

RECREATION & WORKS COMMITTEE

REPORT OF MEETING HELD ON 24TH APRIL 2002

PRESENT Councillor Mrs Bickley – in the Chair

Councillor J S Clark, Mrs Cruse, Mrs Haysom, J Johnston*,
M Johnston*, Mrs Mason, Palmer, Pickering, Walters, Whitfield

Mrs P Rendle – Clerk of the Council

Mr T Moore – North Somerset Council Parks and Amenities Manager
(in attendance for Minute Nos. 463 and 464)

*Councillors J Johnston and M Johnston joined the meeting during
Minute No. RW464

APOLOGIES Councillor Pasley

Prior to the meeting councillors met Mr Tony Moore, North Somerset Council Parks and Amenities Manager, at the Lake Grounds to view the children's play area and proposals for its enhancement.

RW462 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs Haysom

- Personal Interest in Minute No. RW463 – Enhancement of Children's Play Area at the Lake Grounds. Reason – Owner of neighbouring property. Councillor Mrs Haysom did not vote on this matter.

RW463 ENHANCEMENT OF CHILDRENS PLAY AREA AT THE LAKE GROUNDS

Councillor Mrs Bickley invited Mr Moore to explain the proposals for the enhancement of the play area.

Mr Moore confirmed that North Somerset Council had earmarked £40,000 to enhance the children's play area and it was hoped that the work could be completed in time for the school summer holidays. A landscape architect had been appointed and two alternative options had been drawn up. These were –

1. A small expansion of the existing play area footprint to include the surrounding grass bank, removal of some of the equipment and replacement with new items.
2. Increasing the footprint towards the boathouse and inclusion of the grass bank. This would provide a much larger dog free space and enable additional equipment, picnic tables and seating to be installed when finance allowed. The enlarged space would also allow the play equipment for toddlers and older children to be segregated and provide

an additional roly-poly play element with the incorporation of the grass bank. Additional planting would be provided to give shelter and shade.

During the ensuing discussion members generally welcomed the proposal to enhance the play area and commented in particular on

- The desirability of providing a larger fenced off dog-free area.
- The type of new equipment that could be provided and its location, in particular to include more opportunities for toddlers.
- Problems with drainage which would need to be sorted out.
- Provision and access for disabled users
- Retention of existing equipment, particularly the large swing
- Locating toddler equipment near to picnic tables
- Some new equipment to be installed in extended area right away

RECOMMENDED that the Town Council welcome the proposals to enhance the children's play area at the Lake Grounds and ask North Somerset Council to pursue Option 2 as described above.

RW464 NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL – BEST VALUE REVIEW OF PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

Councillor Mrs Bickley invited Mr Moore to remain for this item.

The Committee were informed that North Somerset Council had been considering options for the future management and ownership of parks, open spaces and play areas following the Best Value Review of Parks and Open Spaces. The four options were –

1. For North Somerset Council to continue to own and manage the parks, open spaces, playing fields and play areas, but to develop a partnership approach with Town Councils. North Somerset would fund core standards and Town Councils could make contributions to enhance the core provision if they so wished.
2. To transfer the ownership and management of all the parks, open spaces, playing fields and play areas to Town Councils.
3. To transfer the ownership and management of the areas funded by special expenses to Town Councils.
4. To retain the status quo. However, it was understood that this option was not currently being pursued.

A lengthy discussion ensued with many divergent opinions being expressed. Comments made included –

On general matters

- It is understood that all four Town Councils would be expected to agree to the same option. Unclear what would happen if they did not.
- What would happen to any new areas acquired by North Somerset under S106 Agreements? Mr Moore confirmed that it was possible for Town Councils to become party to S106 Agreements.
- The loss of professional expertise for the whole District if all the play areas and open spaces were to be transferred to the Town Councils.
- Would any existing commuted sums be passed on to the Town Councils?.
- The current special expense charge to residents would no longer apply; Town Councils would raise the finance they required to run the play areas from the precept.

