

**Minutes of the Meeting of the OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE held in Rickards Hall at 7.30pm on Monday 15 July 2019**

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Present: Cllrs B Todd (chairman), A Baker (vice chairman), J Aldridge, A Damodaran, V Jennings, A Layland, N Lloyd, S McGregor and A Smart  
In attendance: Acting Clerk, Deputy Clerk, and Head Groundsman

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

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received, noted, and accepted from Cllr J Barnett (SDC business)

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

Cllr Layland – non- pecuniary interest in item 8.13 being a trustee of the Eden Valley Museum  
Cllr Smart – non-pecuniary interest in items 6.1 being a churchwarden, and 8.13 being a trustee of the Eden Valley Museum.

*The Chairman adjourned the meeting*

**3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

None.

*The meeting was re-convened.*

**4. TO RECEIVE AND SIGN MINUTES OF THE OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE 3 June 2019**

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 May 2019**

Members noted the position two months into the financial year, and that the planned purchase of a replacement for the Bipper van had taken place, at £14,312 ex VAT but inclusive of part-exchange. To complete the van replacement project, the committee chairman had approved addition of the identifying graphics at a cost of £200. It was

Resolved: to endorse expenditure of £200 for the graphics.

Members noted the Council chairman had approved repair of two window units at the Sports Pavilion, damaged in one further incident last month, at a cost of £390 plus VAT from the vandalism budget. The committee chairman had approved an additional cost of £337.50 plus VAT to complete the repair on the roundabout in Stangrove Park playground, requiring a new inner wheel, bearing and bolts. It was

Resolved: to endorse the above expenditure approved by the chairmen in order to progress the work.

**6. CORRESPONDENCE**

**6.1 Parish Church Eco-group re: wild garden proposal**

Members discussed the proposal to create a wild garden and quiet space in the Churchyard, and a request for the groundsteam to stop mowing the grass in the suggested location. In support of the project, it was

Resolved: to meet the request, but ask the eco-group to consider the possibility of anti-social behaviour focused on the bench, and the safety of wooden stepping stone surface in wet/cold weather, and to display a notice highlighting the project.

**6.2 Hever Festival Theatre re: event advertising**

Members considered a question from Hever Festival Theatre regarding any grass verges or Open Spaces maintained by the Town Council where estate agent advertising boards

could be placed for the Festival month (24 July - 30 August). This type of advertising had not previously been permitted on Council land, although it supported events which brought visitors to the town. It was

Resolved: to offer short-term banner space on the Stangrove Park railings, and poster space on the community noticeboards through the town.

## **7. HEAD GROUNDSMAN'S REPORT**

### **7.1 Routine and seasonal work**

Members noted the team's routine and seasonal work during June-July.

### **7.2 Groundstaff activity**

Members noted the team's work preparing the hanging baskets for the courtyard at Doggetts Barn, and the planters through the town, for the summer months. The programme of re-painting benches across all the Council's sites would continue over the summer.

The summer check of memorials in the Churchyard and Cemetery was complete, only a very small number of issues were raised, and these were passed to the Deputy Clerk to seek family contacts to arrange for remedial work. The spring check of the ponds at Mowshurst and Stangrove Park had been carried out. The summer visual tree survey had been completed, with a report due for next meeting.

Areas on all the sports pitches that were re-seeded after last season had with regular watering all taken very well. With the goals due to start going up later this month, all surfaces should be ready for the upcoming season.

The new flail mower arrived in early June and had been in use, cutting the water meadows, as well as other areas of long grass and undergrowth on various sites. The team was pleased with the productivity and finished product of all areas mown.

Members noted the planned purchase of the Council's new van. The previous Peugeot Bipper was part exchanged for a new Volkswagen Caddy week commencing 01/07. It was considered a big improvement, and plans were in place to have identifying graphics applied to match other Council vehicles.

The team prepared six Frisbee pitches for the tournament 13/14 July. The pitches will then be kept visible and remarked with four more for a further tournament at the beginning of August.

The annual selective weed spraying was carried out at the Recreation Ground 5 July and at Mowshurst and Blossoms Park 9 July. It had definitely improved the playing surfaces of the sports pitches long term, and is worth continuing moving forward.

The treatment that was applied earlier in the year at Stangrove Park pond had not eradicated the weed, and further advice was being sought.

### **7.3 Items for the future**

Members noted June Council had accepted the recommendation to add a two days skilled groundsman post during the five winter months as a permanent provision going forward.

Members considered confirmed costings for the planned replacement of maintenance equipment this year, in line with the committee's recommendation from the Asset Register. It was

Resolved: to make the following purchases from Kidman's:

Stihl hedgecutter	£ 437	
Stihl chainsaw	£ 355	
Leaf vacuum trolley	£1015	
Rover 18ins mower	£ 285	
Masport 19ins mower	£ 345	
Masport 19ins mower	£ 340	Total £2,777 plus VAT

Members considered indicative costings, requested at last meeting, for a suitable robust chipper to process arisings from tree and shrub maintenance, accepting advice that a self-powered unit would be more versatile, rather than a machine powered off the tractor. It was

Resolved: to seek costings for the option of hiring a chipper and operator to deal with material at intervals when required, to consider at next meeting.

