

## **Clerk Report June 2020**

### **Business required by statute**

As government restrictions are still in place and people are not permitted to meet others outside of their family units, the Councils decision to defer the Co-Option remains in place at this time.

### **CCLA**

A transfer of £10,000 has been made to the CCLA account (the Councils savings account). Clerk is looking at changing the current account as the Council is currently charged a small amount for making e payments.

### **Amenities**

#### **Church Street Bus Shelter**

Property claim re bus shelter – An accident on Church Street on 16 May resulted in the small bus shelter being damaged. An insurance claim has been lodged with Zurich and is progressing. Due to the unstable nature of the structure and the high winds on the weekend of the 23<sup>rd</sup> May, a contractor was asked to remove the shelter.

The Council has been contacted from the owner of the property whose fence was damaged by the bus shelter when it fell. The resident was advised to contact Northumbria Police for a crime number in order that they can take the issue up with their insurer. The resident has asked the Council to consider relocating the bus shelter. The shelter is by the bus stop location which is a NCC Highways decision chosen for traffic and safety considerations and therefore it is not practical to move it unless the stop is changed. The request will be forwarded to Highways to see if a relocation of the bus stop is possible.

#### **Commonwealth war grave**

The Council were contacted by a person researching the Robson family, some of whom who were killed by an RAF Bomber accident in their family home at Togston. When locating the family grave, he brought to the attention of the Council that the gravel covering the plot had been swept up and left in a pile in the middle of the grave. He was also concerned regarding the deterioration of the lettering on the headstone. The Council made him aware that it was not the Council's responsibility to maintain and repair headstones but that of the descendants of the Robson family. As the children were listed as Civilian War Dead casualties, it was queried whether the Commonwealth Grave Commission would repair the headstone, however they are simply responsible for recording their names and not for any upkeep of their graves. The Clerk updated the researcher and will also contact the RAF to check if they have anything in place regarding renewing the lettering. If any Cllrs are aware of any descendants of the Robson family who may be attending the grave plot, their details would be appreciated.

## **NHS planting**

NCC asked the Town Council if they would like some themed NHS planting done around the town. It was agreed that as there are more than NHS workers who are key workers that we should also include rainbows. Therefore, in the Wynd bed there will be a rainbow and then in alternate beds at Dilston Terrace there will be rainbows and NHS logo. There have been many favourable comments already about this tribute.

## **Bonfires**

As reported in the last meeting, there had been some issues regarding bonfires at the West Allotments. Since then the AAHS has confirmed that the lighting of bonfires has been banned for the foreseeable future.

## **Social distancing at Cemeteries and Outdoor Areas**

In line with advice from government, the Town Council asked NCC to mark out social distancing lines at both cemeteries and to place signage here to remind people that they must stay 2 metres apart. We have also asked that additional signage is added to paddlers park to remind people to stay 2 metres apart.

The play areas remain closed although some people have ignored these signs. Staff are in the process of adding more signs to state "Do Not Use" on the items of fitness equipment as well as new entrance signs for the area.

## **Decals**

A contractor has quoted £200 to skin the ground on the decals which should bring them to the same level. This will make it easier to be painted.

## **Utilities – plus British gas contract**

I have been in touch with Northern Powergrid regarding the new electricity meter at the West Cemetery. They have resumed some works and are currently working through a vast backlog although will be on site in Amble on 3<sup>rd</sup> July.

Once these have been completed, our contractor will then attend site to reconnect and the fountain work will be arranged.

Quotes are still being requested for the tarmac work.

Contractors for the removal of the spoil have also been contacted again and is visiting before setting a date.

## **Utility Supplier**

The electricity costs at the West Cemetery had increased and this was due to the last contract ending and being placed on a variable rate.

A new contract has been arranged which should see the payments reduce.

## **Memorial Inspections**

Some sections of the cemetery had their memorial testing last year. This year, the Council have been asked if they would agree to the whole of both cemeteries done in the same year. This will have no implication on the SLA but will be more of a streamlined way to ensure that all are completed. Members are asked to agree.

### **Letter of support rotary**

A letter of support has been sent to the Amble and Warkworth Rotary towards their grant application that will enable them to carry out their work within a planting bed at the Memorial Gardens. There is no financial risk to the Town Council in supplying this letter. A copy of the letter has been sent with the agenda papers.

### **Remembrance Day**

It is hoped that by this time, further clarity will be known and some easement on social distancing may mean that Remembrance Day can go ahead. Ben Newall has been provisionally booked for that day.

### **Leazes Street Bin**

In order to assist the Harbour Chippy maintain social distancing for customers, ATC have asked that NCC relocate the bin to Broomhill Street.

The bin had previously been removed to allow the queue to form down Leazes Street. It was unclear if the bin now needs new fixtures or if it is broken. The fixings have been repaired and the bin moved to Broomhill Street.

### **Information Board**

The back of the Lawson Street Information Board in the memorial gardens is to be painted. Members need to decide what colour. Residents wished it to be lighter.

### **Paddlers Wall**

A quote for repointing a Paddlers Park wall has been received of £400. Members are asked to discuss.

### **Paddlers Water Feature**

Members are asked to agree to a Paddlers Water feature visit from fountain engineer man when he attends for his advice on its operation. It will be confirmed that the visit is free and without obligation.

### **Coal Truck Planters**

Framework and settings still intact but rusting and badly in need of TLC and painting.

Insert- non existent as wood has deteriorated over the last 5 years.

New Insert in Metal- Cllr Weir had been talking to Northern Structures hoping to get free new inserts from them as they could use their waste metal. However shutdown

occurred and now they are slowly starting up again, they have a lot of work backed up so cannot do the inserts. (Would still need something for lower sides). So a rethink was needed to get work done as they are very unsightly at present; as wood had lasted 5 years, decided try wood again.

