

**Minutes of the meeting of the OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE held in Rickards Hall at 7.30pm on Monday 8 November 2021**

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Present: Cllrs A Baker (Chairman), S McGregor (Vice-chairman), J Aldridge, V Jennings, A Layland, and N Lloyd.

In attendance: 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 Cllrs A Read, and B Todd. Cllrs A Damodaran and S Taylor were absent.

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

None.

*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 20 September 2021**

**Resolved:** that the minutes (9594-9599) 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 2021**

Members noted the report.

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

Placing the order for new litter bins for the Recreation Ground, agreed last meeting, revealed a 12 week wait for the dual-capacity metal bin (into the new year). The two GRC bins with chutes were available for the end of November – but splitting the order would result in the loss of the “free delivery” qualification. In consultation with the committee Chairman and Vice-chairman, the order was amended to change the dual bin material to GRC, while keeping the same design, reducing the cost and maintaining the free delivery.

The contractor who carries out the annual hedge-cutting work within the 10-year Maintenance Plan confirmed his price this year at £1,628 plus VAT – an increase of £116 on last year. This was within the scope of the Plan budget, so in consultation with the committee Chairman, the costing was accepted. The contractor who provides the decompaction work for pitches at Mowshurst and at the Recreation Ground confirmed the price would be the same as last year at £2,200 plus VAT. This was the sum included in the Plan budget, and was therefore accepted in order progress to the work. This was programmed for w/c 15 November, weather and ground conditions permitting.

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

**7. CORRESPONDENCE**

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

Members noted Edenbridge and Westerham Rotary Club had advised that their wish to plant a tree for the Jubilee is on “hold” until autumn next year.

**8. HEAD GROUNDSMAN'S REPORT**

**8.1 Routine and seasonal work**

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

## **8.2 Groundstaff activity**

Members noted the grounds team's task based Risk Assessments had recently been reviewed and amendments made where necessary. The team members had been made aware of these changes and had signed to say they had read and understood them.

The autumn pond checks had been completed, and the team had cleared foliage around the lifebuoy and safety signage at Mowshurst. The second application of duck weed treatment would be applied to Stangrove Park in due course.

The Team had made and installed a new planter next to the Wall of Remembrance in the Cemetery. They had also carried out a significant clearance of vegetation in the small memorial garden on the corner of Hever Road and the High Street. It was proposed to refresh the planting in the Spring.

Some repair work had been necessary on the railings of the Retention Dam bridge that crosses over the river into the Town Field from Church Street. This had highlighted that work to the timbers was becoming necessary (see item 9.7).

The team installed a new "user advice" sign at the skate ramps in Blossoms Park. This was to replace the damaged frame and lost signage previously there.

The team had recently re-painted two pairs of gates in the Cemetery, and the ambulance gate in the car park off Coomb Field at the Recreation Ground.

The winter tree maintenance programme had begun, to include pruning of branches that impede the tractor. Dead wood and ivy would be removed from trees across all sites, and also self-set saplings will be removed.

It was noted a costing had been calculated for the proposed additional groundstaff maintenance work at the Watermeadows, and was being presented to the Great Stone Bridge Trust for consideration.

## **8.3 Items for the future**

Members considered purchase of a second tripod ladder with 10ft over all height and 7ft platform, at £329.25 + VAT. They also reconsidered adding a scarifier to the Greentek slitter, which was not pursued in November last year. A 6ft rake attachment is now priced at £1060.00 (inc carriage from manufacturer) plus VAT, which would improve the quality of the pitch surfaces. As there was sufficient funding remaining in the equipment budget this year, it was

**Resolved:** to approve the above proposed purchases.

Members noted five items on the Asset Register due for renewal as of 01/04/2022, and it was

**Resolved:** to purchase the following – Stihl 18" Chainsaw £406.67; Stihl hedgecutter Combi engine £276.67; Stihl hedgecutter attachment £240.66; Stihl pole pruner attachment £171.66; also replacement for the larger rotary mower up to £1356.67 – a total of £2,452 (all prices exclude VAT) in the next financial year 2022/23.

Members noted the current tractor was scheduled for replacement soon, but continued to work well. An indicative price had been sourced for information for a possible new machine, of similar specification to the existing model, in the region of £40,500.00 + VAT.

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

### **9.1 To receive the Burial Report, and review memorial benches policy**

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

It was noted the new extension section Cemetery Four had just come in to use, and the groundstaff had installed its signage. Update of the text within the abridged edition of the Cemetery Rules booklet provided for families had been completed. It remained to produce an updated version of the Cemetery layout plan for inclusion in the booklets.

Members in the spring agreed to review their policy on memorial benches. It was noted a request to include a bench by the children's graves section had subsequently been received, adding to the two families who had already made inquiries for benches on the last row in Cemetery Three section. The location of the existing 17 benches in Cemetery Two and Three sections was considered, and after discussion it was

**Resolved:** to identify positions at which any further benches might be placed, including in the new Cemetery Four section, before deciding whether to accept any more seating.

## **9.2 To receive update on works scheduled for 2021/22 in the 10 and 30 year Open Spaces maintenance plan**

It was noted the report from the periodic **external inspection of Council's trees** every two years had been delayed and was still awaited. The agreed crown reduction work to a large oak in the south-west corner of Stangrove Park had been commissioned, and specific inspection of two other trees in the park and one at Mowshurst had been requested.

