



RAMSGATE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of Open Public Spaces Strategy Group

Venue: The Council Chamber, The Custom House, Harbour Parade, Ramsgate

Date: Thursday 10th November 2022 at 1pm.

Present: Councillors: Crittenden (Chair), Huxley, Wing.

Also in attendance;

Mrs R Smith – Town Promoter and Visitor Information Centre Manager.
(Minutes)

Mr C Barton – Supervisor Technician.

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Introductions were received from all members of the group, detailing their backgrounds and fields that they have come from.

Councillor Crittenden stated that she had invited Councillor Huxley as Town Promotion Vice-Chair as it had been Councillor Crittenden's oversight at the Town Promotion Committee meeting not to include Councillor Huxley in the membership of the Strategy Group, given also that it was their joint motion that had brought about the Open Public Spaces development by Ramsgate Town Council.

ELECTION OF A VICE-CHAIR

The group decided not to elect a vice-chair at this stage but noted this could be decided at a later date as per the Terms of Reference.

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Miss L Fidler, Town Clerk.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Terms of Reference (ToR) were received from the initial meeting, and it was noted that the ToR was approved in the Town Promotion Committee meeting on 12th October 2022.

STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

As per the Terms of Reference, the Council will develop and action a strategy to co-ordinate and support existing volunteer gardening groups, and undertake public spaces gardening works throughout Ramsgate, not only of the East and West cliff promenades, but also the town centre flower beds and through the creation of pocket parks elsewhere in Ramsgate.

As per the Terms of Reference; The group will:

- 1) Undertake and maintain an audit of all open spaces including details of who owns and maintains those spaces.
- 2) Liaise with existing volunteer groups to identify where Ramsgate Town Council can provide support, including working with volunteer groups to develop a support network.
- 3) Encourage the development of new volunteer gardening groups.
- 4) Identify areas, not covered by volunteer groups, where Ramsgate Town Council could take over the grounds maintenance and where appropriate undertake to commit to Service Level Agreement or take over land ownership.
- 5) The overall aim is to improve the environmental aesthetics of Ramsgate, with sensitive consideration, biodiversity and appropriate maintenance of our open spaces.
- 6) It is anticipated that this will be a three-year project during which Ramsgate Town Council will increase the amount of general grounds maintenance they provide through working in the areas not covered by volunteer groups. This will be a further development and more structured approach to services Ramsgate Town Council already provides.

Budget

- 7) Initial costs will be covered through staff time and resources. It is expected that there will be some costs for additional plants and equipment over time, as well as expert advice and volunteer events, which will be sought from the appropriate budget, as and when required.

Councillor Huxley reminded the group that because Thanet District Council is so resource limited that this strategy was essential to improve public spaces in Ramsgate.

Mr C Barton suggested that the only capital outlay initially would be for the soil and plants on the promenade which he estimated would cost between £150 & £250 per bed. He will update us further at the next meeting.

IDENTIFY COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES

The group discussed the role of community representatives on the Open Public Spaces Strategy Group. Mrs R Smith proposed Davena Green (Nelson Crescent) and Clara Gibson (Winterstoke and East Cliff Projects). It was agreed that these suggestions had the advantage of ensuring the west and east cliffs were both represented, as well as bringing strategic knowledge and experience to the group. It was acknowledged that there are others with expert knowledge who can be invited to support the Strategy Group on an adhoc basis, such as Kevin Pressland (Former Horticultural and Biodiversity Officer at Thanet District Council), as suggested by Councillor Wing, and Jacqui Young (Young's Nursery).

ACTION:

Mrs R Smith to email Clara Gibson and Davena Green and invite them to the next meeting.

AUDIT OF GREEN AND OPEN SPACES

Mr C Barton presented copies of satellite maps of approximately 30 green spaces he identified across Ramsgate (not including King George VI and Ellington Park).

Councillor Wing suggested that we might include roundabouts to the list so that we could ensure that low maintenance plants were chosen in the future. Councillor Crittenden noted that she was mindful of Councillor Green's concerns regarding extra finance but felt that in the short term, any expenses could come out of the Town Improvement budget. Councillor Wing pointed out that Ramsgate Town Council has a significant amount of money to spend on this type of initiative for the benefit of the community and visitors.

