

**BRIDGNORTH TOWN COUNCIL  
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING  
19 OCTOBER 2021**

BI/2021

12<sup>th</sup> October 2021

REPORT TO TOWN COUNCILLORS

**AGENDA ITEM 11 – OUTDOOR AND PROPERTIES MANAGER REPORT**

AIM

1. To provide a general overview of estate management matters and consider budgetary recommendations to increase the grounds training budget and set aside funds for the future provision of a replacement tractor.

BACKGROUND

2. This report is a general overview of the ongoing outdoors and property maintenance issues.

DISCUSSION/ COMMENT

Some new, but mainly ongoing projects and tasks are listed below.

3. **Castle Grounds Ruin.** Concerns over the vegetation growth and the impact that this might have on the upper part of the Castle Keep ruin and the potential to undermine the mortar and public safe has prompted the need to seek help and advice from Historic England and English Heritage. Both of which have shown interest in visiting to site to give advice on the way forward. The first meeting is with the Principal Inspector and a Structural Engineer from Historic England on the 9<sup>th</sup> November. I will keep you informed as there is likely to be some costs associated to ensuring the ongoing safety of this monument.
4. **Pergola Castle Grounds and David Austin Roses Donation.** David Austin Roses have made a very generous donation in both shrubs as well as providing their head gardener and one other to prepare the ground for planting.
5. **Stoneway Steps.** After what seems like a very long-time work will start the week commencing 18 October on the damaged retaining wall between the steps and the Cliff Railway.
6. **Castle Hall Repairs.** After investigating the cause of dampness in the main office it was found that the damage was much more serious than first thought. Investigation

found that a Buddleia had rooted itself in the roof valley at the rear and had been steadily growing there for some time and the roots had spread under the plaster over the whole length of the room. The repairs will involve removal of the shrub, repairing the damaged brickwork, stripping the plaster back to the brick across the whole office top to bottom, replastering once dry and then decorating. Further investigation of a leaking gutter in the valley above the old nursery has identified the need to replace a lead lined drainage trough. This is quite a major task and best left until the spring as it will involve opening the roof to the elements. Although these jobs combined are likely to be less than £1K, but likely quite time consuming.

7. **Christmas Lighting Contract Tender.** The final draft has now been prepared and is with the Town Clerk prior the Events & Christmas Committee will likely need to approve its content before it is published.
8. **Vehicle Leases.** The leases for the Ford Ranger and 2 Ford Transit flatbeds are due to expire at the end of April 2022. We have obtained 3 quotes for a near like for like replacement of the 3 vehicles. Full costings will be presented to Council next month along with a recommendation. In the current climate, a 6 month lead-in time is likely required.
9. **Lodge Lane (the Grove) Woodland Trail and Play Equipment.** The play equipment has now been installed and subject to passing the ROSPA or equivalent safety inspection the play area will be handed over to the Town Council the week commencing the 18 October and opened following a site inspection with the contractor.
10. **Cemetery Extension.** The hard landscaping and building of the access steps on the new part of the Cemetery was coming along well but had to be put on hold yet again due to sickness and manpower shortages.
11. **Cemetery Canteen and Entrance to the Lodge.** The wooden decking in front of the Canteen has rotted along with the retaining wall in front of the garden. The maintenance team are currently costing materials to make more permanent repairs in brick and concrete. Approximate costs are likely to be circa £500.00.
12. **Severn Park Slipway.** Please note the repair work to the slipway and riverbank in Severn Park is now complete. We are setting up a maintenance contract to look after the repair until the grass sward is established on the repaired banks.
13. **Town Hall Clock Mechanisms.** The Town Council has been approached by Mike Proudman of Axis Micro Systems Ltd. He is a local man and quite an authority on church clock mechanisms and has retrofitted timing mechanisms to several clocks in the area, limiting the need for weekly checks and adjustments which are sometimes quite hard to synchronise and quite time consuming. The Town Council has three such clocks, two in the Town Hall and one in the Low Town Clocktower. The two clocks that are the most problematic to us are those in the Town Hall which regularly take two members of staff anywhere from 30 minutes to 1 hour a week

depending on the staff members knowledge of the clock's mechanism and how far the synchronisation is out. It usually requires one man to crawl inside the bell tower structure while the other stands down in the street below to give guidance, a bit archaic when there are other modern methods available to us.

