

Minutes of the Meeting of the OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE held in Doggetts Barn at 7.30pm on Monday 7 January 2019

Present: Cllrs. T Bryant (chairman), B Todd (vice chairman), J Barnett, A Layland, G Middleton, and S McGregor

In attendance: Deputy Clerk, Head Groundsman

There were three 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 M Robson (unwell).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, OR PREDETERMINATIONS

None

The Chairman adjourned the meeting

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Three members of the public stated their concerns regarding proposed housing development on open space on the Stangrove estate, two of them from the perspective of neighbouring properties in Greshams Way. They were advised that although no formal planning application had been submitted, they should make sure their points were recorded in the District Council's consultations process, including for the Local Plan currently under way.

The Chairman thanked the members of the public for their contribution. The meeting was re-convened and the residents left the meeting.

4. TO RECEIVE AND SIGN MINUTES OF THE OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE 19 November 2018

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 November 2018

Members noted the position eight months into the financial year.

Members noted that the committee chairman and vice-chairman, had approved costings for work to repair damage reported at last meeting to the new gates lock, and subsequently a fence panel, at the front of Stangrove Park. It was

Resolved: to endorse expenditure of £118.70 to supply and fit a new lock, and £234 to supply and fit a new fence panel and brackets (both ex-VAT).

It was also noted that on safety grounds, and after consulting the committee chairman, a contractor was engaged to remove a broken branch wedged high in a tree in Stangrove Park, adjacent to a path. It was

Resolved: to endorse this expenditure of £120 plus VAT.

6. CORRESPONDENCE

6.1 Request re: ultimate Frisbee dates

Members considered a request from the Rugby Club for pitch marking for Ultimate Frisbee competition weekends over 13/14 July (pitch numbers to be confirmed) and 3rd/4th August with 10 pitches marked. The Head Groundsman believed the team should be able to cope. It was

Resolved: to provide the pitch-marking service for the events.

6.2 League of Friends of Edenbridge Hospital re: fete on 1 June

Members considered the usual bi-annual request from the League of Friends regarding use of Blossoms Park outfield for parking adjacent to the Hospital Fete on Saturday 1 June. Subject to the completion of an Open Spaces Hire Agreement and meeting the associated Standard Conditions, and to liaison with the Cricket Club, it was

Resolved: to agree to this request, at no charge for a community event

7. HEAD GROUNDSMAN'S REPORT

7.1 Routine and seasonal work

Members noted the team's routine and seasonal work during November and December.

7.2 Groundstaff activity

It was noted the wildlife display sign for Stangrove Park pond had been collected from the local craftsman who had also fitted the re-furnished artwork into the sign, then installed the new sign in the same location as the previous one. Since taking on maintenance of the flower beds at the front of Edenbridge Town train station, after the initial overhaul they were being checked on a weekly basis, clearing any rubbish or tidying as required.

Pitches decompaction work was part completed before Christmas, before the weather intervened. The contractor had resumed this week for the two remaining pitches at the Recreation Ground, and the two pitches at Mowshurst.

The grounds team had begun pollarding the lime trees in the Churchyard, resuming this week and making use of the recently purchased tripod ladder. Clearance of lots of undergrowth and deadwood from small copses at the Recreation Ground was under way, as well as pruning some more mature oak and cherry trees, which would also help clear litter.

The trail gangs had been collected for winter servicing, which would include regrinding of the blades, being two years after purchase. The team had installed two new signs at Blossoms Park to address dog fouling and littering issues, as discussed at the last meeting.

The seasonal pond checks had been made, with nothing new to report. The agreed purchase of a net and an eco-friendly chemical, would take place early in the New Year now that the water level had risen in Stangrove Pond. After extracting as much of the remaining duck weed as possible, it would be treated with the chemical hoping to eradicate the problem for the summer.

The winter headstone check was under way, and the winter tree survey would be started early in the New Year. Both reports would be available for the next Open Spaces meeting, and any urgent items meanwhile would be dealt with promptly.

7.3 Items for the future

Members considered training for the Head Groundsman – an IOG accredited maintenance course over one day in February for Level 2 winter pitches: Applied turf culture, at £191, plus a one day course covering basic management of trees of all ages at £115, scheduled for April. It was

Resolved: the Head Groundsman should attend both training courses as above.

