

**Minutes of the meeting of the OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE held in Rickards Hall at 7.30pm on Monday 14 February 2022**

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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

There was one member of the public present and no press.

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received, noted, and accepted from Cllrs A Read, B Todd and A Damodaran. Cllr S Taylor was 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 Extra Ordinary OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE 20 December 2021**

**Resolved:** that the minutes (9658) be signed by the committee Chairman as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

*A member of the public arrived, with an interest in item 9.7 – the chairman allowed them to comment on the possible location of the Queen’s Jubilee Beacon.*

*Members then agreed to bring forward discussion of item 9.7*

**9.7 To receive an update on projects for the Queen’s Jubilee, and consider the Recreation Ground as location for the Beacon**

Members noted that the proposed visit to a local nursery, to look at tree stock for replacement trees on the Council’s planting schedule, was planned for two days’ time. The Rotary Club had re-contacted the Council regarding the offer of a tree, identifying the sum available, and looking for spring planting – but had subsequently decided to remain with the autumn timescale.

A local contractor had been asked to provide a provisional costing for the proposed Rose Walk in Stangrove Park, and his response was awaited.

The Jubilee Working Group tasked by January Council provided a verbal report. The recommendation for location of the Beacon had been reviewed, and the 25m safety zone had been confirmed as available at Stangrove Park within the open space on the slope above the pond. Members considered the new recommendation for Stangrove Park as the location, and

**Resolved:** that the Jubilee Beacon be located in Stangrove Park on the slope above the pond, and the Working Group would submit the required planning application, due to the Beacon being above 4m in height.

Members were advised that local organisations were being asked to assist with display of banners and flags across the High Street, along with bunting. The Town Band would be present on the evening of Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> June, when the Beacon would be lit as part of a national chain being started at 9.45pm at Buckingham Palace.

**5. TO RECEIVE ANALYSIS OF THE COMMITTEE'S RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS TO 31 January 2022**

Members noted the position with two months of the year remaining, and that Market income and expenditure now had specific budget headings.

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

Members noted the company which provides and maintains the High Street hanging basket display confirmed the price for this summer at £4,960, which was within the budget for 2022. In consultation with the committee chairman it was accepted, and the colour scheme set for red/white/blue for the Royal Jubilee celebration.

January Council approved a request from Sevenoaks District Council for partnership working, to use part of Stangrove Park for free community post-natal exercise classes under the This Girl Can initiative, the instructor costs being covered by grant funding from Sports England. The aim is to run six-week courses from March until October. Dates for one hour "taster" sessions for participants with their babes-in-buggies were agreed for Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> and Friday 25<sup>th</sup> February, 10-11am. An Open Spaces Hire Agreement (at no charge) had been completed, and relevant qualifications and insurance documentation provided, along with Risk Assessment.

Additional funding for Family Fun sessions had been acquired by PlayPlace under the Re-Connect scheme, designed to encourage residents to re-connect with their local open spaces and playgrounds post-Covid 19. There would be 10 sessions over the months to the end of August (the latter including the usual four Thursdays provided for many years in the school holidays in Stangrove Park). Council's own budget for those four sessions could therefore cover "extra activities" to enhance the basic provision in the summer. The first two Re-Connect sessions were being delivered in the February half-term week, weather permitting.

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

**7. CORRESPONDENCE**

**7.1 Resident re: community garden inquiry**

Members considered an inquiry regarding a proposal for a community garden project. The activity described was similar to that which already exists among plot holders at the allotments, and the contact had been advised of this, along with the cost of annual rent. As the Council does not have other unused public space suitable for the type of project, it was

**Resolved:** advise the resident accordingly, and suggest they contact Sevenoaks District Council, and the local housing associations, to see if they had any unused public space.

**7.2 Resident re: Town Field wildflower meadow thanks**

Members were pleased to note the appreciation of the partnership project with SDC which is operating on Town Field, east of the Great Stone Bridge.

**7.3 Riverside fields Wildlife In Edenbridge report**

Members noted receipt of the usual annual report from Mr D Eade, who has continued his detailed recording of flora and fauna sightings in the riverside fields south-west of the town centre. Four members requested the opportunity to see a copy of the report.