Members considered a request for a replacement set of the lighter weight T-shirts summer uniform for the four groundstaff, and it was

Resolved: to purchase 20 T-shirts at £80 plus VAT

Members considered a request for adjustment to the new van's tow-bar connection to facilitate operation of the water bowser pump, a possible cost around £180 plus VAT. It was

Resolved: to carry out the adjustment, subject to confirmed cost being referred to the committee chairman for approval.

## **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:

June 2019

One burial    Four interments of ashes    Five Grants of Right

### **8.2 To review the Open Spaces risk assessment**

The current Open Spaces risk assessment was reviewed, and no changes were proposed.

### **8.3 To consider works scheduled for 2019/20 in the 10 year maintenance plan**

It was noted that painting of the equipment in the playgrounds had been carried out as agreed at April committee.

Members noted the periodic tree survey report had just been received, with only 34 trees recommended for work out of more than 500. Only one tree was noted as high priority for urgent work (within three months), to remove a dead branch above Mill Hill in a roadside tree within Blossoms Park. A costing had been requested from Council's contractor, and it was

Resolved: that to progress the work the chairman would consider the cost and approve up to £200 plus VAT

Nineteen trees were recommended for work within a year, and fourteen within two years, aiming to benefit the condition of the trees and reduce any risk potential to an acceptably low level. Costings for the works would be sought and presented to next committee meeting.

Resurfacing around skate ramps, Blossoms Park

The chosen company had confirmed the cost of the project would be £6,110 plus VAT, but would reduce by £350 if the area at the north end of the court around the cycle hoops was not given a smooth surface suitable for practice skating/scooting – which was what the users would like. It was

Resolved: to proceed with resurfacing the whole of the court as there was sufficient budget in the maintenance plan.

Costings for other work scheduled in the 10 Year Plan were considered as follows:

Replacement of riding surface sheets for the skate ramps.

The ramps constructor had inspected this well used facility, and advised that the equivalent of nine surface sheets required replacing, including the top landing-deck platforms at either end of the equipment. The cost for this routine maintenance would be £1,350 plus VAT. It was

Resolved: to proceed with the maintenance at £1,350 plus VAT, taking £270 from the 10-year-Plan contingency heading to cover the item budget shortfall.

#### Replacement signage at the Cemetery

Members considered replacement for signage in the different sections of the Cemetery which had been installed/replaced variously over past years, some now tired and/or in need of content updating. Costing had been received for a set of aluminium composite panels with a consistent updated content as already displayed at Cemetery One. It was

Resolved: to replace the signage at a total cost of £560 (no VAT), to include a new Cemetery One sign

Members noted the groundstaff were able to provide the backing boards for the signs, and new leg posts if necessary, for the cost of materials and weather proof sealant.

#### Autumn hedge-cutting

Members noted the contractor had confirmed that the cost for this annual work would be £1,480 plus VAT, and

Resolved: to accept the cost, which was slightly less than the budget provision.

#### Annual playgrounds inspection

Members noted the consultant RPII inspector who had for a number of years provided the annual report on the Council's playgrounds and the skate ramps, was unable to do so this year due to health reasons. Members considered alternative options, and

Resolved: to appoint another RPII inspector through Wicksteed, at a total of £345 plus VAT for the four playgrounds and the skate ramps.

### **8.4 To consider Year 2019/20 works in the 30 year Open Spaces plan**

#### Spitals Cross Playground refurbishment

June Council accepted the recommendation that Wicksteed should be selected to carry out the refurbishment at a cost of £80,000 plus VAT. An application was made to the ETC CIL board for £35,000 and its recommendation for approval was accepted by July Council meeting. There had been no notification as yet of arrangements for SDC's next CIL board. The order for the project had been placed, and a meeting with the company's contract manager is to be arranged.

#### Street lighting replacement programme

Members noted in March 2016 Council resolved to budget to replace 70 concrete columns, on a rolling programme, with £15k per annum, inflation linked, allocated in the 30-year Open Spaces Plan. For efficiency, it was considered sensible to try to replace columns in blocks where possible. Works agreed under this programme for the financial years 2017/18 and 2018/19 had been completed

The budget was underspent by £2,658 which, added to this year's budget for concrete columns (£16,200) and metal columns (£8,100), made a total of £26,958 for 2019/20. There was also an outstanding claim against Admiral Insurance in respect of col. 242 in Swan Lane, which was hit by a motorist. The costs for the street light and installation total £3,212.40.

Members considered a proposal for works in for the lighting project in this financial year, and

Resolved: to replace 10 concrete columns: 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 Ashcombe Drive, 7 The Brownings, 46 Ridge Way, 63 Hawthorn Close, 101 & 102 Lynmead Close; and three cast iron columns: 29 Church Street, 91 Lingfield Road, 143 Mill Hill, at a total of cost of £27,070 plus VAT – taking £112 from Open Spaces general contingency to complete the project.