8. OPEN SPACES BUSINESS FOR DECISION

8.1 To receive the Burial Report

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

November 2018

December 2018

Four burials

One interment of ashes

One interment of ashes

Three Grants of Right

It was noted the back-entry of past burial records onto the computer system was well under way, but had revealed a problem in the way grave numbers were recorded in the period when the oldest section of the Cemetery was still in use at the same time as the “new” extension Cemetery Two section had been opened. Reference to the registers of graves would provide a resolution, but it would take some hours of checking and recording on a spreadsheet before the back-entry process could be completed.

8.2 To review the Allotments half-plots policy

Members considered the current policy, and

Resolved: to retain the policy unamended

8.3 To review the Waste Management policy

Members considered the current policy,

Resolved: to retain the policy unamended

8.4 To consider recommendation from the groundstaff review group

The proposed small group of councillors had carried out a review of groundstaff structure and activity. Members considered a recommendation that the current level of staffing should be changed from three full-time permanent staff (head groundsman, skilled groundsman, and unskilled groundsman) with a fourth skilled post short-contract for the busiest seven months from April to October, to add a two-day skilled post for the five “winter” months. After some discussion it was

Resolved: to extend the review, request the Head Groundsman to prepare a report on the balance of tasks and team skills for the future, and convene another meeting to give the issue further consideration.

8.5 To consider remaining 2018/19 (Year 3) items within the 10 year Maintenance Plan, and consider the 2019/20 committee budget

Members noted the comparison with 2018/19 (Year 3) budget to date and that the work to replace the pipes and valves in the sewage pumping chambers at the Sports Pavilion was due to take place w/c 7 January. The remaining works were small items including replacement of a dip-tank at Forge Croft allotments, planters in Doggetts Courtyard, and annual service of the Jubilee Clock in the High Street.

For the general Open Spaces committee budget 2019/20, December Finance committee approved £13,000 funding for works outside the 10-year Maintenance Plan in the Budget, yet to be approved at full Council next week (£4,000 general contingency, £4,000 for Small Projects, and £5,000 for Vandalism). The expenditure for hanging baskets and plants now had a separate budget heading, at £6,065. It was

Resolved: to continue this year with the company which provided and maintained the High Street baskets display last summer, at a cost of £5,363 plus VAT

Comparative quotes were being sought for the next year 2019/20 10yr Plan works, to be presented for consideration at next meeting April 1. The periodic tree survey had been commissioned for the spring, in line with the decision at last meeting.

Members noted further advice sought from KALC, and from Council’s insurers on frequency of periodic tree inspections. Both had indicated there was no “one size fits all” approach to intervals for periodic tree inspection, and that tree stock should not be treated as a whole. A risk-based approach should be taken, and inspection regimes tailored accordingly. Given the nature of the locations Council maintains, it was

Resolved: to carry out periodic tree surveys at two year intervals, and identify trees for more frequent inspection based on the results of the survey this spring.

8.6 To consider 2019/20 works in the 30 year Open Spaces maintenance plan

Following members' decision to revisit previous consultation on play equipment for inclusion in refurbishment of Spitals Cross playground, they planned to deliver a questionnaire for every household on the estate this week, with responses to be returned by the end of the month. Depending on the outcome, the invitation to tender documents might require amendment.

Street lighting replacement programme

Members noted the replacement works for concrete and metal columns under the rolling programme in the current financial year. A recommendation from the street lighting contractor regarding which columns to replace in the next financial year would be provided for the next committee meeting.

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

Members noted the updated Action Plan from the two autumn monitoring visits, and that proposed dates would be circulated for the next monitoring visits due in January.

8.8 To consider support for Edenbridge in Bloom 2019

Members noted the Edenbridge In Bloom 2018 competition was again well supported locally. Although the member of staff who co-ordinated the scheme at Coolings had left the company, but he would continue to organise Edenbridge In Bloom on their behalf this year. It was

Resolved: to again support Edenbridge In Bloom competition in 2019

9. TO NOTE THE GENERAL REPORT OF OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE

The Mont St Aignan sun dial was still awaiting its relocation to the Great Stone Bridge garden adjacent to the South End roundabout.

The volunteer who carries out pest control at Mowshurst to protect the football pitches continued to report his success in reducing rabbit numbers, adding further to the total during the seasonal break.

10. PRESS RELEASE

Members considered items from the Agenda for publicity, and

Resolved: that the consultation regarding Spitals Cross playground should be subject for a Press Release.

Meeting closed at 8.50pm