

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD  
ON-LINE AT 10.00 ON FRIDAY 5 FEBRUARY 2021**

PRESENT: R TAPLIN (Town Mayor)  
Councillors: G CAMPBELL, J HLADKIWSKYJ; A HOOKER; C HYAMS; P IRVING; P MORGAN; Mrs  
M RADFORD; C THOMAS; G WILSON; J YOUNG

Minute Taker: Mrs C WHITLOCK

**MINUTES**

**Action**

**21/24 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE:**

TOWN CLERK – Another appointment  
Cllr S CONBOY – Work Commitment  
Cllr R MAHMOOD – None received  
Cllr ROUND – Received  
Cllr C VANE PERCY – Received after the meeting  
Cllr S WILSON – Another meeting  
Cllr WORTHINGTON (Deputy Mayor) - Received

**21/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:**

None

**21/26 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION:**

None

**21/27 PLANNING REPORT:**

The TOWN CLERK was to advise HDC of planning application recommendations.

Town Clerk

Cllr G WILSON advised that he, Cllr RADFORD, Steve Wiseman (Godmanchester Allotments), Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) and David Wilson Homes (DWH) would be meeting to discuss how DHW would be setting up the allotments in Roman Edge.

**21/28 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT:**

Cllr HOOKER advised that the tender process for the Grounds Maintenance Contract of about £40,000 began in September 2020 resulting in five companies submitting tenders. Giles Landscapes were discounted as their quote exceeded the budget, being over £54,000. The remaining four companies were contacted requesting references, finances etc. RW Gardening did not respond and therefore they were also discounted. The final three, CGM Group, EGA Gardens and Fergusons were subsequently invited to attend Zoom interviews. Although a cheaper quote (but felt that it may have not been feasible considering the work involved) CGM Group were a large company and the Council would not have the service of a dedicated team and were discounted. EGA Gardens were a new, small, business and it was felt it was too early in their experience cycle to award them the contract. However, councillors had been extremely impressed with them and mentioned possibly nurturing them for a future contract as they had the right attitude.

Fergusons have been in charge of the Council's grounds maintenance for 18 years. However, over the last four years the Council had enlarged their scope of work to take in additional tasks, which had become regular and had been included in the new tender, resulting in a price increase compared with the current regime. Fergusons knew the work involved, were competent and the Council already had a good working relationship with them. Cllr HOOKER therefore recommended that the Council award the contract to Fergusons.

Cllr HOOKER explained that, when the tender document was produced in September 2020, the proposed installation of the Multi Wheel Pump Track (MWPT) at Judith's Field (JF) had not been taken into consideration. The area would not require the same maintenance and Fergusons had agreed that the contract would be reviewed once the MWPT was in situ. Cllr HOOKER also advised that a new additional rubbish bin had not been included in the tender but which Fergusons had agreed to include in their price, as would two bins on JF which had not been included in the tender document but were currently emptied. They had included them in their quote (which no-one else would have noticed). Fergusons would be prepared to look at how things progress, review and reduce costs if necessary.

Cllr MORGAN explained, for the benefit of those who had not been involved in the debate, that CGM Group were a multi-million pound company based in Kings Lynn. They had no current knowledge of the town areas they would be expected to maintain and would be reliant on their phones or tablets to see what needed to be done. Cllr MORGAN also mentioned the quote CGM Group had provided this time was half the price of what they had quoted in their tender back in 2016.

The MAYOR advised that a number of things were taken into consideration during the interviews and each company had a fair hearing and were asked the same questions.

Cllr G WILSON congratulated Cllr HOOKER and the team for such a thorough job and asked how Fergusons' current quote compared to the existing contract they had with the Council. Cllr HOOKER explained that the new quote was £10,000 more than four years ago but the new contract would include the extra work that had now become regular, and also include things such as maintenance of the osier beds, rather than our relying on volunteers. The MAYOR estimated that the Council were currently paying Fergusons £33,000 per annum, which included the extras, therefore it was not such an increase to £37,020.

Cllr G WILSON also asked how the Council would nurture EGA Gardens. Cllr HOOKER said this would be considered when informing them that they had been unsuccessful with their tender. He suggested that EGA Gardens be invited to do some 'bits and pieces' for the Council to give both them and the Council a flavour of what each other were like and whether they could work together with Fergusons, if practical.

Town Clerk

Cllr HOOKER requested that, given the length of time it had taken from tendering to awarding, the Grounds Maintenance Contract be added to the Five Year Review Sheet for to be considered at the end of July/August 2024. This would allow for the chosen company to be notified in January 2025.

Town Clerk

The MAYOR proposed that the Council be recommended that Fergusons were awarded the Grounds Maintenance Contract for period 2021-25 at an annual cost of £37,020 plus VAT. All were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

{Post-Meeting Note: RW Gardening had responded but they too exceeded the budget so were also discounted}.

Cllr G WILSON reminded Councillors to provide him with any comments regarding his draft questions on the trial closure of the bridge by lunchtime on 5 February. Cllr G WILSON would then send them onto Cambridgeshire County Council for their attention.

All Councillors

The meeting closed at 10.25