It was noted that the technicians are keen to begin practical action in implementing the open spaces strategy. Following the discussion around Mr C Barton's audit, four areas were identified which included:

- a) East Cliff Promenade (grass cutting and overhaul & maintenance of plant beds)
- b) Nethercourt Dog Park (grass cutting and general maintenance)
- c) Government Acre (weeding of edges above the gulley suggested by Cllr Wing)
- d) Broad Street seating area (hedge cutting, mowing and weeding and general maintenance)

The group suggested that all four sites were owned by Thanet District Council and therefore permissions would need to be sought.

Councillor Crittenden suggested we confirm ownership of all the identified green spaces before proceeding with any groundwork. Mr C Barton suggested we start with the first four identified spaces as they were quick wins and would achieve maximum aesthetic impact. East Cliff promenade was unanimously agreed as the area that would achieve maximum impact and the group proposed that the plant beds would need digging over, new topsoil, edges trimmed and neatened. Plant choice strategy would include:

- 2 x seasons of planting (Spring and Autumn)
- choosing a colourful display
- thick coverage
- low height
- bio-diverse choices of plants
- drought resistant and
- low maintenance

Possible experts to consult included Jacqui Young, Irene Seijo and Kevin Pressland. Councillor Crittenden presented the two posters created by Mr D Williams that show all the services that are already undertaken by Ramsgate Town Council.

ACTION:

- **Councillor Wing to purchase an Ordnance Survey map of Ramsgate to help identify and plan for future projects.**
- **Mr C Barton to contact local nursery to cost soil/plants for bedding plants for East Cliff promenade.**
- **Mr C Barton to email list of green spaces he identified to the group.**
- **To request the Town Clerk emails Thanet District Council Open Spaces Manager/Estates Manager to advise of Ramsgate Town Council's intentions and query if a Service Level Agreement could be put in place for (at least) the East Cliff Promenade and flower beds.**

ENGAGING VOLUNTEER GROUPS

Councillor Crittenden explained that engaging with volunteer groups was about keeping them informed of the Town Council's progress in implementing a strategy to focus on the public spaces that are not currently undertaken by our volunteers, it was not about utilising the volunteer groups further. She praised the work that our volunteers already undertake and emphasised the importance of ensuring that they were aware that the council was taking this project on in recognition of the volunteers' hard work and to complement their achievements by 'filling in the gaps' that were not currently focused on.

Councillor Crittenden suggested that Ramsgate Town Council initially host a bi-annual gardening volunteer networking lunch with a guest speaker or speakers. Mrs R Smith to consider how best this could be organised and who to involve, for consideration and confirmation at the next Open Public Spaces Strategy Group meeting. This would be funded through the Town Promoter's budget.

Councillor Wing suggested we could ask volunteers to support the new projects as many of the volunteers might be interested in helping, particularly as some of the groups had stopped work over the winter period. It was noted that once the technicians had brought the areas identified up to a good standard, if volunteers approached the council about taking areas on within their organisation, this could be considered if permissions were given by the identified landowners (Thanet District Council/Kent County Council in most cases).

Councillor Crittenden suggested that we should try to support Albion Gardens Volunteer Group. Councillor Crittenden stated that we are waiting for Thanet District Council to tackle the overgrown buddleia, bamboo and brambles surrounding the waterfall, as well as the Holm Oak and Sycamore saplings, which will all damage the pulhamite if left unchecked. Volunteers should not be tackling these areas on Health and Safety grounds. Councillor Wing requested no glyphosate or environmentally damaging weedkiller be used. For larger plants, (eg. buddleia and the tree saplings), Councillor Wing suggested a French technique that was not harmful to other flora or fauna, was to drill holes in the top and pour milk into the drilled hole.

Addendum: The work will have to be carried out by Thanet District Council and Ramsgate Town Council will have no control over how they do this.

ACTION:

- **Mrs R Smith to organise a bi-annual gardening volunteer networking lunch for some time in January and invite all gardening groups to attend. (Funded through Town Promoter budget).**
- **Mrs R Smith to email gardening groups confirming the supporting role of our technicians in collecting their green waste and formally ask if there were any other duties the groups felt that Ramsgate Town Council technicians could undertake to support them in their respective areas. Mr C Barton to be copied into the email.**
- **All members to research most effective and environmentally friendly methods for controlling weeds/weedkiller alternatives and report back.**

DATES AND TIMES OF NEXT MEETINGS

Friday 9th December 2022 at 10am.

Thursday 5th January 2023 at 1pm.

Thursday 2nd February 2023 at 1pm.

Thursday 2nd March 2023 at 1pm.

The Chair closed the meeting at 3pm.