#### **8.4.1 To consider additional street lights for Westways**

As agreed at last meeting, members considered a request for additional lighting in Westways, noting that new columns cost approx. £2,500 each to supply and install, depending on location – plus there would be ongoing costs for power supply and maintenance. It was

Resolved: that once the new Highways lights on Station Road were working, to investigate where any additional lighting might be added, and to seek advice on the lighting level along with options for other solutions which could reduce light pollution.

#### **8.5 To confirm July Quarterly Monitoring visits and to update the Action Plan**

Members noted the updated Action Plan amended after previous monitoring, and the dates arranged for the sites visits, mornings of 24 July and 31 July.

#### **8.6 To consider works to prevent unauthorised access to Open Spaces**

Members noted the recommendation for metal knee-high rail and a new gate at Blossoms Park, to prevent access to the field, was approved by June Council meeting at £4,969 plus VAT, and the subsequent successful application to ETC CIL board for the project was accepted at July Council.

The committee considered the proposal to replace the removable bollard at the top of path down to the Sports Pavilion, on the western side of the Recreation Ground, with a gate, and

Resolved: to pursue this as a Small Project for this year, and consider a range of styles of gate costing from £1000-£2000 depending on style.

Members received an update on the Police request to keep the western access gates of the Recreation Ground closed daily for evenings and overnight, noting that the Police were now content to block the access *ad hoc* at the time of activity. It was

Resolved: to provide the Police with the ambulance gate code to facilitate their vehicles access onto the Rec if necessary over the summer.

#### **8.7 To consider resurfacing Mowshurst car park**

Members noted that a third company had visited site and provided a costing, including suggested drainage soakaway inside the front hedgeline, at around £80,000. After discussing the variation in costs, and the presence of the recycling banks altering the pattern of use of the car park in recent years, it was

Resolved: to establish from SDC the level of use compared with the recycling sites nearer the centre of the town, whether Mowshurst was the right location, and whether the banks could be moved, and also to consult on other options for solving the surface wear.

#### **8.8 To consider a preliminary draft agreement for Forge Croft Allotments**

Following the decision at April Open Spaces committee, the Council's solicitor had produced a preliminary draft agreement for members to consider. It was

Resolved: to convene the Lease Negotiating working group to consider the draft, and a suggested date should be circulated for confirmation.

#### **8.9 To consider introduction of wildflower planted areas in Edenbridge**

Members considered a suggestion that more wildflower planted areas should be introduced in Edenbridge to provide more support for bees and other insects, and create attractive areas in the town. It was

Resolved: to set up a working group including Cllrs Baker, Lloyd, Smart, and Todd to consider suggestions for locations, costs and maintenance requirements of managing such

areas, inviting SDC officer Ashley Walmsley to meet with the group, and reporting back to the committee.

**8.10 To consider a feasibility study for an Outdoor Gym**

Members noted that Forward Planning committee agreed that the installation of an outdoor gym should be considered, and requested that Open Spaces should carry out a feasibility study. It was

Resolved: to establish a working group of Cllrs Baker, Damodaran, Jennings, and Todd, to consider possible location(s) for equipment, the cost of installation and on-going maintenance, and to consult the community to establish what support there was for this project.

**8.11 To consider bulk waste collection in Edenbridge**

Members considered a suggestion that bulk waste collections at intervals in the town might help address fly-tipping issues. Currently residents could arrange direct with SDC for bulky items to be collected with advance payment. It was noted the range of items was restricted, and there was a possibility of mis-use of bulk collections by businesses seeking to off-load trade waste. The cost depended on the number of locations, and how many dates, for a driver and vehicle to be available. It was

Resolved: to arrange a trial of collections on a Saturday morning, in September and in October, from three locations – on the Spitals Cross estate, Stangrove estate, and in Skeynes Road – at a cost of £242 per date, and then review the project.

**8.12 To consider a replacement bin at Stangrove Park**

Members considered a change in design of litter bin at the front of Stangrove Park, which was being raided by wildlife, and it was

Resolved: to install a design with a closed lift-up lid, at a cost of £354.99 plus VAT from Wybone, and utilise the existing bin at another location.

**8.13 To consider proposed information lectern for WWII shelter, Doggetts Courtyard**

Members considered the cost of a proposed information lectern beside the WWII portable bomb shelter relocated into Doggetts Courtyard. It was

Resolved: to pursue this project from the Small Projects budget, at a cost in the region of £500 plus VAT, to create an A3 size etched metal information panel on a free-standing mount.

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

Members noted a resident's inquiry at the Council chairman's surgery, regarding installation of a dog waste bin on the St John's Way estate green space, and a litter bin at the junction with Station Road. The residents' estate management committee had been advised to contact Sevenoaks District Council regarding installation of new bins, the co-mingled waste policy having been explained.

July Council meeting decided that the project to provide visitor direction signs through the town should in future be an item for this committee. An updated report would be provided for the next meeting.

**10. PRESS RELEASE**

There were no items members wished to be the subject of a press release at this time.

Meeting closed at 9.50pm