



RAMSGATE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of Open Public Spaces Strategy Group

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

Date: Friday 8th December 2023 at 10am

Present: Councillors: Albon, Crittenden (Chair and Minutes) and Huxley.

Also in attendance;

Mrs R Smith – Town Centre and Tourism Manager

Mrs M Morgan – Technician Manager (Projects Manager)

D Green – Community Representative

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr G Mills, Technician Manager (HR and Health & Safety); C Gibson, Community Representative

Membership of this group includes Councillors Wing and Green. Need to review membership following change in committee memberships.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

REVIEW PREVIOUS MINUTES FOR ACTIONS

Councillor Huxley to contact Tony Marmo about re-surfacing the Eastcliff promenade.

Completed – any further action will be with Thanet District Council

Councillor Huxley to find out who the tree officer is and report back.

Pheobe Cullingworth, Tree and Biodiversity Officer

Mr G Mills to assess the Nelson hedging for nests with a view to trim back for the winter.

Mrs M Morgan reported that this is on the list for works for the winter months

Mr G Mills to review workload and report back on areas that could be undertaken by technicians including the three identified areas plus shelters and Eastcliff promenade weeding.

Mrs M Morgan expressed concern at taking on any new work given recent unexpected staff changes and extra seasonal work. Discussion included Eastcliff beds and relocation of the palms.

Councillor Crittenden clarified that the document we had originally worked on with Mr Barton was a list of all the green spaces in Ramsgate and that three areas had been selected for initial consideration for Ramsgate Town Council to take on the maintenance (based on the original concept of 'pocket parks')

- Eastcliff flower beds
- Broad Street seating area
- St Lawrence beds

Mrs R Smith to send an e-introduction to C Gibson and NCI contact.

Completed

Ms L Fidler to chase 'walkabout' meeting with Tony Marmo.

Completed (see below)

PROGRESS UPDATE - DISCUSSION

1. Weeds and weeding
 - a. Noted increasing damage to infrastructure caused by weeds: eg paths and retaining wall of cliff top gardens either side of Granville Theatre.
 - b. Roots of weeds along cliff top edge on the Eastcliff are mostly on sea side of the railings which makes them too dangerous to weed by hand.
 - c. Councillor Albon advised that officers at Thanet District Council have prepared a report for Cabinet on pros and cons of alternatives to glyphosate based weedkiller – glyphosate is the only solution that kills the roots; hand weeding and herbicide weedkillers don't kill/remove roots, making them more labour intensive and costly. Hand weeding is hazardous due to contamination from dogs and not appropriate to ask of volunteers. D Green asked about burning with a flame weeder but this also does not kill the roots. Thanet District Council looking at using barriers to keep public away when spraying is being undertaken, when the risk to the public and pets is at its greatest.
 - d. Kent County Council continue to use glyphosate. Mrs R Smith asked about a national policy Kent County Council should adhere to: Councillor Albon to follow up (see actions)
2. Negotiations with Thanet District Council for Ramsgate Town Council to take on maintenance of identified small spaces.
 - a. Ongoing. Councillor Albon and Town Clerk to liaise with Thanet District Council officers.
 - b. Mrs M Morgan would like to add the small green at Prestedge Avenue to the list of pieces of ground Ramsgate Town Council maintain, if it is not already included. Councillor Crittenden asked Mrs R Smith to ensure that we have the most up to date version of the list of green spaces available, as out of date version recently circulated.
 - c. Mrs M Morgan to review technician workloads and viability of the proposed work to be undertaken.
3. Walkabout with Tony Marmo. Discussed issues raised and noted that this had been a very positive event. Already the ground opposite Regency Crescent, Westcliff Promenade, which had been particularly overgrown, has been cleared by Thanet District Council since the walkabout.
4. D Green noted that the litter that had been building up behind the fencing under the Viaduct has been cleared. This was done by Network Rail/ Southeastern Railway. They have also cleared the alleyway between Station Approach Road and Margate Road.

5. D Green asked about the future of the shelters since the Ramsgate Society lease with Thanet District Council has expired. John Walker (Ramsgate Society) has written to Thanet District Council about this. Councillor Albon clarified that even though the lease has expired responsibility remains with the Ramsgate Society until a new agreement is in place. Councillor Albon to liaise with Town Clerk for follow up.
6. It was noted that there has been a proliferation of Heras fencing, raised by D Green. This is out of our control.
7. Charlotte Court – for noting only – Councillors Austin and Crittenden have met with the owner of Saltworks who hopes to take on the maintenance of the Thanet District Council owned sections of the gardens opposite his shop.

ENGAGING VOLUNTEER GROUPS

It was reported back that the last volunteer lunch had been very successful, with free bags, badges and correx notice boards for marking public and wildflower gardens. The presentation by Irene Seijo based on her research on the history of the plantings in the pulhamite, including the waterfall area, included an outline of some of the invasive plants in the Albion Gardens waterfall, taken from her report to Thanet District Council.

Linda Miller spoke to the group about her ideas for setting up a Ramsgate Horticultural Society. Mrs R Smith to liaise to follow up with Linda Miller.

So far the costs (mainly lunch) have been paid out of the Town Centre and Tourism Manager's miscellaneous budget but due to funds having been taken from this budget recently. Mrs R Smith will be reviewing expenses budget with Deputy Town Clerk and will report back.

Mrs R Smith will prepare for the next volunteer lunch in the spring (March).

ACTIONS

- Councillor Crittenden to liaise with Town Clerk re membership of group following change of membership of Town Promotion Committee.
- Mrs R Smith to locate up to date copy of green spaces document as completed by this strategy group and ensure that this is the copy that is available for future reference
- Mrs M Morgan to continue the review of the works the technicians can undertake focussing on the three identified areas
- Mrs R Smith to prepare for next volunteer lunch in March
- Councillor Albon to continue to liaise with Town Clerk and Thanet District Council officers to liaise with Thanet District Council to ensure correct permissions for any work undertaken (ongoing)
- Councillor Albon to ask Councillor Everitt (Leader of Thanet District Council) to raise at the Leaders' Forum the issue of the use of glyphosate by Kent County Council (and any national policy)
- Councillor Albon, in his role as Chair of Ramsgate Town Council, to write to Kent County Council about the use of glyphosate and adherence to national policy
- Mrs R Smith to liaise with Linda Miller re possible Ramsgate Horticultural Society

- Mrs R Smith to organise volunteer lunch for spring 2024
- Mrs R Smith to report back on budget for volunteers' lunch events
- Also noted: Councillor Albon to liaise with Town Clerk over future lease arrangements for cliff top shelters (not Open Public Spaces Strategy Group remit)

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Friday 9th February 2024 at 10am

The Chair closed the meeting at 11:25 am