

**BRIDGNORTH TOWN COUNCIL
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING**

15 April 2020

REPORT TO TOWN COUNCILLORS

AGENDA ITEM 8 – Outdoor and Properties Manager Report

AIM

The aim of this agenda item is to inform Councillors of actions taken so far with regard to ensuring that the Council and in particular the DLF are able to maintain a somewhat limited service to the residents and the town of Bridgnorth.

BACKGROUND

No-one needs reminding why a number of the actions listed have become necessary and even more stringent restrictions may become necessary as this situation progresses. It is vital that all concerned are fully aware that our workforce's health and welfare are paramount throughout. I have listed below all the main items that I feel you need to be aware of, not necessarily in the order of occurrence.

DISCUSSION/ COMMENT

1. **Changes to work patterns.** In order to limit the chances of a large number of the workforce from becoming infected at the same time we have split the workforce into two smaller groups of a five and four (Red and Blue team). We also agreed that in order to get the best cover the DLF should work a four day shift to ensure continuity over a seven day week. A new emergency contract was drawn up detailing terms and conditions which have included a 'no leave' ban and a work through bank holidays. All staff have agreed and signed this document. Furthermore, the DLF and caretakers have all received verbal briefings, as well as, all the latest documented advice on how to stay safe at work and at home during this pandemic. These changes were implemented on Monday 23rd March and will continue until further notice. Our main priority during this period as always is the cemetery and burials, closely followed by; bins and dog bins; litter picking; and then grass cutting and general maintenance.
2. **Severn Park closure.** While not wishing to exclude members of the public from exercising in all our open spaces, it was decided to place out of bounds all play and exercise equipment to eliminate the possibility of the virus spreading on hard surfaces. It was also decided to close the stone car park to discourage people from making unnecessary journeys by car, to exercise and walk dogs. Signs have been displayed to inform why these actions have been enforced.
3. **Castle Grounds.** The Castle Grounds have been closed altogether, as this is a much smaller park and social distancing is more of an issue. It also meant that we were able to close the toilet facility and to redeploy staff to assist as member of a team. Maintenance of the grounds will form part of the overall maintenance roster for the whole town.

4. **Public Toilets.** There have been some mixed reactions from the public as to whether not the toilets should be open or closed. The data shows that we have had approximately 50 users a week over a 7 day period. A good number of those are likely to be delivery drivers or visitors who have nowhere else to go. Just think what might happen (worst scenario) if they are shut. The toilets are checked and cleaned twice a day, morning and evening and the contract cleaners work alone and have been provided with all the correct PPE.
5. **Lodge Lane consultation.** The ERDF consultation brief to the residents of Lodge Lane and the Grove scheduled for the evening of 2nd April has also been cancelled and notified via social media. I would hope to reschedule when we are back to normal.
6. **Security.** All buildings and properties are being checked at the start of every working day throughout the whole period.
7. **Community Halls.** Castle Hall, LTCH and the Town Hall have all been closed down indefinitely. However they are still being cleaned periodically, checked for security and weekly fire safety checks continue. The caretakers have been given new responsibilities to include cleaning of the cemetery canteen and toilets and to open and close park gates, should it be required. They have also been put on a four on, four off roster, to coincide with the remainder of the workforce.
8. **Compressor and Jackhammer.** As virtually all unnecessary businesses have now closed, and because the vast majority of our graves are in varying depths of sandstone, we felt it prudent to hire in a compressor and jackhammer to cover a six-week period at a cost of £100 per week, discounted from £120 a week.
9. **Cemetery Lodge.** Planned work on Cemetery Lodge was temporarily halted as both members of the maintenance team have/are currently off work. The scaffold contractor is being very sensible about the extended period of hire and we are unlikely to be charged anything above the original quote of £450. Interior decoration was temporarily suspended and therefore the Lodge is unlikely to be ready to lease until the end of June at the earliest.
10. **Emergency tree work.** A large fir tree located just before the entrance into the rowing club was damaged in the wind and a large proportion of it has snapped off and fallen across the Rugby Clubs perimeter fence. The remainder of the tree was so badly damaged that it was in danger of failing and falling across the path into Severn Park. It was decided to dismantle the whole tree at a cost of £550.
11. **Hedging and tree pack.** 120 assorted hedging and tree whips have now been planted along the top edge of the newly landscaped cemetery land and a few of the Crab-apple trees have been dotted about on Severn Park, to replace specimens lost in recent gales.
12. **Grave Shoring Boards.** The Council currently hold 3 sets of grave shoring boards, one of which requires minor repair. In the current crisis we could very easily find ourselves with a much higher demand and unless we take steps now to prepare in advance we are likely to be faced with severe criticism. We have already begun to prepare by digging graves and back filling, especially in sandstone areas, as this will seriously reduce the time it takes to dig out again at short notice. However, if the Council agree to the purchase of 2 new sets of boards and the repair of the 3rd set, then that would allow us to have 5 graves prepared at immediate notice. We so far have one quote at £1,300 a set and are currently awaiting a second.

FINANCIALS

13. There will be a cost associated to the preparation and delivery of a burial service. £600 for a six week hire of a compressor and jackhammer and approximately £2,600 for the purchase of a further 2 sets of grave boards.

SUMMARY

14. In order for the Council to meet any sudden demand in burial services, it is imperative that we have the money made available to purchase (if required) all the equipment identified above.

RECOMMENDATION(s)

15. It is recommended that the Town Council RESOLVES:

- To approve the closure of Severn Park Car Park as part of the national lockdown and in line with any subsequent Government advice during the period of the Coronavirus emergency (authority delegated to P&G manager)
- To approve the closure of Castle Grounds as part of the national lockdown and in line with any subsequent Government advice during the period of the Coronavirus emergency (authority delegated to P&G manager)
- To approve the closure of all play and exercise equipment as part of the national lockdown and in line with any subsequent Government advice during the period of the Coronavirus emergency (authority delegated to P&G manager)
- To approve the 6 week hire of a compressor and jackhammer at £100 per week VAT to a total of £600 + VAT
- To approve the purchase of 2 new sets of grave boards up to £2,600 + VAT

Barry Ince
Outdoor & Properties Manager