

**Minutes of the Meeting of the OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE held in Rickards Hall at 8pm on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2015**

Present: Cllrs J Barnett, T Bryant (Vice-chairman), A Layland (Chairman), J Scholey and B Todd.

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

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Cllrs R Davison (holiday), V Maynard (business), S McGregor (holiday), M Robson (unwell), J Woollorton (business)

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, OR PREDETERMINATIONS**

None

*The Chairman closed the meeting*

**3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

None.

*The Chairman re-opened the meeting*

**4. TO RECEIVE AND SIGN MINUTES OF THE OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE 28 September 2015**

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 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015**

Members noted the position for the first half of the financial year 2015-16, budget comparisons already approved at October Finance Committee.

**6. CORRESPONDENCE**

**6.1 SDC re: outdoor projects National Citizen Service**

Members considered suggestions for outdoor social action projects for **summer 2016**, under the National Citizen Service programme for 12 young people (ages 15-17) delivered locally by Charlton Athletic Community Trust (CACT) in partnership with North West Kent Countryside Partnership. It was

Resolved: to suggest as possibilities work in the Millennium Wood, painting gates/outdoor furnishings, or general overgrowth clearance, depending on the length of work time the project required.

**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 activity, including completion of the quarterly health and safety monitoring, and winter machinery servicing on going. Following the wet conditions for the Bonfire night ground reinstatement had been necessary, and the committee Chairman with the Clerk and head groundsman had a site-meeting with representatives of Rugby Club and Bonfire Society, to consider arrangements for future years. It was

Resolved: to record members' thanks to the team for the ground recovery work at the Rec.

Members also noted that training provision for the team, agreed in principle at last meeting, was being progressed, first with a bespoke course of two half-days, covering an update on noise and vibration awareness and also basic equipment maintenance, at a good value cost of £375. Grounds and office staff alike will receive basic Health & Safety refresher, including Manual Handling and Personal Safety, free from Ellis Whittam as part of the package Council has with the company.

## **8. OPEN SPACES BUSINESS FOR DECISION**

### **8.1 To receive the Burial Report**

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

#### **September 2015**

One ashes interment

Three Grants of Right

#### **October 2015**

Two burials

One Grant of Right

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

It was noted that the Head Groundsman had carried out the annual review of the activities risk assessments, and an assessment for clearance of drains had been added.

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

Members noted the report from the October two half-day sites visits, and with the next quarterly monitoring being due in January, two half-days for this need to be scheduled.

### **8.4 To consider the Annual review of Groundstaff Activities**

Members noted the grounds team currently has four staff in the summer (including an eight-month contract post), and three in the winter. With the deputy head groundsman on long-term sick leave, the short contract had been extended by a year to maintain staffing levels at three. Meanwhile, it was

Resolved: to maintain the activity *status quo*.

### **8.5 To consider committee budget for 2016/17**

Members noted that following the last meeting, at which the 10-year Open Spaces Maintenance Plan was adopted, the agreed small group of councillors had met to review the budget for Year One of the Plan. Cllrs Layland, Bryant and Scholey met with the deputy clerk in attendance. Cllr Davison was unavailable but was content for the meeting to proceed without him.

As discussed previously at Forward Planning committee in September, the total cost of the works in the 10-year plan spread across the period results in an average of £42,000 per year. Some years would require more than that, other years less. Adoption of the Plan was considered to be good governance as a method of managing the estate maintenance.

The intention is to create a capital budget for Open Spaces maintenance, into which £42K would be transferred each year, requiring additional funds if insufficient for the year, and to roll forward any unspent year-to-year. The maintenance works programmed for Year One are budgeted at £51,594 at 2015 prices, with £42,450 coming from £18,150 savings in the Revenue Budget currently allocated for maintenance, £17,300 from Depreciation Fund, £7,000 from Property Fund. All but £1,000 (provided in perpetuity for grave maintenance) of the Cemetery Capital Fund will also be transferred to the new Open Spaces maintenance budget heading, thus a further £33,846. Details of the mechanisms for managing these funds need to be agreed with the Clerk and RFO.

