

Minutes of the Meeting of the OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE held in Doggetts Barn at 7.30pm on Monday 1 April 2019

Present: Cllrs. T Bryant (chairman), B Todd (vice chairman), J Barnett, A Layland, G Middleton, and S McGregor

In attendance: Cllr C Pearman, Deputy Clerk, Head Groundsman

There was one member of the public present, and no press.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received, noted, and accepted from Cllrs R Bell (unwell), M McArthur (business) and M Robson (unwell).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, OR PREDETERMINATIONS

Cllr T Bryant non-pecuniary interest for item 8.1 – personal knowledge of the family

The Chairman adjourned the meeting

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

None.

The meeting was re-convened.

4. TO RECEIVE AND SIGN MINUTES OF THE OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE 7 January 2019

Resolved: that the minutes be signed by the committee chairman as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

5. TO RECEIVE ANALYSIS OF THE OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE'S RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS TO 28 February 2019

Members noted the position one month from the end of the financial year.

Members noted that the committee chairman had on safety grounds approved costings for work to remove a tree within the tree belt alongside Four Elms Road, identified during the winter tree survey as unstable. It was

Resolved: to endorse expenditure of £275 plus VAT to fell the tree.

6. CORRESPONDENCE

6.1 Resident re: request for dog waste bin

Members considered the request for a dog waste bin in the vicinity of Swan Lane allotments, in the light of notice received that day from the District Council that it would no longer support the installation and emptying of new dog waste-only bins. The County Council as waste disposal authority now required this waste to be mixed with general litter. Given the possible location near to housing, it was

Resolved: to investigate options and cost for a dual-purpose bin.

6.2 Tree Council re: national plan to address ash die-back disease

Members noted the e-mail circulated by the Tree Council had been passed to the head groundsman for his information.

7. HEAD GROUNDSMAN'S REPORT

7.1 Routine and seasonal work

Members noted the team's routine and seasonal work during January-March.

7.2 Groundstaff activity

Members noted the report including treatment for duckweed at Stangrove Park pond, completion of sports pitches decompaction, pollarding of the lime trees in the Churchyard

using the new tripod ladder, and reduction of bramble and other self-seeded shrubs and trees in areas of Stangrove Park. Overgrown shrubs in the Churchyard had been heavily pruned, for easier maintenance. The gang mower and tractor had been fully serviced, and a new rope fitted in the flag pole outside the police office.

The annual check of First Aid boxes was made in February, alongside those for Rickards Hall and Doggetts Barn, and all were fully stocked with in-date contents. The annual check of driving licences was also being made. The winter visual tree survey was completed in early January, the majority of resulting work being dealt with by the grounds team. An issue beyond their capabilities was passed to a local contractor and had been resolved. The winter headstone check was completed in early January with nothing major to report.

The IOG course on the maintenance of winter pitches at Sutton Valence school in February provided an insight into a number of procedures useful for maintaining the Council's sports pitches. Two of the team attended a free Amenity Forum event at Lingfield Park race course.

Members were pleased to note that along with the Rugby Club chairman the head groundsman recently met with Keith Kent, Twickenham head groundsman, to inspect the condition of the rugby pitches. Mr Kent was impressed with the current condition, and advised on a maintenance programme for the future, including fertilisation and over-seeding, and also verti-draining. The Rugby Club was intending to access funding to action this. It was

Resolved: to record members' thanks to the grounds team for their work.

7.3 Items for the future, including consideration of planned vehicle replacement

Members noted the gear linkage fault on the the Bipper van which presented as it was taken for its annual service, and a new battery. The total cost of service and repair was £419.17 plus VAT, to be taken from the vehicle budget heading 2018/19. Members considered the plan to replace the 10-year-old vehicle in 2019, and had tasked the committee chairman with seeking prices for a suitable replacement, with funding up to £15,000 to come from Depreciation in the Capital reserves. It was

Resolved: that the committee chairman in consultation with the head groundsman should present a purchase proposal to April Council for approval, in line with financial regulations.

The grounds team's largest manual mulching mower, used for larger areas of grass inaccessible to ride-on mowers, had developed a problem with the gears in the head of the mowing deck. It had been inspected by a local contractor who had quoted £280 approximately to rectify the problem. Although the mower was due for renewal during 2020, it was considered worth repairing as an invaluable piece of equipment, and members

Resolved: to commission the repair at c. £280

As requested at the last meeting, the head groundsman had reviewed the balance of grounds staff tasks and team skills. He felt that the balance of the team throughout the summer months was fairly adequate for the seasonal tasks carried out, but it could be difficult at times through the winter, as the lack of skill-set in the current full time staff often left the team stretched. They were fortunate over this winter period to have a fully qualified team member for an additional two days, but if this option was not available it would have been a struggle to continue operating at the highest level. This could be resolved by employing a skilled groundsman every winter for the additional two days a week at a minimum. It was

