

Minutes of the Meeting of the OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE held in Rickards Hall at 7.30pm on Monday 16 September 2019

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

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

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received, noted, and accepted from S McGregor, and received subsequent to the meeting from Cllr A Damodaran.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, OR PREDETERMINATIONS

Cllr Layland – non-pecuniary interest in item 6.3 being a member of the Bonfire Society
Cllr Lloyd – non-pecuniary interest in item 6.3 being a Bonfire Society committee member
Cllr Smart – non-pecuniary interest in items 6.1 being a churchwarden

The Chairman adjourned the meeting

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

A member of the public asked committee members to consider the alternative suggestion of an audio information unit for inside the WWII shelter (item 8.12) as part of the project.

The same person also questioned the amount of funding available from KCC from s106 for visitor direction signage (item 8.13), and asked if members decided to go ahead with the signage project, to consider how each sign would contribute to increase High Street footfall. Another alternative suggestion was an updateable paper map for display in notice boards showing High Street businesses by category, with a version also available online.

The meeting was re-convened.

4. TO RECEIVE AND SIGN MINUTES OF THE OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE 15 July 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 July 2019

Members noted the position four months into the financial year, and that it had been necessary to replace the lifebuoy at Mowshurst Pond, stolen from its housing at the beginning of August, at a cost of £30.46 plus VAT, taken from vandalism budget heading.

6. CORRESPONDENCE

6.1 Parish Church Eco-group re: wild garden proposal

Members noted that the Eco-group had amended its proposal following the committee's response at last meeting. The garden was now proposed for a different location, no stepping stones to be included, but the bench under the yew tree was still being considered, again without stepping stones. It was

Resolved: to fully support the amended project in the Churchyard.

The Town Clerk joined the meeting

6.2 Marsh Green community re: fundraising event on the Green, 21 September

Members considered a request from Marsh Green community for permission to hold a fundraising event on the Green including a live band and a marquee, to support the on-going provision of the village defibrillator. It was

Resolved: to permit the event and use of the TN8 Licence for the music, subject to completion of an Open Spaces Hire Agreement, and meeting its Standard Conditions – at no charge for a community event.

6.3 Bonfire Society re: annual fireworks display at the Recreation Ground, 2 November

The Bonfire Society had submitted its usual request to hold the annual fireworks display at the Recreation Ground. Subject to completion of an Open Spaces Hire Agreement, and meeting its Standard Conditions, it was

Resolved: to grant permission for the display, at no charge for a community event.

6.4 Allotment holder re: request for poly tunnel.

Members considered the request from a plot holder at the Swan Lane site for permission to install a rectangular poly “house”, and having considered the requested size too large

Resolved: to permit a poly “house” the same size as small sheds already on the site, 2.5m by 1.8m

7. HEAD GROUNDSMAN’S REPORT

7.1 Routine and seasonal work

Members noted the team’s routine and seasonal work during July-September.

Cllr M McArthur joined the meeting

7.2 Groundstaff activity

Members noted the annual review of the task based risk assessments and that there were no amendments needed, nor new tasks to be added. The annual Qualifications Review will form part of the annual appraisals process yet to take place, and will reveal the training needs for the forthcoming year.

The summer visual tree survey had identified some low-level seasonal work for the grounds team across Council sites, such as removal of ivy, and pruning, plus two items to add to the Periodic Survey works referred to contractors (see item 8.3 below).

The team had maintained the baskets and planters throughout the town, including at the train station and in the courtyard at Doggetts Barn. They had installed three new bins at sites across the town, including the closed design near the leisure centre in Stangrove Park.

All the pitches at the recreation ground were fully prepared, as the rugby and football seasons have recently begun. The team would be installing a new set of rugby posts on the newly marked intermediate rugby pitch, replacing one of the senior football pitches for this season. The annual selective weed spraying was completed in mid-July at Blossoms Park, the Recreation Ground and Mowshurst.

The duckweed issue at Stangrove Park pond had returned in the hot summer months. The team would wait for the weed to die back as much as possible this autumn before removing the remainder and treating again. If the weed then returned next year, a more effective form of action would be explored.

