

**Minutes of the Meeting of the OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE held in Rickards Hall at 7.30pm on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2016**

Present: Cllrs A Layland (Chairman), J Barnett, S McGregor (ex officio), B Todd and M Robson

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

There were no members of the public or press present.

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Cllrs T Bryant (unwell), V Maynard (business), R Davison (holiday), and J Scholey (prior commitment)

Cllr J Woollorton was absent

**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 19 September 2016**

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 31 October 2016**

Members noted the position seven months into the financial year 2016-17.

**6. CORRESPONDENCE**

**6.1 Community First Responders re: council vehicles**

Members considered an inquiry from Community First Responders regarding their wish to establish a vehicle for rural outreach, and potential disposal of Council vehicles. As the Council usually part-exchanged when acquiring a new vehicle, it was

Resolved: to advise that the Council is not planning to replace any vehicle before 2019, but would consider an offer equivalent to the part-exchange value at such time in future

**6.2 Great Stone Bridge re: Water Meadows Project report**

Members noted the updated report for this project and that the Trust was very grateful for the contribution of the grounds team members on the activity day in early October, and were pleased to accept the gift of two barn owl boxes for the Council to install in a suitable location.

**6.3 Kent Men of the Trees re: result and report from Trees in the Village Competition 2016**

Members were pleased to receive the letter advising the competition result, and a copy of the judge's report praising the good care being taken of the local trees. Members considered what type of tree they would like to acquire with the £25 award, and

Resolved: to request either a flowering cherry, or a lime for the avenue at Stangrove Park

**6.4 Resident re: request for geocache location in the Millennium Wood**

Members considered a request from a resident for permission to introduce a geocache location beside one of the footpaths at the Millennium Wood, which had potential to draw visitors to the area. It was not considered the right location and members

Resolved: to reconsider the issue in six months.

## **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 tree and bush maintenance at Stangrove Park, the back of the eastern car park at the Rec, and along the fence behind the flood bund.

The two football pitches at Mowshurst plus football pitch 2 at the Rec had been treated with the Earthquake machine.

The visit to the SALTEX show at NEC in Birmingham went well, checking equipment prices to make comparison with costs from local suppliers. Following a recommendation, prices for verti-draining, Earthquake machine, and sand-banding were sought from a Kent-based company for treating all of the pitches as a project. The response was £2,400 for ten pitches, verti draining or Earthquake machine, taking four days to complete Mowshurst and the Rec. Members were advised the work would help the pitches by relieving compaction, and aiding water movement through the surface and root development.

Preparing for winter the salt bins were full, with about five tons in stock, plus 200 hundred sand bags. The quarterly Health & Safety monitoring has been carried out.

The agreed repair to the small Bipper van was carried out, and during the process it was recommended that the water pump be done at the same time as it was all connected. This matter was referred to the committee chairman, who approved the work to proceed, at a total cost of £830.93 plus VAT. It was

Resolved: to endorse this expenditure

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

### **8.1 To receive the Burial Report, and consider revision of the Cemetery rules**

Members noted the record of Cemetery activity as follows:

September 2016	October 2016
One burial	Two interments of ashes
One Grant of Right	

The agreed small group of councillors (Layland, McGregor and Todd) revisited the Cemetery regulations and recommended that in view of increasing instances of elderly long-term residents having to move out of the parish into care homes nearer their families, but wishing to return to Edenbridge for interment when the times comes, parishioner status should continue for up to three years after moving. It was

Resolved: to adopt this recommendation and that requests for variation should be considered by the Council chairman, chairman of Open Spaces committee and one other member of the committee.

Other aspects of the Cemetery rules and regulations had also been reviewed, and changes to update them were proposed. Members accepted these and

Resolved: to discontinue the option to include a small engraved image of the deceased on a memorial, which had not been taken up since it was introduced several years ago; to include specific reference to exclusion of animal remains; and to discontinue provision of a flat marker stone on pre-purchased plots.

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

Members noted the annual Activities Risk Assessment review has been completed, with only one item to add, a manual handling assessment for the knapsack spraying assessment.

