of the boundary of the play area to the edge of the path.

Following discussion it was, it was proposed by Cllr Kevin Blakey seconded by Cllr Les Bayliss and **resolved** to

1. Approve the remediation of the interior section of perimeter footpath at Crannaford Play Park and
2. Recommend to Council to instruct the Council's Ground Maintenance and Landscaping Contractor to replace the existing perimeter path to with grass as per quotation for £5,368.00

A//24/59 RANGER REPORT

The Chairman referred members to the Ranger Report outlining the activities carried out since the last meeting and proposals for forthcoming activities.

Members requested confirmation that the grass cutting of Great Meadow had now been completed.

The Committee noted the Ranger report.

A//24/60 HAPPY TO CHAT BENCHES

The Chairman reminded members that the Committee had previously considered Happy to Chat Benches and welcomed the update from the Ranger. The Ranger advised that the scheme was intended to assist with loneliness within a community as a support mechanism for mental and physical health.

The Committee considered the project and whether existing benches could be incorporated into the scheme or whether to designate new benches for the purpose.

Following discussion, it was proposed by Cllr Vincent Wilton seconded by Cllr Kevin Blakey and **resolved** to

1. Agree in principle to the installation or designation of Happy to Chat Bench(es) in Cranbrook to help reduce loneliness and support resident mental health.
2. Agree to designate some existing benches as Happy to Chat Benches and install plaques to identify the bench as part of the scheme.
3. Agree to the installation of additional Happy to Chat Benches and for these to be benches made of a recycled composite, and complementary colour to provide a long-lasting product which promotes visual awareness of the scheme. The colour to be in keeping with the concept of the Country Park and in agreement with the Chairman, Deputy Clerk and Ranger.

A/24/61 MEMORIAL BENCHES

The Chairman noted that the Ranger had reviewed the Memorial Benches project for the town and had prepared a booking form for applicants. Members reviewed the scheme and following discussion, it was proposed by Cllr Vincent Wilton seconded by Cllr Kevin Blakey and **resolved** to

1. Note the report and
2. Defer a decision on the item to enable the Ranger to review the proposed form and bench specification and to report back.

A/24/62 VETERAN OAK

The Chairman invited the Ranger to update members on the work carried out to the Veteran Oak Tree, Tillhouse Road, Cranbrook. The Ranger advised that a future Static Load test would be advisable during the winter of 2026-27 and this may require additional works following the results of the test inspection. Members discussed the complexity of managing such a tree and the cost implications to manage it correctly.

Following discussion, it was proposed by Cllr Vincent Wilton seconded by Cllr Kevin Blakey and **resolved** to

1. Note the report
2. Agree in principle to perform another Static Load Test in 2026/27 as per the advice of the Principal Arboricultural Consultants.
3. Make provision in the 2026/27 Council Budget for the Static Load Test to be carried out with sufficient provision for any additional works to be undertaken in the following financial year 2027/28.

The meeting closed at 20:40

Signed

2 December 2024