Other than the High Street hanging baskets display, no additional items/projects were identified for Budget considerations at last meeting, but it was

Resolved: to include the Rec east car park railing project, if agreed at item 8.9 below.

**8.6 To consider refurbishment of Spitals Cross Playground**

Members noted the outcome of the meeting of the committee chairman and the deputy clerk with West Kent Extra's funding co-ordinator, that the organisation was prepared to be a funding partner for this project and was investigating the possibility of making an application for Landfill Trust funds through waste handling companies. Local charities and organisations were also being approached.

The outline specification did not currently state that the new playground equipment should be mainly metal, as is the existing provision, and it was

Resolved: to add this to the specification

Members were advised that SDC was proposing to reconsider the use of open space on the estate in the first half of 2016, and it was

Resolved: to put the playground refurbishment on hold until the future land use became clear, therefore moving back the target date to at least 2017.

**8.7 To consider tree works costings and Millennium Wood future maintenance**

Members noted the Edenbridge Club had confirmed that it would share the £550 cost of works to the Copper Beech in the Churchyard to reduce over-shadowing, and therefore this, and the felling of the nearby dead Birch at £100, had been submitted to the SDC arboricultural officer for approval, as they are within the Conservation Area. The SDC officer had agreed all except shortening of over-extended laterals. It was

Resolved: to proceed with the works, with the exception of shortening over-extended laterals.

The Chairman welcomed the Kent Men of the Trees representative David Carey, who had toured the sites with Cllr Richard Davison in August, and invited him to discuss questions to consider for the future maintenance of the Millennium Wood. Mr Carey advised that the area would be just large enough to consider "zoning", and agreed that the least costly and most biodiverse approach would be to maintain the existing tracks and allow the areas between to take their natural course. It was

Resolved: that the town already had sufficient "open" amenity spaces, so the Millennium Wood should be managed as natural woodland, and members would at January meeting consider answers to the questions posed for the management of the wood.

**8.8 To receive the report from the biennial review of street lighting**

It was noted the biennial review of street light provision had been carried out by members, as agreed last meeting, though three reports were still awaited. Only two of ETC columns were found out of light, both already listed for work by council's contractors. No columns were reported in poor condition.

**8.9 To consider future action to protect open spaces from unauthorised access**

Members considered the report from Cllr Barnett following his meeting with members of the Rugby Club at the Rec, and

Resolved: to seek budget costings for either low rail or spaced-post options to create a barrier along the eastern car park, to prevent vehicle access to the field.

It was noted that the Club representatives felt there was no need for a speed hump across the access to the car park from Coomb Field.

**9. TO NOTE THE GENERAL REPORT OF OPEN SPACES ACTIVITY**

Members noted a spate of **vandalism** incidents including a large amount of graffiti covering the surfaces and sides of the skate ramp equipment at Blossoms Park overnight 31<sup>st</sup> October, and broken glass panels on both bus shelters either side of Main Road on Marlpit Hill which

required replacement at £175 each plus VAT. During the weekend of 7/8 November, the wall beside the footpath SR610 to the north of the Churchyard/Cemetery One was in one place splattered with white paint. Someone subsequently walked in the pool of paint on the footpath and left a trail of footprints along the asphalt. The Chairman recorded his appreciation of clean-up achieved by the groundstaff.

Members noted the volunteer controlling rabbits at **Mowshurst** reported that there had been a noticeable reduction in activity, and although the preparation work for re-surfacing a section of the paths in **Stangrove Park** had been carried out, ground conditions since had not facilitated vehicle access to lay the asphalt.

A report on the **Edenbridge in Bloom** competition was also noted, also that the awards presentation went ahead without notification to the Council. Local winning entrants again went on to do well at the District level competition. The Council Chairman had decided to invite them to his Reception next month.

**10. PRESS RELEASE**

No items were suggested for a press release.

The meeting closed at 9.15 pm