

Minutes of the Meeting of the OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE held in Doggetts Barn at 7.30pm on Monday 19 November 2018

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 were four members of the public present, and no press.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, OR PREDETERMINATIONS

Cllr A Layland declared a non-pecuniary interest in items 6.4 and 11.1, being a member of the executive committee of the Chamber of Commerce.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Three members of the public raised questions and made statements concerning maintenance of a variety of open spaces through the town, and also put forward suggestions for future projects and increased involvement of members of the community. One set of questions was tabled, and committee members were advised the others would be e-mailed for members to consider. Where information was known, answers to questions were given at the meeting.

The Chairman thanked the members of the public for their contribution and the meeting was reconvened.

4. TO RECEIVE AND SIGN MINUTES OF THE OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE 17 September 2018

Members considered a recommendation from October Council meeting that the minute for item 8.7 be amended inserting the words in italics as follows: The draft Local Plan *allocations* do not include this proposal, *as the site has been identified in Appendix 8 (Blue Category) as too small*, but SDC Officers had indicated that... It was

Resolved: that accepting the amendment as proposed, 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 2018

Members noted the position seven months into the financial year.

Members noted that as agreed at last meeting, the committee chairman with the deputy clerk approved the costing for urgent tree works at Mowshurst adjacent to Four Elms Road, at £1,317 plus VAT, this being less than the maximum figure set by committee. It was

Resolved: to endorse this expenditure.

It was noted that reported wear to the boards over the River Eden retention dam had been repaired on safety grounds at a cost of £70. It was

Resolved: to endorse this expenditure.

6. CORRESPONDENCE

6.1 Great Stone Bridge Trust re: thanks for help with Watermeadows Project

Members noted the message of thanks for groundstaff help provided for the Watermeadows project on Make A Difference Day. Cllr Pearman on behalf of GSBT asked whether staff assistance could be available for the MADD event in early October 2019. It was

Resolved: subject to confirmation of the date, and with the Head Groundsman's agreement, two

staff could again support the activity day.

6.2 Allotment tenant re: gates replacement

Members were pleased to note a message of appreciation for the maintenance works from one of the tenants at Swan Lane site, and another had conveyed verbal thanks.

6.3 Marsh Green residents re: WW1 commemoration bench

Members considered a request on behalf of Marsh Green residents for a WW1 commemoration bench for the village. The bench provided at the war memorial at the hospital was for the whole parish, which includes Marsh Green, but it was

Resolved: to ask whether the residents' association could make a contribution to a bench, and where the residents envisaged it would be located on the Green.

Cllr Layland left the meeting

6.4 Chamber of Commerce re: French Market event 25th November

Members considered a request from the Chamber of Commerce for use of the Market Yard car park on Sunday 25th November for the annual pre-Christmas visit of a French Market, times proposed from 7am to 9pm and occupying the same area as the weekly Thursday market. Subject to completion of an Open Spaces Hire Agreement (received), and meeting its Standard Conditions, it was

Resolved: to give permission, including use of the Council's TN8 Licence covering its open spaces, with no charge as this is a community event

Cllr Layland returned to the meeting

7. HEAD GROUNDSMAN'S REPORT

7.1 Routine and seasonal work

Members noted the team's routine and seasonal work during September and October.

7.2 Groundstaff activity

It was noted the team had begun clearing undergrowth from the banks of the pond at Stangrove Park, and had taken down a lot of low overhanging branches, and planned to do the same on island in preparation for clearing as much of the duckweed off the water's surface as possible prior to proposed treatment over the coming months. With the increasing lack of water in the pond this was difficult, as was calculating the volume of water to treat as the level was so low.

One member of the public left the meeting

The team had begun maintaining the flower beds at the front of Edenbridge Town station, under the Station Partnership agreed by members. An overhaul included pruning existing trees and shrubs, and planting a few winter plants, and a fresh covering of wood chip from the stock pile in Stangrove Park.

The team had replaced some of the deck boards on the Retention Dam over the river, behind Church Street. The wood was purchased locally, and a contractor routed out grooves on the board surface.

The team replaced various posts on Council land around the town over a week in October. This included three gates and gate posts at the Swan Lane allotments, a large oak post by the entrance to the Leisure Centre at the bottom of Stangrove Park, as well as 14 posts around Pound Green.