The **annual pumps service** at the Mill Leat and Sports Pavilion was scheduled for 5<sup>th</sup> November, and the **decompaction** work to the sports pitches had also been scheduled (see item 6 above).

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

### **9.3.1 Recreation Ground playground refurbishment**

Members noted that after the October closing date for submissions, the eight tenders received were opened by the Working Group (Cllrs Baker, Lloyd and Todd with the Community Warden, Deputy and Town Clerk) on 28 October. The Clerk would now prepare a spreadsheet with the detail and comparisons. The working group would review this, and the tenders again, before making its shortlist. It may be necessary to go back to the shortlisted tenderers with questions. Once the Working Group was happy with its shortlist, a proposal would be put to the Committee – likely to be an extra meeting. The potential project start date (weather and ground conditions permitting) was spring next year.

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

The project Members approved for the skate ramps had been commissioned, and confirmation of the expected completion date was awaited.

### **9.3.3 Bus shelter, Swan Lane**

Members noted that following the Kent Highways officer's response, information had been requested in September on the potential cost of constructing the pavement and crossing area required under the Equalities Act 2010. The location Highways indicated for the crossing to avoid the Swan Ridge junction (between the first two properties to the east) would involve excavating and laying new pavement on the north side. Information on the potential cost was still awaited.

The ownership of the field to the rear of the proposed bus shelter site had been established through the Land Registry. The land owner was contacted to see if they would be willing to provide additional land to accommodate the shelter. They have replied that they would not seek financial compensation, but would ask for a *quid per quo* in the form of installation and maintenance of a dog waste bin on Swan Lane farm access drive (which is part of the route of a Public Right of Way footpath). The owner understands that it is not policy to put a bin on private land, but feels that the Council could waive the policy on this occasion. It was

**Resolved:** to ask the County Councillor to follow up with Highways the request for information on the paving construction costs.

#### **9.4 To consider the next quarterly monitoring visits**

The quarterly sites monitoring visits were introduced some years ago, so that Members were familiar with the nature, extent, and maintenance issues of the various locations maintained by the Town Council. It was

**Resolved:** to make the site visits half-yearly, and set the dates for the Tuesday of the first week in March and September – 1<sup>st</sup> March and 6<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

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

Members noted the first of the Bulky Waste Collections funded by the Town Council was on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> October, with the collection vehicle calling at four locations, beginning with Church Street, then moving to Skeynes Road, followed by Park View Close, and finally Fircroft Way. It was publicised through posters, social media, and website, from the beginning of October. There had been no reports of any difficulties. The subsequent bookings next year were for 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 7<sup>th</sup> May, and 30<sup>th</sup> July.

#### **9.6 To receive update on response to anti-social behaviour at Lingfield Rd Recreation ground**

Following the decision last meeting to write to the Police, a letter was sent to the Police and also the Police and Crime Commissioner. The Acting Chief Inspector is willing to attend a meeting to update and discuss policing issues, although the PCC was not available for some weeks. It was

**Resolved:** to request an option of dates from the ACI to arrange the meeting.

Members noted access down to the Watermeadows from Mont St Aignan Way appears to sit with Kent Highways, and it has been suggested that restriction installed at the top of this slope would reduce access for horse and trap at this point. This possibility is being investigated, and it is understood the local police would support a request for this.

#### **9.7 To consider Committee budget items for 2022/23**

Members had received a draft of the 10-year Plan maintenance schedule as it currently stood, and noted the budget for the works was £23,849. Some works which could be deferred to the following year had been removed, also one project had already been funded this year through CIL, a total reduction of £14,600.

The 30-year Plan schedule contained the next phase of the rolling programme of replacing old street light columns, approved by members last meeting at £24,277, also £10,000 towards possible repairs to the stone wall around the Churchyard. That likely cost was as yet unknown. Works to the Churchyard boundary brick wall is a continuing project estimated at £20,000.

A replacement see-saw for Stangrove Park playground could be funded from within the Small Projects budget heading, as could potential timber repairs to the Retention Dam bridge over the River Eden, south of Church Street – the extent of works and possible costs were being investigated.

Funding for continuing the Bulky Waste Collections was currently in the draft budget at £1,200, and funding for equipment replacement was included at £6,630.

#### **9.8 To receive an update on projects for the Queen's Jubilee**

Inquiries about costings for planned replacement of feature trees, to be included as part of the Queen's Green Canopy project, had revealed reduction in supplies due to the national demand for trees. Indicative costs, depending on the species of tree, were around £40-70 for 6-7ft height, and up to £200-£300 for 10ft-13ft height. It was

**Resolved:** Cllrs Baker and Layland would join the Deputy Clerk in visiting a local nursery to look at stock, as other inquiries continued.

#### **9.9 To consider an allotments request**

Members considered a further request from Forge Croft allotments for a small poly-tunnel on a plot. At 3m long by 2m wide, and 2m high, in heavy duty plastic over a tubular frame, it was within dimensions previously permitted. It was

**Resolved:** to permit this temporary structure, provided it was removed at the end of the Tenancy, and to set a policy for size, materials, and construction of such structures at the site.

**10. NEWS RELEASE**

Members considered items from this meeting to be the subject of a News Release, and

**Resolved:** to highlight the Queen's Trees project once decisions had been made for the planting next year.

Meeting closed at 8.40pm