

Minutes of the Meeting of the OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE held in Rickards Hall at 7.30pm on Monday 18th January 2016

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

In attendance: K Staff – Deputy Clerk L Thompsett – Head Groundsman

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

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs J Scholey (holiday), V Maynard (family commitment), S McGregor (council business), M Robson (unwell), J Woollorton (business)

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, OR PREDETERMINATIONS

None

The Chairman closed the meeting

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Members were asked to consider at item 6.2 whether they could ask SDC if the Town Field could be cut less frequently to encourage more natural meadow grass and wild flowers.

The Chairman re-opened the meeting

4. TO RECEIVE AND SIGN MINUTES OF THE OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE 16 November 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 31st December 2015

Members noted the position three quarters through the financial year 2015-16, budget comparisons to be presented at January Finance Committee.

6. CORRESPONDENCE

6.1 Kent Men of the Trees re: Trees in the Village Competition

Members noted receipt of the Highly Commended certificate from KMT, and recorded their appreciation of the groundstaff team's work which contributed to the award.

6.2 SDC Request for additional grass cutting

Members considered the request from SDC, and as current staffing level and work load would make it very difficult to assist with maintaining this large area of grass on Town Field, it was

Resolved: to reply that while not possible now, this could be considered when the groundstaff review takes place in the autumn, and meanwhile to suggest two local contractors who might be able to help SDC, and that leaving the area to become more like wild meadow could be an option.

6.3 CACT re: outdoor projects National Citizen Service

Members considered the advice from CACT that projects for outdoor social action under the National Citizen Service programme for **summer 2016** would cover two five-day periods, and

Resolved: to submit work in the Millennium Wood, painting gates/outdoor furnishings, or general overgrowth clearance, as three options for the programme to consider.

6.4 INTOTRI re: new series of Triathlons in Edenbridge

Members considered a request from INTOTRI for support for the project to introduce monthly free-entry triathlon events on Sunday mornings in Edenbridge, and

Resolved: to permit use of Stangrove Park for the running phase of the events starting in April at no charge, subject to runners staying on the hard surface paths through the park, and to completion of an Open Spaces Hire Agreement, meeting all Standard Conditions.

7. HEAD GROUNDSMAN'S REPORT

7.1 Routine and seasonal work

Members noted the groundstaff work during December/January, and that the very wet weather was affecting the amount of graves sinkage to be levelled in the Cemetery.

7.2 Groundstaff activity

Members noted the activity, including completion of the quarterly health and safety monitoring for January, and the winter memorials check in Cemetery and Churchyard from which there was no major issue to report and no further memorials showing movement. Members also noted the team had received a bespoke training course of two half-days, covering an update on noise and vibration awareness and also basic equipment maintenance. Grounds and office staff alike had received basic Health & Safety refresher course, including Manual Handling, use of ladders, and Personal Safety.

8. OPEN SPACES BUSINESS FOR DECISION

8.1 To receive the Burial Report and consider costings for supply of plaques for the Wall of Remembrance

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

November 2015	December 2015
Three burials	Three burials
One Grant of Right	Two interments of ashes
	Two Grants of Right

Six companies had been invited to submit costings to supply and install the plaques for the Wall of Remembrance exclusively from 1st March for five years to 2021. Three had replied, and it was

Resolved: to accept the proposal from Yew Tree Stone, to supply and install the plaques with up to 40 letters at £228 (inc VAT) cost to clients, with 20% (£38) commission payable to the Council

8.2 To review the Allotments half-plots policy

Members reviewed the current policy and

Resolved: not to make any changes at this time

8.3 To review the Waste Management policy

Members reviewed the current policy and

Resolved: not to make any changes at this time

8.4 To consider costings for Churchyard mowing

Members considered costings received from two local contractors for mowing the Churchyard, two cuts a month March-October (16 in total) boxing off the cuttings, with £2,800 provision in the services budget for this activity in next year. It was

Resolved: to accept the proposal from Hever Landscapes Ltd at £188+VAT per cut (£3,008 + VAT total), the shortfall £208 to be taken from Open Spaces Contingencies

8.5 To consider committee budget for 2016/17 and Year 1 works within the 10 year Maintenance Plan

Members noted Finance committee did not include any additional funding for the project for car park fence at the Rec (see item 8.9 below) in the Budget approved at full Council last week. The item was referred back to Open Spaces committee to consider.

Comparative quotes were being sought for the Year 1 works falling broadly into five elements - hard landscape, soft landscape, fixtures, play equipment, surveys. The responses with costings for the works would be presented for consideration at next meeting April 4.