Members considered the need to rewire the trailer to solve electrical issues with the towing vehicles at a cost of £90, which could be carried out alongside the proposed re-boarding of the trailer at £417. It was

Resolved: to commission S & N Machinery to carry out the re-wiring, and boarding repair in this financial year, from the equipment budget at a total of £507.

Members noted the team had installed the new bench at Edenbridge Hospital opposite the War Memorial in time for the 100th anniversary of the end of WW1 on Remembrance Sunday, and would be installing two new signs at Blossoms park to address dog fouling and littering issues, as discussed at the last meeting.

The planned decompaction of the sports pitches at the Recreation Ground and Mowshurst had yet to take place, due to ground conditions. However, these had recently improved, and contact made with the contractor to progress the works.

The remaining members of the public left the meeting

8. OPEN SPACES BUSINESS FOR DECISION

8.1 To receive the Burial Report and to consider placing burial records on-line

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

September 2018

October 2018

One burial

One burial

Two interments of ashes

One interment of ashes

The possibility of placing burial records on-line was considered, but given the existing very low level of interest from people researching family history, it was

Resolved: not to investigate this option at the current time

8.2 To update the Action Plan from autumn monitoring sites visits

Members noted the Action Plan from the two autumn monitoring visits, during which members covered all but three sites, and that some items had already been addressed.

The next quarterly monitoring visits would be due in January.

8.3 To consider groundstaff tasks and structure review

Council at its October meeting approved a short contract for the temporary skilled groundsman for two days a week through the five "winter" months to March 31, and resolved that a review of the tasks and staffing levels of the grounds team should be undertaken to establish if additional staff in the winter is generally required. A small group comprising the chairman and vice-chairman of Open Spaces, a member of Personnel committee, and also of Finance committee, along with the Head Groundsman, is proposed for this task.

8.4 To consider costings for works from the annual playground inspection.

Members considered costing from Council's regular playground maintenance contractors for three repair items, and as agreed at last meeting for removal of the spring see-saw at Spitals Cross playground pending the proposed upgrade to the playground in 2019. After some discussion it was

Resolved: to accept the costing from Safeplay of £1,797.25 plus VAT, funding to be taken partly from Depreciation, and partly from Open Spaces general contingencies.

8.5 To consider current year works in the Open Spaces 10 and 30 year maintenance plans

Members noted that replacement of the wildlife information display board in Stangrove Park was in process, and a community volunteer artist had undertaken some renovation of the display painting.

Sewage pumping chamber at the Sports Pavilion

Following the annual pumps maintenance service on the Sports Pavilion sewage pump, the contractor had advised there was corrosion in the sewage chambers pipework, and members requested a quotation for replacement in this financial year. The contractor had provided details of the works required and costing, and also pictures from inspection showing the condition of the pipework. It was

Resolved: to commission Denton Pumps to progress the work at a cost of £2,206 plus VAT for parts and labour from the 10-year maintenance plan Budget.

Cemetery One gate pillars repointing

Members noted the difficulty in obtaining costing for this small amount of repointing work, and it was

Resolved: to accept the quote from Truebuild at £140 plus VAT

Annual gully emptying – Market Yard and the Rec east car park

Members noted the company selected for this task last year, again quoted the same price as previously, so in consultation with the committee chairman the cost of £790 plus VAT from County Clean was accepted in order to programme the work ahead of the winter weather. It was

Resolved: to endorse this expenditure

8.6 To consider works in the 2019/20 Open Spaces 10 and 30 year maintenance plans

Members noted the result of the triennial review of the maintenance plans was presented at Forward Planning committee, and the proposed revisions accepted.

Members noted the programme of scheduled works for next year in the 10 year plan and that costings were being sought. For the periodic tree survey these had already been received from three companies, which members considered. It was

Resolved: to commission Quaife Woodlands to carry out the survey to update the database, update the site maps, and the tree-tagging, at a cost of £4,850 plus VAT

Members noted that the Surrey parish council High Court appeal over a case resulting from an accident involving a bus and a falling tree, was dismissed last month. Therefore the original judgement stands, and a two-year period (or less) for tree survey is appropriate where there are justifiable reasons at each location (these include size and condition of trees, public access, proximity to transport and property). The Open Spaces 10-year Plan would therefore need to take this into account. Advice had been sought from Sevenoaks District Council's arboricultural officer, and is being sought from KALC, and from Council's insurers.