### **8.3 To consider the Annual Review of Groundstaff Activities and staff training requirements**

Members noted there had been no changes in the groundstaff team structure, and none were proposed at this time. The team remained three full-time posts in the autumn/winter season (comprising head groundsman, skilled groundsman, and unskilled groundsman) and in the spring/summer increasing to four full-time posts adding an eight month skilled post April-October. This latter was filled by an Agency placement this summer.

The permanent skilled groundsman requested reduction to three days a week, and the agency placement had been extended until 31<sup>st</sup> March to cover the other two days. There were currently no plans for this council to take on additional maintenance work, and the staffing arrangement would give time to consider the range of grounds activity going forward.

Members discussed Kent Highways' decision to reduce its grass maintenance to 5-6 cuts per year from 2017, which included the relief road Mont St Aignan Way, with shrub maintenance reduced to one prune per year. With the Town Council's small team already working at capacity, after considering options ranging from buying-in additional cuts from Highways, the Town Council being paid a small amount as contribution from Highways to carry out the work, to forming a team of volunteers to carry out additional pruning, it was

Resolved: not to take on responsibility nor additional expense for Highways grass maintenance, and a small group of councillors with the Head Groundsman should review grass maintenance overall, ahead of the next season.

Members noted that following staff appraisals this year, the only training need identified was for a possible pesticides course for the agency worker, as all permanent staff qualifications were up to date.

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

Members noted the Action Plan updated following the two half-day site visits at the end of October. The possibility of installing a low rail fence along the field edge of the access drive at Blossoms Park was considered, to prevent unauthorised access to the cricket field and recurring damage/displacement of the white timber bollards, and it was

Resolved: to recommend this as an item for Budget considerations, subject to receipt of indicative costings for the project.

At the skate ramps the user's information notice had been vandalised and the large lockable case and content needed replacing at a cost of £295. The smaller A3 notice was also worn and required updating, at a cost of £65. It was

Resolved: to carry out both replacements at a total of £360.

Members considered a suggestion that to brighten up the skate ramps location, the western side of the surrounding fence could provide a site for panels to host a long mural, to be painted by local young people in a similar project to the award-winning Town Station subway artwork.

Resolved: not to put forward this location, as the skate facility was being investigated for replacement, but consider whether there was another suitable local site.

Subsequent to the quarterly monitoring, routine playground inspection uncovered corrosion damage to the crawl tunnel at the Spitals Cross site, the item being closed off from use.

In consultation with the committee chairman, welding repair has been commissioned in order to return the item to use as soon as possible, at a cost of up to £452.75 plus VAT if the work took as much as four hours – funding to be taken from the 10-year plan Contingencies budget.

Resolved: to endorse this expenditure

Members considered replacement of one of the large wire mesh waste bins in the Cemetery which had reached the end of its serviceable life, at a cost of £73.49 plus VAT. It was

Resolved: to approve this expenditure under the depreciation budget heading

**8.5 To consider committee budget recommendations for 2017/18**

Members noted that the Forward Planning Committee in September recommended committees should set a stand-still budget for 2017/18. Equipment identified at previous meetings for replacement in 2017 includes the following, with indicative prices sought from a local supplier:

Ransomes TG3400 trailed hydraulic 5-gang mower, £23,500 (incl part-ex) plus VAT	
Stihl chainsaw	£ 460
Water bowser	£2290
Rover 18" mower	£ 360
Rotary petrol mower	£ 360
Stihl strimmer	£ 535
"Billy Goat" pedestrian leaf vacuum	£1050.50

In April members at Council agreed to consider provision of funding for an additional dog waste bin and on-going service cost at footpath SR602 Crouch House Road, within Open Spaces budget next year.

Members also considered creating a digital record of the Cemetery registers by scanning the books, costed at £850, and the possibility has also been raised of back-entering data into the computer package from 2011 back to 1905 when the oldest section of the Cemetery was opened. This would involve in the region of 4,500 records, at a cost of approx £1,900.

Other items for consideration included the Blossoms Park fence rail (discussed at item 8.4 above) and the continued provision of the High Street hanging baskets display.