8.6 To consider refurbishment of Spitals Cross Playground

It was noted that West Kent Extra had advised it would make a contribution of £5,000 towards the refurbishment. Having learned about the delay to the project, West Kent had decided its contribution would become designated funds in their accounts, to be carried forward to the next financial year. Their fund-raising co-ordinator had provided very useful advice on potential sources of funding, but he will delay any active fund-raising until next financial year.

8.7 To arrange January Quarterly Monitoring visit and update the Action Plan

Arrangements for two half-day visits were considered, and it was

Resolved: the committee chairman should suggest two dates having consulted his diary, the deputy clerk to circulate these and arrangements to members as soon as possible.

Members noted the Action Plan drawn up after the October monitoring had been updated.

8.8 To consider an update on street light maintenance

It was noted the subject of street lighting will be included within the task groups at the Councillor Training evening scheduled for 15th February.

8.9 To consider a proposal for railing at the Recreation Ground eastern car park

Members noted a local contractor had provided "budget" costings for installation of a low-level rail along the field edge of the eastern car park at the Rec in the region of £5,000. The budget agreed for Open Spaces next year has no provision for this new project, other than through its £3,000 Contingency heading. In the current year's budget there could be just sufficient funding with the remainder of Small Projects plus Contingencies headings, to progress this project before the year end. Members wished to do this if possible, but with the next meeting not until April 4, it was

Resolved: to seek comparative quotes from contractors, to ascertain that the ambulance gate will provide sufficient access for all authorised users, to approach the Rugby club for a possible contribution, and then for the committee chairman and vice-chairman to decide accordingly whether to proceed.

8.10 To consider tree works costings, and Millennium Wood future maintenance

Members considered the condition of a Scots pine tree (1821) in the southern perimeter belt of Stangrove Park, and the advice of the Council's regular tree contractor that it did not look very healthy, was in decline and did need monitoring. It was

Resolved: to fell the tree as close as possible to ground level and remove timber at a cost of £450 plus VAT, funding to be taken from current year's Open Spaces Contingency.

Kent Men of the Trees had requested members to consider a number of questions about their vision for the future of the Millennium Wood, before they could consider any advice on a future maintenance programme for the wood. It was

Resolved: to manage the area as natural woodland, maintaining the existing picnic spaces and tracks, and allow the areas between to take their natural course.

8.11 To consider support for Edenbridge in Bloom 2016

With more categories planned for 2016, and Coolings' own higher-profile reception planned earlier (in July) this year, it was

Resolved: to support Coolings' In Bloom competition again, as a means of recognizing and encouraging community pride in the local environment.

8.12 To consider pitch drainage at Mowshurst

Members considered Nomads FC's concerns about the condition of No 1 pitch at Mowshurst, and the report from the contractor following a site inspection. It appeared the pipes were functioning carrying some water away, but that a lot of water was being trapped in the surface level of the pitch, not getting down to the drains, because the sand bands had disappeared. The company had advised that the slits appeared to have opened up when the dry weather came and the sand went deeper into the ground so destroying the slits. This was unforeseen and due to the very heavy clay soil. Members noted that the pitch was due for sand-slitting this year under the Maintenance Plan, and considered further options. It was

Resolved: that the groundstaff would slit the pitch as soon as ground conditions allowed, and also to accept the contractor's goodwill offer to loosen the top with an Earthquake machine when the ground dries, slitting 250mm deep and vibrating to shake the soil.

9. TO NOTE THE GENERAL REPORT OF OPEN SPACES ACTIVITY

It was noted that the SDC tree officer approved the amended application for works in the Churchyard, and these were carried out on 18th December. The Edenbridge Club had been invoiced for their agreed share of the reduction works to the Copper Beech tree.

The preparation work for re-surfacing a section of the paths in Stangrove Park had been carried out, but ground conditions since have still not facilitated vehicle access across the park to lay the asphalt.

10. PRESS RELEASE

KMT Trees in the Village Award was suggested for a press release.

In view of the confidential nature of the following item to be discussed, the chairman moved that the press and public be excluded from the Chamber. Public Bodies (admission to meetings) Act 1960.

11. CONFIDENTIAL ITEM

Staffing levels for spring/summer season

In light of the personnel decision at full Council last week, and at the committee's last meeting to maintain the groundstaff activity *status quo*, it was

Resolved: that the staffing structure remains as in the past two years, with a seven-month skilled groundsman summer short contract, from April-October – pending a review of the team structure in the autumn.

The meeting closed at 9.37 pm