

Minutes of the Meeting of the OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE held in Rickards Hall at 8pm on Monday 17th November 2014

Present: Cllrs T Bryant, R Davison, A Layland, S McGregor (ex officio), V Maynard, R Orridge (ex officio) M Robson (Vice-chairman)

In attendance: K. Staff – Deputy Clerk L. Thompsett – Head Groundsman
There were no members of the press or public present.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs J Scholey (holiday), M V McArthur (work), and J Wooltorton (work).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, OR PREDETERMINATIONS

None

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

None

4. TO RECEIVE AND SIGN MINUTES OF THE ES COMMITTEE 29th September 2014

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

5. TO RECEIVE ANALYSIS OF THE AMENITIES COMMITTEE'S RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS TO 31st October 2014

Members noted the position as at the end of the first seven months of the year 2014-15.

6. CORRESPONDENCE

None

7. HEAD GROUNDSMAN'S REPORT

7.1 Routine and seasonal work

Members noted the groundstaff work during October/November.

7.2 Groundstaff activity

Members noted the two wooden signs had been erected at Stangrove Pond, and ahead of winter the salt/grit and the sandbag standby stock had been topped up. Training for groundstaff on hedge-cutting/working at height had been arranged for 2 December.

8. OPEN SPACES BUSINESS FOR DECISION

8.1 To receive the Burial Report, and consider commissioning of Cemetery Extension

The burial report was noted as follows, updating the record of cemetery activity:

September 2014

Three burials

One Grant of Right

October 2014

One burial

One interment of ashes

To address on-going concerns about dog-fouling in the Churchyard, members considered a suggestion for display of temporary signage with a message from the Church, and

Resolved: to approve the signage, hoping that it would have a positive effect.

Members considered a request for a second interment of ashes in an existing Child's Grave, the previous being almost 15 years ago, and

Resolved: in this exceptional circumstance and with no memorial recognition proposed, to permit the interment.

Members considered a suggestion that consecration of the Extension could take place on 29 March just before Easter, and also discussed the response from the Diocese to an initial inquiry regarding the procedure. It was

Resolved: to continue seeking the proposed date, accepting that there would be an administration charge of £350 plus VAT, and in line with the Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1974 to leave approx. 10% of the Extension unconsecrated to be available for those of non-Christian or no faith.

8.2 To receive the report on the annual review of Activities Risk Assessments

Members noted the Head Groundsman and Deputy Clerk completed this annual review, and no further new tasks were added to the assessments.

8.3 To receive the report on Quarterly Monitoring and review the action plan

Members noted the updated Action Plan from the October quarterly Monitoring of sites.

8.4 To consider the annual review of groundstaff activities

Having reviewed the current level of staffing and range of tasks required across the sites, members felt the Council could not take on pitch mowing at Mowshurst under a new lease, and

Resolved: for the next year to add two more lengths of hedging to the external contract, continue contracting out the Churchyard mowing, and budget for eight months cover of the deputy post.

8.5 To confirm the Committee's Budget recommendations

In light of the decision at 8.4 above, members discussed Budget items and

Resolved: to make recommendation as follows for inclusion in the committee Budget:

Churchyard mowing	c £3,000 plus VAT
Hanging baskets	£2,925 plus VAT
Hedge cutting	£1,040 plus VAT
Pest control Stangrove Pond	£ 240 plus VAT
Tipper trailer	c £4,000 plus VAT
Aerator to replace SISIS slitter	c £6,000 plus VAT
Plus budget for eight months' cover of deputy post	

8.6 To receive update on Mowshurst pitch drainage works and pest control

Members noted that Nomads had played their first game on the No.1 pitch, and the wetter weather was levelling the lines. The club had suggested two dates for an event to officially mark the completion of the drainage project, and it was

Resolved: to select 17 January for the event.

Following Nomads' query regarding electricity bills for the sewage pump installation, copies of past bills had been received just prior to the meeting but had yet to be assessed.

8.7 To consider creating an Open Spaces 10 year Maintenance Plan

Members considered the draft scoping document, and

Resolved: to provide prospective consultants with the brief and part of the sites and elements chart, excluding details of existing activity in order to capture their recommendations for required maintenance, to compare with current schedules.

8.8 Refurbishment of Spitals Cross Playground

Members noted that during the Quarterly Monitoring tour, it was observed the wooden platform wear on the multiplay unit at Spitals Cross had deteriorated. The committee chairman requested these repairs be costed urgently. In line with Financial Regulations 4.5, with his

subsequent authorization, the two repairs were commissioned at £325 for the bridge, and £204 for the platform, to maintain the equipment in the interim.