Members discussed a new lockable wooden noticeboard to be installed at Marsh Green to replace the metal one removed from the former Wheatsheaf, possibly to be shared the church St John URC with a cost which could be in the region of £1,500 depending on source. It was

Resolved: to propose the above items for consideration for the Open Spaces budget next year

**8.6 To consider works within Open Spaces 10 year Maintenance Plan**

**8.6.1 Update current Year 1, and costings for Rec car park re-marking**

Members noted that a comparison to date of agreed work costs against budget (set on 2015 prices) and that work on Doggetts Courtyard surface was still part completed, with appropriate weather conditions awaited, and replacement of the bus shelter at High St/Mont St Aignan Way was also yet to be carried out.

**Doggetts Courtyard Benches**

Members were delighted to noted that subsequent to last meeting the Rotary Club had agreed a donation of £600 towards the second longer-length bench for the courtyard.

The local carpenter commissioned to repair the remaining shorter seat found in practice the joints had deteriorated too far. With the committee chairman's approval the £350 in the budget has been used to replace the seat from the same supplier as the long benches at £274.99 ex VAT. It was

Resolved: to endorse this expenditure

**8.6.2 Programme for next Year 2**

Members had an opportunity to review the works programme for next year during the quarterly monitoring visits. The budget figures shown were still at 2015 level, and would need an uplift of 2% to reflect inflation. There was a total of £2140 included in the budget for verti-draining – in light of the head groundsman's report above, it was

Resolved: to increase this sum by £260 to be able to cover all the pitches

The car park at Mowshurst (896sq m in total) had become potholed in the section approaching the recycling pods, and was due for resurfacing next year under the Plan. The consultants allowed £12,096 (at 2015 prices) to regrade the whole surface and re-

lay with road planings, but suggested two other alternatives – one to use recycled asphalt at approx. £1,000 more than the planings' cost, or the other to use a completely different system such as Bodpave which could add around £31,000 further to the planings cost. It was

Resolved: to seek costings for the planings and the recycled asphalt options.

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

Following one suggestion from Marsh Green, to increase the height of the edges of the Green, making it harder for towed vehicles to gain access, members had requested an advisory cost for information, and noted £2,480 for raising by 30cm along an 80m length. Given that determined intruders were likely to overcome any physical barrier, it was

Resolved: to pursue legal action and continue to press the Police to use their powers

**8.8 To consider the future of casual-use football goals at the Recreation Ground**

Members noted the response from the Youth Forum on this item, that there was a need for metal mesh goal-ends for casual use, but given the uncertainty of the amount of funds which could be raised towards a possible £8,000 cost, it was

Resolved: not to include a sum in the Open Spaces budget for this project, but investigate installation of goals which were more heavy duty to resist vandalism

**8.9 To consider street lights maintenance – LED lighting**

Members considered advice from Council's lighting contractor that there was now available an LED gear tray, which fits directly into the Thorn Jet lanterns, and they can supply and install these gear trays for £195 + VAT each. Although there was the initial outlay, there would be a 65% energy saving, and it would provide a white light. KCC was changing its lanterns and at the recent Highways parish seminar said the LED lights last for 15 years. The gear trays can be installed on a column by column basis, or road by road. There was funding assistance available from Salix Finance, a government-backed, not-for-profit organisation with 0% interest funding and repayment via energy savings. It was

Resolved: to make further enquiries about Salix

The lighting contractor has also reported that column 68 (on the wall of 54 Hever Road) had been vandalised. To repair, it could be converted to 50w Sodium and have the broken panel replaced, at a cost of £137.25 + VAT, or have an LED gear tray installed and the broken panel replaced. It was

Resolved: to repair the lantern with an LED gear tray and replace the broken panel, giving the opportunity to assess the LED.

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

Members noted concerns continued regarding an increased number of pigeons present in the town centre, some property owners had consulted Environmental Health about options for their control. It would be up to each premises to take their own action, and defences on one property could just move the problem along to the next. An application had been submitted for a grant of £500 from SDC Business Area Improvement Fund to take wider action. A response was awaited.

Plaques for the two donated benches for Doggetts Courtyard had been ordered, and it was proposed to have a photo-opportunity to mark the gifts to the community before Christmas.

**10. PRESS RELEASE**

Members did not consider any items from the meeting should be the subject of a Press Release

The meeting closed at 9.48pm