

NOTES of the **CUSTOMER SERVICES KEY AREA GROUP MEETING** held in the Council chamber on **Thursday 24 February 2022** at 19.00 hours.

Present: Robert Duggan Chairman
Joseph Foster* Vice Chairman
Lee Gibbs
Kathleen Willis
Graham Allen*

Robert Eggleston
Peter Chapman
Ann Eves
Sylvia Neumann
Janice Henwood

Also present: Steve Cridland, Chief Executive Officer, Sarah Hughes, Maintenance Section Head

* *Denotes non-attendance*

(19:00 hours)

109. OPEN FORUM

A member of the public who lives on Mill Road had been responsible for organising the rewilding of the piece of land at the junction of Mill Road and Middle Way. Last year the land was left to grow in order to see what plants would grow. Some 20 species were identified including Nettles and Dandelions (which are feeders for pollinators). The patch was mowed at the end of the season. The member of the public noted that many people walked past this area and the bin nearby was unable to cope with all the litter deposited. She was of the opinion that the land should remain as is ie species rich. Yellow Rattle had been sown which would overtake the grass. Nettles, which are deep rooted, will remain while other species take over. They are better than shallow rooted alien species. Mowing in late summer and raking enables invertebrates to drop off. Log piles have been made as a habitat for animals to live in. She was not in favour of stripping the turf as too many seeds would be lost.

110. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Joseph Foster

111. SUBSTITUTES

Cllr Robert Eggleston for Cllr Joseph Foster

112. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Nil

113. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Notes of the meeting of the Customer Services Key Area Group held on 18 August 2021, having been previously circulated, were AGREED and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

114. RE-WILDING

8 of the 9 sites from last year would continue this year. The St Wilfreds site had been replaced with a tree. The case for the Mill Road site had been outlined by the member of public and discussed previously at a working party meeting. The grass stored around the tree could be detrimental to the tree and should be discouraged as it will rot. It needs to be removed. Complaints have been received from residents who consider the site as unsightly. A larger bin will be installed.

Cllr Eggleston felt that a consistent approach was needed throughout town when it came to re-wilding. Mill Road did not follow council policy. No consultation had taken place and it had been a *fait accompli* which was unacceptable. He felt that he had been backed into a corner.

He proposed a compromise with part of the area being stripped and part being left. Other sites had been attractive from the onset which was not the case with Mill Road. In addition, it was situated on a road junction and sight lines had been impeded. He felt that the site should be compliant with Council policy.

Cllr Eves felt that the site had previously been neglected. A load of dead vegetation had been used to create habitat in the middle. She agreed that the site was in the public eye. She recognised that many volunteers had put in a lot of work. She pointed out that stripping the turf made sites pictorial while leaving as is was re-wilding ie leaving it wild. Nettles attract butterflies. She suggested that the area on the outside perimeter be stripped. Autumn bulbs could be sown as well. An insect hotel could be established. It was about educating people.

Cllr Henwood felt the site should be managed. She felt that indigenous seeds such as Yellow Rattle should be sown. She suggested that the site be delineated to allow for a wild area and a strip area.

The member of the public felt that allowing the propagation of non-native

seeds was not achieving anything.

Cllr Eggleston agreed that while the whole area should not be stripped, the Council has a clear policy which should be followed. He felt a compromise had to be reached

RECOMMENDED:

1. That a compromise be reached and that Cllr Eggleston, Sarah Hughes and the member of the public meet on site and delineate areas for turf stripping and leaving wild.
2. That it be noted that a larger bin would be installed

115. STREET LIGHT ASHWAY

This street light as with many others was not covered by WSCC. In order for WSCC to agree to take over the maintenance of the light, they require it to be brought up to standard. This will cost £804,27 and £41,13 per annum

RECOMMENDED

That the street light in Ashway be replaced by a PFI standard light at a cost of £804,27 and that the council enter into an agreement with WSCC to maintain the light at £41,13 per annum.

116. SIGN POST: CHURCH WALK AND CHURCH ROAD

A request had been received from a business person for a sign at the junction of Church Walk and Church Road to signpost businesses in Cyprus Road. MSDC had previously indicated that wayfinding would form part of the Place and Connectivity project but it appeared that this could be some way off. There is an existing finger post which might be able to be adapted.

RECOMMENDED:

That permission be sought from WSCC for the installation of a suitable signpost to signpost businesses in Cyprus Road and that a design for the signpost be distributed among members for agreement before installation

Meeting ended 19.40