Approved replacement purchases due this year on the asset register have been made – two new petrol push mowers, a chainsaw, leaf vacuum, and long arm hedge cutter, and the new machinery had been a huge success.

A member of the public left the meeting.

7.3 Items for the future

Members considered the costings requested for hire of a chipper/operative, and the advice that for the amount of tree work the team did over the winter, it would be better to burn what cuttings there were, as residents had complained when the current piles of chippings appeared, and the team only had use for a finite quantity of material. It was

Resolved: to follow the advice of the head groundsman and not chip cuttings.

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:

July 2019	August 2019
One ashes interment	None

8.2 To review the Open Spaces Hire Agreement

Members considered the current Open Spaces Hire Agreement, and

Resolved: to amend the dates of recent legislation in items six and eight in the Standard Conditions.

8.3 To consider works scheduled for 2019/20 within the 10 year Open Spaces maintenance plan

Members considered costings for works identified in the periodic external tree survey sought from three contractors, along with two items identified in the Head Groundsman's recent summer survey. It was

Resolved: to commission RWE Rural Services to carry out the works for priority two and three works over the autumn/winter season, for a sum of £7,870 plus VAT, taking £2,280 from contingencies to cover both priorities in one phase.

Members considered a request from a property at the rear of the flood bund at the north-east corner of the Rec, for tree reduction work to a neighbouring Ash and Hawthorn. It was

Resolved: to engage RWE to prune branches clear of the property, at a cost of £175 ex-VAT.

Costing had been confirmed for decompaction of sports pitches at Mowshurst, and half of the Recreation Ground, held at the same price as last year at £2,200 plus VAT. It was

Resolved: to engage SJK sports turf installations to carry out the pitch decompaction works

Members noted the annual service of the pumps at the Sports Pavilion (sewage) and the Mill Leat (water feature), had been carried out. The pumps themselves were fine, but two items were noted for attention, and it was

Resolved: to replace the electrics junction box in the pit at the Sports Pavilion at a cost of £185 plus VAT, and to replace the timer at the Mill Leat at a cost of £73.76 plus VAT

It was noted the contractor has confirmed his intention to schedule the resurfacing around skate ramps at Blossoms Park w/c Monday 23rd September. Advance notices would be posted, and publicity given to the upcoming works.

Members noted the outcome of the annual playgrounds inspection carried out by the independent RPII inspector through Wicksteed on 27th August. No high risk items requiring urgent action were noted, but there was need for welding repair to the slide at the Recreation Ground within three months, and to replace worn bushes and shackles on swing fixings. Costings were being sought for this work. Some medium risk items which "require appropriate action within resources and individual site assessment" could be carried out by the groundstaff, with costings being sought for other items such as repair to wear patches in Wetpour surface under swings.

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

Spitals Cross Playground refurbishment

Members noted arrangements for SDC's next CIL board, not meeting until Monday 9 December. Work on the project was expected to begin at the end of this month, and be

finished before the Board met. The deadline for bids was 30 September. The Clerk had checked the revised criteria for submissions to SDC CIL, which indicated that a consideration would be “whether sufficient evidence has been provided to show that funding from other sources, has been maximised and that this will normally include a majority of funding from other sources” (par. 5.1.4). It was not clear if SDC would consider a retrospective bid for a contribution to the playground project, but it was

Resolved: to submit an application, and the committee chairman would assist with this

Street lighting replacement programme

Members noted the works on 13 columns agreed for the 2019/20 project within the rolling programme of replacement have all been completed.

8.5 To update the Action Plan after July Quarterly Monitoring visits and confirm October dates

Members noted the updated Action Plan amended after July monitoring, and

Resolved: proposed dates for the October site visits should be circulated to all councillors.

8.6 To consider works to prevent unauthorised access to Open Spaces

It was noted the metal knee-high rail and a new gate at Blossoms Park, were now in place to prevent access to the field.

Members considered three styles of gate for the top of path down to the Sports Pavilion from the western car park at the Recreation Ground, and

Resolved: to install a triangular swing barrier gate 1.2m high powder coated black with posts and hold-back, and padlock box, at a cost of £1,440 plus VAT as a Small Project for this year.