A timing mechanism would not benefit the Low Town clock as this operates on a 7-day wind up system and is already the most accurate in town. However, Axis Micro Systems Ltd also carry out annual inspections and servicing and could include all three clocks, which may well work out cheaper than our current service contractor (Smith of Derby Ltd) who factor in travelling costs from Derby to their costs.

A recent quote for the Remote Control of timing of the two Town Hall Pendulum Clocks from Axis Micro Systems would be £750 for the South Facing Clock and If we decided to have this system for the two clocks, installed at the same time, the cost would be £1200 for the two clocks.

14. **Town Hall White Line Marking.** After trialling many different types of road paint to mark the lines under the Town Hall none of which have lasted more than a couple of months. We have now decided to try thermoplastic lines marking which is a method whereby the lines are burnt onto the bitumen surface similar to road lining. It is quite time consuming but not particularly expensive at around £350.00. However, it is expected to last for years and will save money in man hours and paint in the long term.
15. **Town Hall Roof Timber Pest Infestation.** A recent inspection has uncovered evidence of wood infestation that that will only get worse if left untreated. An inspection by a suitable contractor will need to be carried out to assess the damage and advise on a suitable treatment.
16. **Meadow Preparation at Lodge Lane.** The meadow preparation and planting is now complete at the open space at Lodge Lane, part of the overall ERDF Woodland and Play Area Project. Kate Jones of Buglife provided the Yellow Rattle seed and hundreds of wildflowers plug plants which we planted as part of a community involvement day on the 30<sup>th</sup> September. Sadly, despite being well advertised by Buglife and us there was very little community involvement.
17. **Well Meadow Cut and Collect.** The cut and collect is now complete and the contractor have done an excellent job. So much so that Kate Jones of Buglife has once again offered to provide and plant more wildflowers on Well Meadow and his organising another community involvement day for the 26<sup>th</sup> of October. It is hoped that this one might be a little better attended.
18. **Dog Bins.** The new dog bins are now being fitted in Severn Park.
19. **Tree Work on Severn Park.** The DLF have recently spent a week clearing back a significant amount of overgrowth along the length of the hedgerow adjacent to the Telford Road and the far end of the park along with a good amount of formative pruning that incorporated the hire of a heavy duty woodchipper for a week at a cost of £500.00 plus VAT.

20. **Public Toilets.** The public toilets and particularly Listley Street continue to be the target of vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

21. **Handheld Tools Petrol / Battery Power Comparisons Prices** There are several reasons why the Council might consider the move to battery operated equipment not least the environmental impact, reduced vibration injury to the user, the reduction in price and a saving on fuel and staff time to collect and then mix to 2-stroke. There will of course be an initial investment required to achieve the changeover to battery somewhere in the region of that stated below. However, some of the petrol equipment could be sold off to subsidise that cost.

<b>Tool Type</b>	<b>Petrol</b>	<b>Electric incl battery and charger</b>	<b>Qty</b>	<b>Cost to replace with battery operated</b>
Leaf Blower	£348.00	£239.00	4	£956.00
Brush Cutter	£678.00	£550.00	6	£3,300.00
Hedge Cutter short	£636.00	£409.00	2	£818.00
Hedge Cutter long	£762.00	£540	1	£540
Total =				£5,614.00

## 22. SUMMARY.

23. There is much work being undertaken across the wide sphere of property and ground maintenance tasks.

24. The Council is asked to consider the quotation for mechanising the timing adjustment of the Town Hall clocks. To consider making and investment in battery operated hand tools and to consider the lease renewal with Day's Rental.

## FINANCIALS

25. Castle Ground Ruins – There are insufficient funds in the grounds budget for any significant works here.

26. Stoneway Steps – The Council has set aside £7k from the general reserve for this (previously unbudgeted), with Cost Centre 249, nominal ledger 4172 having had its budget increased from £3.5k to £10.5k

27. Castle Hall Repairs – Roof and wall repairs referred are affordable in current year budget and included with the projected spend

28. Town Hall Roof/ Infestation. – Quotes are currently being obtained. It is likely that there is sufficient funding in this years budget to investigate and scope the work required. Dependent upon the outcome, it is likely that funding is available (Cost Centre 210, Nominal Ledger 4170) this year to effect the required repair work.

29. Hand held tools (electric) – There are insufficient funds in the current year's budget to upgrade these items. Provision has been made in next year' draft budget.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

30. It is recommended that the Town Council notes the report and the activity being undertaken.

Barry Ince  
Outdoors & Properties Manager