Resolved: to reconvene the Groundstaff Review Group and consider a recommendation to present to Council

8. OPEN SPACES BUSINESS FOR DECISION

8.1 To receive the Burial Report and consider arrangements for interment of ashes

Members noted the burial report updating the record of cemetery activity as follows:

January 2019	February 2019	March 2019
One burial	Two burials	Two burials
One Grant of Right	One Grant of right	One Grant of Right

Members considered a letter from a local funeral director concerning current arrangements for interment of ashes, and a subsequent letter from a local family with a request for interment where a memorial was possible. The Ashes Lawn and Wall of Remembrance had replaced traditional ashes plots as the facility for ashes interments 1999. After some discussion it was

Resolved: to reconsider the arrangements for interment of ashes, and at the discretion of the Council in the specific family circumstances to offer the opportunity to use a grave space for ashes interment.

8.2 To review the 2018/19 (Year 3) items within the 10 year Maintenance Plan, and consider the works scheduled for 2019/20

Members noted the comparison with 2018/19 (Year 3) budget. The work to replace the pipes and valves in the sewage pumping chambers at the Sports Pavilion took place in January, and the repointing to Cemetery One gate pillars completed in February.

The annual service of the Jubilee Clock in the High Street, coincided with one face of the clock stopping. Replacing two lithium batteries (£50) did not resolve the issue, as the master clock section of the main drive unit was faulty. In consultation with the committee chairman, a new part was ordered and fitted, at a cost of £220, plus labour at £260 to repair and re-install the clock (all prices ex VAT). It was

Resolved: to endorse the expenditure for the repair.

Within the 2019/20 10yr Plan works the periodic tree survey commissioned for this spring was underway, as scheduled. Costings had been sought for the following scheduled items.

Annual weed control on sports pitches – members considered quotes from three companies to treat the pitches at Blossoms Park, the Recreation Ground, and Mowshurst, and

Resolved: to commission Peter Duke for the work at a cost of £1,090 plus VAT

Replacement of chainlink fencing round the perimeter of the new Cemetery Four section

Members considered costings for this project, and current condition of the fence, and

Resolved: to postpone the project to a future year, to remove redundant supports for past playground ball-stop netting, and continue to monitor the condition of the fence through the quarterly sites visits.

Repainting of playground equipment

Members considered costings for three playgrounds (excluding Spitals Cross playground due for upgrade), and

Resolved: to commission William Beaumont LLP to carry out the work for £1,930 plus VAT

Members noted costings for resurfacing the skate court surround were sought from three companies, but none had been received in time for the meeting. Quotes for this work would be considered at next meeting.

Playground repair items arising from the 2018 external annual inspection had been completed, with the exception of replacement of the worn bearing on the roundabout at the Recreation Ground. The bearing shaft was worn beyond repair and required replacement, which could be done at the same time as fitting the new bearing. It was

Resolved: to approve Safeplay to supply and fit the shaft and bearing at £1,857 plus VAT, as upgrading of the playground is not scheduled until 2022/23.

8.3 To consider Year 2019/20 works in the 30 year Open Spaces plan

Spitals Cross playground refurbishment

Following the positive result from the consultation with residents of Spitals Cross, who supported the project, and the range of equipment proposed, the committee chairman and vice-chairman prepared the invitation to tender documents. These had been publicised and placed on the Contract Finder website. The deadline for return was Thursday 9 May. A small group of councillors would assess the submissions, along with the head groundsman and propose the next steps. It was

Resolved: that depending on the election results on 2 May, Cllrs. Todd, Layland, and Middleton, would consider the tender submissions.

Street lighting replacement programme

Members noted that 10 concrete columns had been replaced as part of a rolling programme. The 30 Year Plan for replacing some metal columns is continuing.

8.4 To arrange April Quarterly Monitoring visit and to update the Action Plan

Members noted the updated Action Plan amended after previous monitoring, and considered dates for the sites visit. It was

Resolved: to carry out the visit on 25 April.

Remedial work to potholes in the car park at Mowshurst became urgent during January, and the committee chairman on safety grounds approved work at £620 plus VAT, to be taken from Depreciation. It was

Resolved: to endorse this expenditure

Members noted replacement of the damaged Cemetery Depot access gate last month. During these works damage to the “hinge” fixtures of the undamaged half of the gates was found, requiring on-site correction to achieve a level setting. In consultation with the committee chairman this additional work was approved at a cost of £100 plus VAT. It was

Resolved: to endorse this expenditure from the vandalism budget

8.5 To consider works to prevent unauthorised access to Open Spaces

Members noted that costing for the proposed welding of extensions to the keep-bolts on new gates at Mowshurst was received after the last committee meeting. The committee chairman approved the sum of £162 plus VAT to complete the works to improve site security. It was

Resolved: to endorse this expenditure.