Of particular concern to Portishead and North Weston Town Council

- A significantly large increase in precept would be required. Currently no income-generation.
- The Town Council's current set-up and working practices would need to be completely re-organised.
- Additional accommodation, staff and equipment would be required.
- How would the contracts for the new proposed concession at the Lake Grounds be affected by any new working arrangements.
- Town Council's history of partnership working with the District Council has been very successful ie Parish Wharf Play Area and High Street litter bins.
- More efficient if one Council responsible for play areas and open spaces in their own area. Town Council should be responsible for all the towns' assets.

On being put to the vote it was

RECOMMENDED that

In principle, the Town Council wish to pursue Option 1 – North Somerset Council to continue to own and manage the parks, open spaces, playing fields and play areas, but to develop a partnership approach with Town Councils.

The voting was recorded as 6 votes for the recommendation, 5 votes against.

It was further **RECOMMENDED** that North Somerset Council be asked to provide

- Further information to enable a more informed decision to be made
- A breakdown of the special expenses figures for Portishead
- A list of the exact areas of land under consideration

Councillor Mrs Bickley thanked Mr Moore for attending the meeting.

RW465

FOLK HALL – RELOCATION OF DISABLED TOILET, EXTENSION TO TOWN COUNCIL OFFICE AND UPGRADING OF GROUND FLOOR FACILITIES

Councillor Mrs Bickley reminded the Committee that £25,000 had been included in the 2002/2003 budget to enable the disabled toilet to be relocated to the ground floor, the Town Council Office to be extended and facilities on the ground floor to be upgraded. The Chairman and Clerk had now met to discuss the project with two architects and one building surveyor and members received details of their respective charges and initial thoughts.

After discussion and receiving clarification on a number of points it was

RECOMMENDED that

Mr David Vestey of Davis Blackburn of Clevedon, be appointed as building surveyor for the project at a cost of 11% of contract sum + disbursements. The fee to include preparation of all scale drawings, submission of drawings for building regulation approval, preparation of specification and documents for tendering, site visits and assessment of works with relation to standard building contracts.

RW466

TREE WARDEN SCHEME

Councillor Mrs Bickley reminded members that the Town Council had been without a formal Tree Warden following Mr Titchen's resignation from the post some 12 months ago. Since then, Councillor Mrs Cole had acted in an informal capacity whilst additional information about the Tree Warden Scheme was obtained from the Forest of Avon. This information had now been received and was circulated to members.

Members were also informed that as North Somerset Council were to now consult with Town and Parish Councils on applications for works to trees, in much the same way as the consultation on planning applications, it would now be appropriate to consider formalising our Tree Warden scheme.

During the ensuing discussion members commented that as the Town was growing, consideration should be given to appointing more than one warden.

RECOMMENDED that

- Councillor Michael Johnston be appointed Tree Warden, to be assisted by Councillors Mrs Haysom and Palmer.
- An article about the Tree Warden Scheme, asking for volunteers to become Tree Wardens, be included in the next editorial in the Portishead Paper.

RW467

TOWN COUNCIL MARQUEE

The Committee were informed that the proposed awarding of the new concession at the Lake Grounds had highlighted a number of concerns about the Town Council's marquee which was stored in the boathouse. In particular, not only was it unclear whether or not the new concessionaire would allow the marquee to continue to be stored, but also difficulties were being encountered with hirings because historically the previous concessionaire had assisted with erection and transportation. The canvas was also in a very poor condition and in need of a certain amount of renovation. The Clerk further reported that there had been a drop in bookings over the last few years and this, coupled with an increase in insurance premium (to £325 per annum) indicated that it was no longer financially viable to keep the marquee. Furthermore, co-incidentally, the changes to the concession at the Lake Grounds had prompted two unsolicited offers to purchase the marquee.

Members acknowledged the difficulties now being encountered with regard to the marquee and agreed that it was no longer financially viable to retain it.

RECOMMENDED the marquee be disposed of and the highest offer of £800 be accepted.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.35pm