8.7 To consider resurfacing Mowshurst car park

Members noted the response from SDC regarding the comparative volume of use of the recycling pods, that it was not possible to produce a figure for the specific site as all the glass from Edenbridge is combined into one vehicle. It was still too early in the development process to pursue a suggestion of relocation to Lidl at this stage, but the approved site plans had not included a recycling bank area. Investigation of alternative non-asphalt parking surface options for Mowshurst was still under way.

8.8 To arrange the biennial review of street lighting

Members considered the existing practice of councillors reviewing the illumination quality and condition the street lighting this Council provides, next is due this autumn. Given the introduction of the rolling programme of column replacements, and the proactive response of the current lighting contractor to reported faults, it was

Resolved: to discontinue the biennial review at this time.

8.9 To consider provision of an Outdoor Gym

Members noted that the new working group had met, to consider possible location(s) for equipment, the cost of installation and on-going maintenance, and had visited a facility in another parish. It was felt installing some equipment at two different locations (possibly the Rec and in Stangrove Park) would be appropriate, and that the community should be consulted in due course. Members discussed the possibility of adding other outdoor fitness options to the project, such as an interactive snooker wall game based on ball skills, which had also been viewed elsewhere, and a measured and marked running circuit around the town between the facilities. It was

Resolved: that the working group would meet again and continue its investigations, and report back to the committee.

8.10 To consider bulk waste collection in Edenbridge

Members noted that as agreed last meeting to arrange two trial collections had been arranged with SDC for Saturday mornings, on September 28 and October 26, from three locations – on the Spitals Cross estate, Stangrove estate, and in Skeynes Road – at a cost of £242 per date. Members could review the project at their member meeting, and decide whether to continue further. There would be advance publicity for the location and times of these collections on the Town Council website, through social media, and posters.

8.11 To consider introduction of wildflower planted areas in Edenbridge

The working group had met with SDC officer Ashley Walmsley. There had also been a follow-up site meeting at Mowshurst, and at SDC's Town Field next to the river, east of the Great Stone Bridge.

The working group suggested that some small areas in the Millennium Wood were prepared for adding native bluebells, and snowdrops, at a ballpark cost of £100-£200, the best time to purchase bulbs being in the spring after flowering, pre-ordered in early spring. The Community Warden believed some of the volunteers who helped with the on-going autumn roadside bulb-planting project would be willing to help with this project also. It was recommended the open field bordering Four Elms Road, which was already wildlife rich and had some wild flowers established, has the perimeter mown track maintained, and one third of the main area cut annually in rotation. The cost of grass-cutting contractor, or equipment to buy, to be investigated. It was

Resolved: to accept the working group's recommendations, to progress the small projects.

It had been suggested that the existing maintenance plan for Town Field is changed, and carried out as a partnership project between SDC and the Town Council to improve the biodiversity of the area and localise the mowing activity. This council's contribution would be to mow a set of tracks over the field, four or five times during the main growing season, similarly as done on the watermeadows west of the river. It was

Resolved: that the Town Council should become a partner in the Town Field project

8.12 To consider proposed information lectern for WWII shelter, Doggetts Courtyard

Members noted the cost of a free-standing lectern on which to mount an A3 size etched metal information panel, and that the proposed design and cost for the panel was still awaited. They considered the suggestion to provide an audio information unit inside the shelter, and

Resolved: to investigate this in addition to the lectern project.

8.13 To receive an update on proposals for visitor direction signage in Edenbridge

Members received an update on the proposal for visitor direction signage through the town. They noted that the exact amount of s106 funding available from KCC to contribute to the project was uncertain, and that there had previously been no firm decision, either to proceed or on the design of signs.

Resolved: to establish the amount of funding available, and a working group of Cllrs Aldridge, Baker and Layland would reconsider the concept with a reduced number of signs, aiming to increase footfall into the High Street.

9. TO NOTE THE GENERAL REPORT OF OPEN SPACES ACTIVITY

Members noted the closures necessary at the Recreation Ground and Mowshurst at times during the summer, to prevent unauthorised incursions

10. PRESS RELEASE

Members wished the pilot bulky waste collection project, and the Town Field management partnership to be subjects of a press release at this time.

Meeting closed at 9.20pm