

Present: Mayor, Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin (presiding)
Deputy Mayor, Councillor Mrs J Wood
Councillor Mrs J Bland
Councillor Mrs G M Dodds
Councillor A J Follett
Councillor C W Gibson
Councillor Miss L M Hillier
Councillor Mrs R Myer
Councillor C I Pye
Councillor Miss L H Pye
Councillor I Reissmann
Councillor S Smith
Councillor Dr B G Wood

In Attendance: Mr M W Kennedy – Town Clerk and Minute Taker

80. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D Nimmo-Smith and Councillor Dr P J Skolar.

81. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

82. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

It was moved by the Chairman and

RESOLVED that the public and the press be excluded from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 as matters which were about to be discussed were considered to be confidential.

83. PARKS SERVICE REVIEW

Members had before them the comprehensive private and confidential report of the Town Clerk which considered the case for expanding the Council's Parks Service by bringing back in-house those functions that were currently out sourced to external providers.

Councillor I Reissmann sought clarification as to whether the revenue implications of the capital expenditure were included in the estimated revenue budget for vehicles and machinery in 2010/11. The Clerk confirmed that this was not the case.

A view was expressed by Councillor Miss L M Hillier that as well as the additional duties set out in the report for the new parks service attention could also be paid to those areas of land within the town that were often neglected and overlooked because ownership was unknown.

Councillor A J Follett complimented the Clerk on his comprehensive paper which draws together the service. He said that the Council had grappled with the Parks Service for many years and that it was time to adopt the recommendations for reorganisation to provide an improved service. He felt that the report laid the foundations and building blocks for the service which would enable the town clerk to develop the principles contained in his report and to present further details on the capital and revenue implications. It was moved by Councillor A J Follett seconded by the Mayor, Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin and unanimously

RESOLVED that

- (i) the Clerk's report for the proposed restructure of the Parks Service to bring back in-house the whole of the grass cutting operation from 1st April 2011 be adopted;
- (ii) notice be given to M&C landscapes of the Council's intention to terminate their contract from 1st April 2010;
- (iii) M&C landscapes be retained for a further period of 12 months commencing 1 April 2010 while staff recruitment takes place;
- (iv) full consultation on the proposed restructure takes place with the staff and Trade Unions;
- (v) Ellis Whittam, HR consultant, assist the Council in the restructuring process to minimise the Council's exposure to possible claims of unfair dismissal where redundancy arises, and any possible TUPE considerations in terminating the existing grass cutting contract with M&C landscapes;
- (vi) arrangements for advertising and the recruitment of the new posts follow;
- (vii) the procurement of the vehicles and equipment set out in the report be progressed as a charge against capital expenditure in 2010/11 subject to a further more detailed report from the Parks Manager; and
- (viii) any statutory redundancy payments arising from the restructure be paid in 2010/11.

Arising from the foregoing, Deputy Mayor, Councillor Mrs J Wood, paid tribute to the Parks Service and congratulated staff on their work particularly as the section had operated with a vacancy for the nearly two years.

Mayor, Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin, said that the recruitment of the Parks Manager could commence in earnest. The Parks Manager would bring forward further recommendations to Council arising from the clerk's report.

Councillor Dr B Wood suggested the appointment of a small working group to assist the town clerk in the delivery of the new structure. It was

RESOLVED that a Parks Service Working Group of Councillors Mrs J Doods, Mrs E Hodgkin and Dr B Wood be appointed, reporting to the Finance Strategy and Management Committee, to assist the town clerk in the delivery of the Parks Service Review.

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm