

**Minutes of the meeting of the OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE held in Rickards Hall at 8.01pm on Monday 20 September 2021**

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Present: Cllrs S McGregor (vice-chairman), J Aldridge, A Damodaran ,V Jennings, A Layland, N Lloyd, A Read, and B Todd.  
Cllr S Taylor was absent.

In attendance: Cllrs S Sumner and M McArthur (non-committee members)  
Deputy Town Clerk, Head Groundsman

There were no members of the public or press present.

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received, noted, and accepted from Cllr A Baker (chairman)

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

None.

*The Chairman adjourned the meeting*

**3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

Cllr McArthur provided members with descriptions of anti-social behaviour at the Recreation Ground in contravention of the Byelaws, occurring on summer evening between 6-7pm. This included model planes being flown over the heads of children taking part in sports training, and the use of a horse and trap driven at speed round the Rec. Residents who phoned the police had been told they were not able to take action. Members were assured this was possible, under the Byelaws. (*See item 9.8 below*)

*The meeting was re-convened.*

**4. TO RECEIVE AND SIGN MINUTES OF THE OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE 26 July 2021**

**Resolved:** that the minutes (9573-9576) be signed by the committee Vice-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 August 2021**

Members noted the report.

**6. TO RATIFY OPERATIONAL DECISIONS FOR OPEN SPACES ACTIVITY**

Members noted that in line with the decision at July committee meeting, a cost of £143 plus VAT was accepted for a local company to carry out the "plumbing work" as last stage of addressing the water leak in the Cemetery. Thus only £61 extra was required above the original sum allocated. Supply was restored at the start of August.

Following the earlier decision by members to install additional signage to address problems from long-term parking in Market Yard car park, the Clerk approved expenditure of £150 plus VAT for three new signs, which the groundstaff installed.

Attempted break-in through the gate at Forge Croft allotments last month damaged the padlock sufficiently to require a replacement.

**Resolved:** to endorse the above operational decisions.

**7. CORRESPONDENCE**

**7.1 CPRE re: Countryside Voices – summer edition**

Members noted there were several topics of relevance to rural communities such as Edenbridge: Affordable homes, solar farms, the importance of hedgerow management/maintenance, and rural housing development.

## **7.2 Kent County Playing Fields Association re: subscription**

It was noted the annual subscription had been paid (£20) in line with the decision to continue membership. The letter containing the subscription request included the reminder that grants up to £1,000 were available to parish councils and voluntary organisations for projects such as children's play areas. Subject to availability of office resources, an application could be made for funding towards the Recreation Ground play area refurbishment.

## **7.3 Great Stone Bridge Trust re:**

### **a) Additional Water Meadows maintenance**

Council had been contacted on behalf of the Great Stone Bridge Trust regarding possible additional maintenance work at the Water Meadows, going forward. It was noted the groundstaff already mowed the "walks" around the Water Meadows usually four or five times a year for the Trust, though in this year of rapid grass growth it had already been five, and another cut was anticipated necessary.

The new request was for the kind of "pruning and clearing" maintenance with which the team had helped annually on a voluntary basis one day in October for several years. But in future it would replace voluntary work and be more frequently across the months during October-April. It was

**Resolved:** that some groundstaff time could be allocated to additional Water Meadows maintenance, subject to terms and costs agreed with the officers.

### **b) Mont St Aignan sundial**

Following a second incidence of damage to the brass pointer (the gnomon) on the sundial sited at the riverside garden near the stone bridge, the Trust had suggested the item could be relocated elsewhere. The heavy stone column itself had not been damaged. Another suggestion was to replace the gnomon in more robust material, such as steel or iron with a wider based design, to make it less vulnerable to interference or theft. Costs were being investigated, and hopefully it would be replaced soon.

Members noted no formal request had been received to re-site the sundial, but it was

**Resolved:** to investigate the cost of a contractor removing, transporting, and re-installing this heavy single-piece unit, and to explore possible new locations.

## **7.4 EdenARA re: donation of seat(s)**

Members discussed an offer from EdenARA to pay for purchase of one, or two, even three seats, for Stangrove Park, with a request to waive the Council's existing policy for an accompanying charge of a 10-year maintenance fee for each seat at £650. This is to cover the cost of future time and materials for annual painting/staining, and repair if necessary. It was

**Resolved:** to accept gratefully the offer of one seat, but not to waive the maintenance fee.

## **7.5 Rotary Club re: offer of a tree for the Queen's Jubilee**

Members considered Edenbridge and Westerham Rotary Club's wish to plant a tree for the Jubilee. The Club had been asked to clarify what funding they had available, which would affect the possible size and species of tree, and therefore would influence the safest location to suggest for its future protection and welfare. An answer was awaited, and it was

**Resolved:** to accept in principle the offer of an appropriate tree to fit in with the agreed tree planting programme.

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

### **8.1 Routine and seasonal work**

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

### **8.2 Groundstaff activity**

Members noted the in-house summer visual tree survey had been completed, as had the summer check of memorials in the Churchyard and Cemetery. Only a small number of issues were found in the Cemetery and action had been taken where necessary. Nothing major was found

during the tree inspection. A few minor items had been carried out by the grounds team, with more routine maintenance scheduled for the coming winter months

The team had begun removing some of the summer plants from the planters throughout the town, and taking down some of the summer baskets from the courtyard at Doggetts Barn. It was hoped to have all the winter plants in within the next few weeks.

The summer pitch renovations were completed in a shorter off-season than normal. The football goals had been up for over a month, with most leagues having started. All the rugby pitches were ready, with rugby training in full swing and the start of the season imminent.

The grounds team had reinstated two notice boards that were removed from the Market Yard some time ago, as they were obscuring the view of the CCTV camera. One had been fixed to the wall of the public toilets, and the other placed on legs on the small area of grass by the band hall.

Some time was spent clearing the majority of the duck weed from the pond at Stangrove Park, before applying some eco-friendly duck weed treatment. Unfortunately, shortly after that there was one of very few warm spells this summer, and the weed multiplied again. Hopefully, once the rest of the treatment was applied, and the weather began to cool, the weed would start to disappear. As a continuing issue, it was suggested a more long term solution was sought.

A sturdy post had been sourced and installed to hold the new defibrillator placed in Stangrove Park.

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

### **9.1 To receive the Burial Report, and consider water supply to the Cemetery**

The burial report was noted as follows, updating the record of Cemetery activity:

July 2021	August 2021
One interment of ashes	One burial
	One interment of ashes
	Two Grants of Right

### **9.2 To receive update on works scheduled for 2020/21 in the 10 year Open Spaces maintenance plan**

Works outstanding from last year, for a variety of reasons, were noted as follows:

#### **Cemetery walls mortar joints and coping stone repairs**

The contractor completed the work during August.

#### **Mowshurst car park resurfacing**

A date for scheduling the work was dependent on supply of the planings required, and these finally became available to proceed on 15<sup>th</sup> September.

#### **Tree survey follow up works**

Phase two of removal of a large horse chestnut tree deteriorating in Stangrove Park beside the path passing the pond was complete and the remaining tree trunk re-purposed.

The report on the condition of the oak in the south-west corner of Stangrove Park had advised there was still significant sound wood present. Balancing tree benefits against risks, present and future pruning works would be required to mitigate the basal decay and it was recommended as high priority that the tree be reduced in height by 6m and lateral growth by 30%. It was

**Resolved:** to carry out crown reduction as recommended in the survey report at £1,500 plus VAT.

### **9.3 To consider works scheduled for 2021/22 in the 10 year and 30 Year Open Spaces maintenance plans**

Members noted the report from the periodic **external inspection of Council's trees** every two years was awaited.

The report from the **annual external inspection of playgrounds** had been received, with most small-scale maintenance items within the capabilities of the groundstaff team. At the skate ramps in Blossoms Park it was noted that some parts of vertical surface were in need of replacement, and these had been referred to the constructor for costing. This will be covered by the 10year Maintenance Plan budget. The large square user advice sign on the side of the ramps required extra and different text, but the notice cover and frame had subsequently been damaged and the sign itself removed. It was proposed to replace the frame sign with a directly applied notice with aluminum surface layer (used for the new Market Yard signage), and a costing for this was awaited.

At Stangrove Park playground it was noted that the wrong style of access gate had been supplied. The contractor had ordered the correct replacement, at no cost to the Council, and this would be installed as soon as it was delivered. Fault was noted with the “butterfly” see-saw unit, on which two bolts had worked loose and were missing from the central pivot point. It was not returning to level rest when not in use, which indicated worn bearings. Groundstaff had fenced off the item and displayed notices to take it out of use for the time being.

Members discussed whether to repair or replace the “butterfly”, the quoted repair cost being £735 plus VAT, and considered a variety of designs and prices for replacement. It was

**Resolved:** to approve repair of the current unit, and consider budgeting for a replacement item next year.

Work had been completed on the section of concrete slabs in Doggetts Courtyard due for cleaning, replacement and re-setting as necessary.

The latest stage of the rolling programme of streetlights replacement under the 30 year plan was complete. The contractor was asked to recommend which columns should be included in the schedule **next** year 2022/23.

#### 9.4 To consider the street lighting replacement programme 2022/23

Members noted the budget in the 30-year plan for the street lighting replacement programme was £14,800 for metal columns and £14,700 for concrete. Figures for works in 2022/23 had been obtained from the lighting contractor; these were subject to UK Power Networks not implementing a price increase for the new year.

The cost for the metal columns from Streetlights was £1,175+ VAT and UKPN was £1,032 + VAT = £2,207.00 + VAT per column. For concrete columns from Streetlights it was also £1,175.00 + VAT and UKPN was £1,032.00 + VAT = £2,207.00 + VAT. The figures would allow for six metal and five concrete columns to be replaced.

The following **metal** columns were proposed:

Column numbers	Road	Streetlights	UKPN	Total net VAT
81, 82, 83	Hilders Lane	3,525.00	3,096.00	6,621.00
235, 236, 240	Swan Lane	3,525.00	3,096.00	6,621.00
Column totals		7,050.00	6,192.00	13,242.00

And to replace the following **concrete** ones:

Column numbers	Road	Streetlights	UKPN	Total net VAT
16, 19, 21	Cedar Drive	3,525.00	3,096.00	6,621.00
155, 158	Park Avenue	2,350.00	2,064.00	4,414.00
Column totals		5,875.00	5,160.00	11,035.00

**Resolved:** to schedule the above 11 columns as the project for the street light replacement programme in 2022/23 at a cost of £24,277 plus VAT, and any surplus funds to be used to paint and number some of the more recent metal replacement columns.

## **9.5 To receive update on projects awarded CIL funding**

### **9.5.1 Recreation Ground playground refurbishment**

Members noted several site visits had been made with interested suppliers, the tender document having been published on the ContractFinder website. The closing date for submissions had been extended to 18<sup>th</sup> October, with a potential project start date (weather and ground conditions permitting) of spring next year.

### **9.5.2 Addition to skate ramps facility, Blossoms Park**

The design had been taken to Blossoms Park to consult various users on the project, and the proposed addition had been welcomed by younger users, ages ranging from top-end primary (8-11) and lower secondary (11-13+) school years, and included two girls starting to learn skate boarding. The opportunity to practice skills on a unit at lower heights, and separate from the main run of ramps, was much appreciated by this upcoming generation of users. A couple of older young men said they were sure users would welcome anything that enhanced the range of skating activity possible at the site.

The suggestion was made that insertion of a sloping “hip” to infill the 90-deg angle between the flat bank at the end of the new run, and the ramp leading down to approach the grind box, would increase the user options. It would also remove the issue of meeting a vertical surface if a rider fell while approaching this point. The constructor had agreed with the comments, but warned the “hip” element was complicated to construct, and could add in the region of £3,000 to the overall cost. With sufficient CIL funding allocated to this project to cover the “hip” feature, members

**Resolved:** to add the “hip” to cover the angle between the flat bank and the ramp within the design, subject to confirmation of the additional cost.

Members noted other comments, including whether it was possible to increase the depth of the landing platform at the cricket field end of the ramps, so there was a deeper space before encountering the back railings of the platform. The ramps constructor has been asked as a separate issue to see if this would be feasible and if so at what cost.

### **9.5.3 Bus shelter, Swan Lane**

Investigation into the ownership of the field to the rear of the proposed bus shelter site was under way, through contacts with the local farming community. The Kent Highways officer contact had been asked to advise on the potential cost of constructing the paved crossing area including dropped kerb access slopes required under the Equalities Act 2010.

## **9.6 To arrange the next Quarterly Monitoring visits and update the Action Plan**

Members noted the proposed date for the end of October was Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> October.

## **9.7 To note resumption of bulky waste collections**

Funding was included in this year’s budget for quarterly bulky waste collections which were trialled in Edenbridge prior to interruption by the pandemic outbreak in spring 2020.

Members noted Sevenoaks District Council had resumed offering this service for parishes to for parishes to book, and Edenbridge had secured four dates through to next summer. The first of these was Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> October, and the collection vehicle would call at four locations, beginning with Church Street, then moving to Skeynes Road, followed by Park View Close, and finally Fircroft Way. The cost would be £304.33 per date, and the subsequent bookings next year were for 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 7th May, and 30<sup>th</sup> July.

Initial publicity had been given to this service, and more details regarding timings at locations would be publicised through posters, social media, and website, from the beginning of October.

## **9.8 To consider response to anti-social behaviour at Lingfield Rd Recreation ground, and replacement of litter bins**

Members discussed the complaints received regarding a variety of anti-social behaviour at the Recreation Ground across the summer, ranging from a horse and trap being driven on the field, to motorbikes, and model aircraft. All of these activities were not permitted by the Byelaws. Residents were encouraged to report on 101 or 999 if life was in danger, but it has been reported that the Police say there is nothing they can do.

Police action could be taken under the Byelaws, and possibly the Town Police Clauses Act 1847. New police officers and PCSOs when appointed to cover Edenbridge frequently have been, and are, given a copy of the Byelaws. A review of the Byelaws and signage is already under way. Members

**Resolved:** to write to the police asking for regular visits to the Rec, where the unauthorised activity threatened the safety of other users of the grounds

Council had requested Open Spaces committee to review defences at the Recreation Ground, which required balancing access for lawful users, and costs of any additional installations, against the seasonality of the problem. It was acknowledged that The Rec by nature was an open site, with a number of access points, including a PROW footpath which runs along the eastern boundary from the south-east corner before exiting into Coomb Field. While pedestrian access remained open, it was possible for a motorbike to get through also. Unofficial access possible from the Water Meadows across the old Mill Leet dry bed also had to be addressed.

A number of options were considered, including barriers, kissing gates, and more fencing, without reaching any conclusion.

Members had previously agreed to address increased litter capacity at the Rec by replacing the three dog waste bins with bins for mixed waste. Unfortunately the litter bin unit used across Council's sites for years had been discontinued. Members considered a variety of designs, and

**Resolved:** to install a double volume MLB rectangular steel bin with 224ltr capacity near the Coomb Field car park at £532.99 plus delivery, and order a square WDB unit with chute in fibre glass reinforced with concrete to replace each of the other two bins at £467.98 each plus delivery (prices ex-VAT).

#### **10. NEWS RELEASE**

Members considered whether any items from this meeting should be the subject of a News Release, and

**Resolved:** to publicise the resumption of the free Bulky Waste collections.

Meeting closed at 9.12pm