Resolved: to ratify the decision to proceed with repairs.

Continuing to explore the possibility of linking the playground refurbishment with wider estate improvements, members noted West Kent Extra had advised its vacant community development post was still not filled, but some resource was available from an existing member of the team who knows Edenbridge and was very keen to assist. It was

Resolved: to proceed as outlined in the notes from WKE's initial project planning, and welcome their assistance with consultation and engagement activity around the possible revamp project, starting in the New Year if possible.

8.9 To consider costings for additional tree work

Members considered assessment of nine trees made following the Head Groundsman's summer tree inspection, and received subsequent to the last committee meeting. In line with Financial Regulations 4.5 in consultation with the committee chairman, more urgent work recommended for three trees was approved as follows:

Stangrove Park – leaning Corsican Pine 1820, felled; large two-stem Horse Chestnut 1844, leaning into park, cut back to one standing stem to regenerate – total cost £450 plus VAT.

Mowshurst – large dead Oak 1925 felled to standing stem for habitat, cost £375 plus VAT.

Resolved: to ratify this decision.

The remaining recommendations were considered, as follows:

Blossoms Park – Oak 34 remove deadwood over road; Oak 27 remove minor dead limbs, total cost £200 plus VAT

Mowshurst – Oak 1910, remove two hanging limbs and reduce remaining crown by 50%, cost £300 plus VAT

Forge Croft Allotments – Oak 39, 25% crown reduction to take weight off imbalanced crown to mitigate future failure, cost £350 plus VAT. It was

Resolved: to approve the works as above, total £850 plus VAT across the three sites.

Nomads football club had requested reduction of branches from two trees over Pitch 2, which can interfere with play. The contractor costed this work at £450 plus VAT to include trimming back two further neighbouring trees, and it was

Resolved: to accept the costing for the work by Pitch 2 at Mowshurst.

8.10 To consider works following annual playground inspection

Members considered the report and costing from the contractor who installed the path across to the skate ramps in 2010, which was now wearing and had gaps opening along the edges. It was

Resolved: to re-coat the path with chippings bonded with VLS adhesive, in the process infilling the edges, at a cost of £446 plus VAT from the Open Spaces contingencies budget, work to be carried out in dry conditions.

Members noted costings are still awaited for Stangrove Park playground signage, and for possible secondary support chains to the top of each chain set on the basket swing, but monitoring through the weekly equipment inspection was sufficient to maintain safety.

8.11 To consider sandbag storage

In line with the Council's sandbag policy amended at its meeting on 10 November, members considered a proposal to provide two outdoor storage units for sandbags. It was

Resolved: to agree in principle to source and purchase one shed-size unit to be sited at Mowshurst and a smaller unit for Doggetts Courtyard for a small number of bags if necessary to protect the Volunteer Control Point when operating from this site, with a guide cost of around £600 to be taken from Open Spaces contingency budget.

8.12 To consider an update on street lights

Members noted the report updating progress on the street light refurbishment programme, and the decisions taken at November Council meeting to include outstanding urgent items on the Inspection Report, with a contingency of 10% for unforeseen costs.

Members noted additional urgent work to replace a cracked concrete column in Ridge Way, reported by the lighting contractors as unsafe, authorised by Cllr J Scholey and the Clerk under Financial Regulations 4.5. It was

Resolved: to ratify the above decision, the total cost being £1,399.70

Members noted an update on the lights on the Great Stone Bridge from County Cllr C Pearman, and there was some concern at the potential loss of two lights from the bridge. It was

Resolved: to advise that the Great Stone Bridge Trust be consulted when Kent Highways have a costed proposal

9. TO NOTE THE GENERAL REPORT OF AMENITIES ACTIVITY

Members noted early poor weather affected the **Family Fun** activities day, organised by Sevenoaks DC and delivered by VAWK, during half term. Once the rain cleared families arrived, and around 30 children ultimately enjoyed the games and activities in Rickards Hall.

The contractor chosen for the **external tree survey** this autumn Arbormedic had advised that due to staff shortages the start of the project would be delayed to the beginning of December.

10. PRESS RELEASE

Members wished to issue a Press Release in support of the initiative to tackle dog-fouling in the Churchyard.

The meeting closed at 9.25 pm