Following a meeting of some of the committee members with representatives from the fair to review the new access to Stangrove Park, costings were sought to install wider gates. Members considered the potential compromise of site security and the costs of dealing with an incursion, against further costs to alter the gates, and the annual income from the fair. Whilst regretting the access difficulty for the fair, after lengthy discussion it was

Resolved: to keep the improved security to the front of Stangrove Park to deter illegal encampments, and to suggest an alternative location for the fair, and offer support for displaying publicity signage for a new venue.

Members previously considered costing for a knee-high rail at Blossoms Park to prevent access to the field, as a Small Project in this new financial year. It was

Resolved: to proceed with this project after the cricket pavilion works had finished, and seek comparative costings for both timber and metal options.

Also as a Small Project, members previously agreed to consider installation of a key-locked gate at the Recreation Ground, to replace the removable bollard at the top of the path running from the west side car park down to the Pavilion. It was

Resolved: to seek costed options for a suitable gate at this location, to consider at next meeting.

8.6 To consider expenditure on vandalism

Members noted damage to the polycarbonate sheeting in the rear notice board in Stangrove Park during January. To deal with the visual blight promptly, the committee chairman approved replacement material at £53 plus VAT, which the groundstaff installed. It was

Resolved: to endorse this expenditure from vandalism budget heading.

The same month some slats from a bench in Blossoms Park were used alongside wood taken from the new pavilion site as fuel for a fire. Replacement slats were subsequently fitted from stock held. Both above events were reported to the police as criminal damage.

It was noted there had been a spike in vandalism at the Recreation Ground during February and March with three windows broken at the Sports Pavilion – criminal damage events reported to the police, also the Community Safety Unit at SDC, and the youth workers, for multi-agency action. The cost for repairs was £490, from vandalism budget.

During a weekend in March playground fencing panels in Stangrove Park were broken down, also reported to the police. The panels were not damaged but four posts and some brackets were required for repair.

8.7 To consider use of CCTV at the Recreation Ground and Stangrove Park

Members received initial information from a security company giving advice on a possible system for the Recreation Ground with indicative costs of £6,500-£7,000, and highlighting issues to consider. These included ongoing maintenance costs, resistance to vandalism, and questions of who would monitor the equipment/system.

Given the layout of Stangrove Park with the central pond surrounded by trees, the advice was there was no good way to cover the whole site, and access to electrical feed was also an issue, along with location for the recording equipment. The company representative was not able to provide a costing without a site visit, and would visit if members definitely wished to pursue the project. It was

Resolved: at this early stage to seek further information on options for possible use of CCTV at the Recreation Ground, and to consult the Rugby Club on the issue.

8.8 To consider resurfacing Mowshurst car park

Members noted that the Mowshurst car park surface was proving not sufficiently resilient for the changed usage pattern with increasing traffic visiting the recycling facilities. Surfacing companies had been asked to provide recommendations for alternative surfacing with indicative costings, to inform members' discussion, but these were still awaited. It was

Resolved: to consider options and costings to resurface the car park at Mowshurst, and seek CIL funding for this infrastructure project.

8.9 To consider the Forge Croft allotments management arrangement with Edenbridge Allotment Gardens Association.

Members discussed the need to formalise the long-standing site management arrangement with Edenbridge Allotment Gardens Association to meet requirements today, including those for GDPR. The Council's solicitor had advised that the usual arrangement is for a Town Council to lease/licence the whole site to the Association, which then manages the site and pays rent/licence fee to the Town Council. It was

Resolved: to create a formal agreement with EAGA as advised, at an expected cost of £600 plus VAT.

Members considered a plot-holder's request to install a walk-in poly-tunnel on pvc tube frame, at Forge Croft, in order to extend the growing season for some more tender fruits and vegetables.

Resolved: to permit the poly-tunnel, subject to agreement of EAGA, on condition that it was removed at the end of the plot tenancy.

9. TO NOTE THE GENERAL REPORT OF OPEN SPACES ACTIVITY

Members noted the relocation of Mont St Aignan sundial, continuing pest control to protect the football pitches at Mowshurst, and the cancellation of the League of Friends of Edenbridge Hospital bi-annual Hospital Fete in June. A possible "farewell" event was being considered for when the proposed new medical facility was open in Edenbridge.

The second phase of the project which re-located the WWII portable bomb shelter into Doggetts Courtyard was under way, to include a display notice giving visitors information about this piece of history. The community warden was preparing a proposal for a small A3 size lectern sign.

10. PRESS RELEASE

Members wished the commendation of the Recreation Ground sports pitches to be the subject of a Press Release.

Meeting closed at 9.35pm