Met with a contractor who will price for insert with treated wooden sides but a marine ply bottom with drainage holes- more expensive but lasts longer. Also wood sides for the lower half. (Once insert in place it can be lined with permeable membrane and a layer of gravel before the compost and plants) The top edge will have an edging over so the water does not run down the sides but over the top or into the compost/soil.

The truck itself and the rails/chain holding it in place badly need attention and repainting with black hammerite metal paint- the wood sides were and can again be painted black. Contractor will give a separate price for this work which is more labour intensive.

The quotation is £400 per truck for the 'woodwork' and £150 each for all the painting involved; a total of £1100 for 2 planters which it is believed will last for 4-5 years.

### **Planning**

The Planning Application relating to 5 North Street has been refused permission and will now be going to an appeal.

### **Signal Cottage**

Members are asked to agree to retrospective approval to a new street name of Lighthouse View for the site of the former signal cottage.

### **Agenda**

#### **NALC Letter of Support**

NALC has requested that all its member Councils submit a letter to their local MP regarding Coronavirus Support. Members agreed via email to send the letter to Anne Marie Trevelyan. Retrospective approval is needed.

#### **Amble Car Parks**

The Town Council were asked their opinion on the opening of the coastal car parks within Amble by NCC. The majority of members requested that the car parks remain closed however NCC later decided that they should now open these ones.

Members are asked for retrospective approval.

#### **Freedom of Information Request**

On 26 May 2020, the Council received a Freedom of Information request for all alleged complaints against a business in Amble. In line with the Council's Freedom of Information Policy, the Council has 20 working days in which to respond. The deadline for is 23 June 2020. If any members have further input to complaints made direct to them, please let me know. Members are asked to delegate to Clerk and Chair to respond.

## **PA Equipment Sale**

An offer of £300 was received and agreed for the sale of the PA equipment.

## **Office Covid 19 Adaptations Report**

The office is currently being reconfigured to make it safer for staff to return there. It is hoped this might be possible by early July at the latest. The cupboards have been moved to form an L shaped 'barrier' to prevent open access for all. These now require screens which are on order. Other cupboards have been moved to create safer distancing for staff. The contents are on tables waiting to be sorted into appropriate places.

Many items have been relocated to the West Cemetery storage area.

Currently the two part time staff share a workstation- this is now being discouraged wherever possible. The extra space made by the rearrangement of furniture has created sufficient room for a third workstation and computer. Members are asked to discuss this- see item below.

Some PPE such as visors and hand gel has been sourced although further items are still required.

A telephone system with 3 separate handsets is being investigated so that these are not shared; it will also need the capacity to transfer calls between staff members.

Many thanks to those who have assisted in this work so far.

## **Computers for staff**

When staff return to work, in order to minimise contact as recommended by Covid 19 regulations, it is proposed to purchase additional computerware so staff each individual equipment. It is hoped costs will be available by the meeting.

## **Coquet Mouth Commemoration**

The Coquet Mouth 80<sup>th</sup> Commemoration that was due to take place on 4<sup>th</sup> July is postponed. It is hoped that on the day a boat will take flowers to the site of the accident; it has been proposed that some flowers on behalf of the town are also sent. Members are asked to agree that should this be the case, flowers can be purchased up to a cost of ??.(amount to be agreed)

## **PA Equipment**

The Council needs to purchase a new system that better meets the needs of the type of small events the Council holds.

A completely waterproof system would be extremely expensive for the limited use by ATC. However at events the gazebo is erected and the smaller portable system would operate from under it.

Members are asked to agree to new portable PA speaker system costing under £400 with a 4 year warranty- details will be sent with the agenda papers.

## **2020 Garden and Civic Awards**

It is unlikely that the restrictions on social gatherings will be removed by mid July and also that a judge could be sourced. Even if there was a judge, unless from the town itself, it could be difficult to organise the actual judging whilst still observing social distancing guidelines. Previous attempts at asking people to nominate or submit photos have been very poorly supported. Members are therefore asked to consider the cancellation of this year's event.

## **Communications**

A business owner in Amble felt that they were not given the opportunity to discuss their licensing application that was listed on the May agenda, despite clearly being invited to address the Council during the meeting. The Clerk has responded to let them know that Public Question Time was their time to address the Council and that members of the public are not able to interrupt the meeting at any other time. They were made aware that the application had been discussed at the April meeting whereby it was agreed that should the application be resubmitted and be substantially the same, the Clerk was to resubmit the Council's response. They were also made aware that they could request copies of all objections from the licensing officer.

New signage has been placed on the memorial garden walls to remind the public about the by-law in place.

## **Paddlers Park Car Park**

NCC have asked for the Town Council's thoughts on whether to reopen the parking area of Paddlers Park. Members' thoughts were ascertained via email to be formally accepted at this meeting. It was agreed to leave it closed whilst play areas remain closed and this response has been sent to NCC.

## **Information Items**

### **CCTV**

The Clerk held a telephone meeting with Northumbria Police to discuss the CCTV system and to ask for an analysis of its usage and whether or not it had been a useful tool for them during the two years of operation. Although there was no specific data to support their comments, the Clerk was assured that the CCTV was a valuable asset to the force.

The system has been used for many offences including anti-social behaviour, public order, carrying offensive weapons and attempted murder.

I am currently waiting further information on downtime and repair timescales from Alncom.

### **Office Arrangements**

Staff are currently both working from home and also coming into the office to dispose of some items and to sort administration items into the cupboards.