The key project in the 30-year plan is the refurbishment of Spitals Cross playground, as agreed at last meeting. Members had been circulated with the specification created previously for the design-and-build works, based on consultation with the local community regarding what play items they would like included on the site. Given the intervening time elapsed, it was

Resolved: to follow-up consultation with local residents, including use of social media, to establish if their views had changed, and to recommend that Council should review its communications policy.

8.7 To consider the committee Budget for 2019/20

Members considered costings for items of equipment identified for replacement next year, for Budget recommendation, and

Resolved: to recommend the following replacements:

Stihl KM90 Hedge cutter and pruner	£198
Billy Goat trolley	£970
Stihl chainsaw	£500
Rover rotary mower	£290
Rotary mower as above	£290
Flail mower	£5,350

Replacement for the Bipper van, planned for 2019, was also considered, and it was

Resolved: to recommend a maximum of £15,000 be included for replacing the Bipper

Members considered outsourcing of supply and maintenance of the High Street hanging baskets again next year, and

Resolved: to recommend £5,363 plus VAT be included for this provision

Members had also requested costing to consider additional fencing at the eastern end of Swan Lane allotments to deter deer incursion, and

Resolved: not to include the fencing at this time, but continue to monitor the site.

8.8 To consider expenditure on vandalised items

Costing for replacement to one half of the Cemetery Depot gates had been confirmed at £650 plus VAT, damage reported last meeting possibly caused from a vehicle reversing into it while shut overnight. It was

Resolved: to accept the quote from Ace Welding at £650 plus VAT, to be taken from the vandalism budget.

8.9 To consider measures to prevent unauthorised vehicle access to open spaces

Members noted additional bow-top fencing and lockable gates had been installed at the frontage of Stangrove Park, also two bollards to decrease the access to the path including the traffic lights end; similar fencing and lockable gates and a bollard had also been added for the rear of the Park.

Someone had tampered with the front gates and part of the lock was missing, and a replacement was being sourced. Meanwhile, the gates were padlocked. Members considered the issue of access for the annual fair, and

Resolved: to request a meeting with the fair operator to discuss access

At Mowshurst the pair of lockable large gates, and keep posts had also been installed. The central keep bolts needed adapting to compensate for the lower ground level in the middle of the access – members during the sites monitoring visit suggested welding extensions, and the cost was being sought.

At last meeting members considered knee-high rail for Blossoms Park entrance, and a gate instead of a drop-down post at the west side of the Recreation Ground. Ball-park costings for these items had been sought (ex VAT): supply and erect knee-high timber rail Blossoms Park c. £1,340; supply and install keyed-lock gate at the Rec c. £1,300-£2,000 depending on the style of gate.

Resolved: to pursue these potentially as “small projects” next year

Members noted the prevailing protocols for CCTV which form the lawful basis for the processing of data, as confirmed by SDC, and

Resolved: to investigate use of CCTV at Stangrove Park and the Recreation Ground

9. TO NOTE THE GENERAL REPORT OF OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE

The addition of the five Awards letters to two names on the War Memorial was carried out *in situ* by a stone mason whose quote was referred to the chairman for approval following last meeting, at £60 plus VAT. The Hospital property section eventually gave permission to locate the WW1 Commemoration bench near the War Memorial, on the basis that the Town Council will be responsible for the maintenance, and it can be relocated if necessary.

Council’s representative to Kent branch of CPRE was unable to attend the branch AGM earlier this month, where the Rt Hon Damian Green MP was due to be keynote speaker, and John Wotton was elected as the new chairman.

The new location for the Mont St Aignan sun dial had been agreed at a site meeting at Great Stone Bridge riverside land on 7 November, which included Cllr Pearman (representing the Great Stone Bridge Trust) and a representative from the contractor. It was hoped the installation beside the footpath would take place in the next couple of weeks.

10. PRESS RELEASE

Members considered items from the Agenda for publicity, and

Resolved: that the consultation regarding Spitals Cross playground, and the relocation of the Mont St Aignan sundial, should be subjects for Press Releases.

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

Cllr Layland and the Deputy Clerk left the meeting

11. CONFIDENTIAL ITEM

11.1 Communication regarding community events

Members discussed the application to use Market Yard for the French Market, and

Resolved: to request a meeting with the Chamber of Commerce to improve communication for any future events

Meeting closed at 10.57pm