**8. HEAD GROUNDSMAN'S REPORT**

**8.1 Routine and seasonal work**

Members noted the team's routine and seasonal work during November-January

**8.2 Groundstaff activity**

The winter visual tree survey noted minor works across the Council's various sites, subsequently undertaken by the groundstaff, such as ivy clearance and low-level pruning, and sadly reported that none of the donated Italian alders planted at the back of the all-weather pitch in Stangrove Park remained. They had been vandalised, broken at ground level.

The winter headstone check had been carried out in the Cemetery and Churchyard with nothing to report.

The Team had cleared out undergrowth and unwanted shrubs/self-seeded trees from the Peace Garden on the corner of Hever Road. It was proposed to plant some new shrubs in the spaces created in the coming weeks from funds remaining in that budget heading.

The team had continued the winter pitch maintenance programme at the Recreation Ground, Nomads and Blossoms Park. The playing surfaces had been good through the winter months with no need for cancellations of fixtures.

Annual first aid kit checks had been carried out, with any out of date items disposed of and replaced. The annual driving licence checks had also been made.

Equipment purchases approved at November committee meeting had been made - a new smaller tripod ladder, and a scarifier attachment for the Greentek slitter.

### **8.3 Items for the future**

Members noted that under the Government's 2020 Budget, as part of UK commitment to reducing global warming, there are changes in permitted uses of lower duty red diesel tractor fuel coming into force from April 1st. These will affect most sectors – agriculture being an exception. Landscaping and the maintenance of recreational facilities would not generally be considered an accepted activity, but maintenance of land by community amateur sports clubs, golf courses and driving ranges would be permitted – if machines were not used on public highway. This latter would appear to preclude movement between sites. Illegal use of red diesel will incur penalties, and end users must not stock up prior to deadline.

This potentially affects Town Council activity, requiring to swap onto white diesel fuel, but part of the groundstaff work involves pitch maintenance FOR community amateur sports clubs, though the Council is not itself a club. The GMA says it understands that there is a lack of clarity regarding red diesel legislation, and its use for grounds management going forward.

The Association is currently speaking to Government to get specific updates on its use for grounds management and turf care, and will be updating members as soon as more is known.

Advance orders have been placed for the five items approved for replacement on the Asset Register, from the budget for next financial year beginning 01/04/2022.

## **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:

November 2021	December 2021	January 2022
Three burials	One Burial	Three burials
One interment of ashes	One Grant of Right	Two Grants of Right
Two Grants of Right		

Members noted update of the short edition of the Cemetery Rules booklet provided for families had been completed, with inclusion of an electronic version of the Cemetery layout plan, with the help of Cllr Aldridge. Booklets for reference had been provided to all purchasers of new graves and ashes plots last year. The updated layout plan had also been included in the full Rules booklet, provided to funeral directors and stone masons.

In line with the decision at the November meeting, eight locations within the Cemetery where memorial benches might be placed going forward had been identified, if more seating was accepted. Members considered these and

**Resolved:** to resume accepting requests for benches in the identified locations, which would eventually increase the total in the Cemetery from 17 to 25

It was noted it was and is still possible to donate a bench for some other location in the town.

## **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 delayed report from the periodic **external inspection of Council's trees** every two years was expected in a couple of weeks. The agreed crown reduction work to a large oak in the south-west corner of Stangrove Park had been carried out, and specific inspection of two other trees in the park and one at Mowshurst had been requested. Council had been advised that the future prognosis for ash trees generally was not good.

Members considered a request from the Cricket Club for reduction of a long branch extending over the cricket nets at Blossoms Park, due to the quantity of leaf and debris affecting the roof of the nets. A tree surgeon had costed this at £200plus VAT. It was

**Resolved:** to carry out the work, subject to approval from SDC tree officer

The **decompaction** work to the sports pitches at the Rec and Mowshurst took place as scheduled, and the annual empty of the **interceptor tank** at Market Yard car park was carried out last month.

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

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

Following the extra meeting last month at which the proposal for awarding this contract was accepted, the chosen contractor was notified of the outcome. In line with the meeting decision, a CIL Board application for funding for amendments to the equipment had been prepared as follows:

- alternative surfacing beneath the teens equipment
- provision of a play jeep instead of a small trampoline
- division of the swings unit into sections

An additional application for CIL funding for separate provision of an access path (approximately 60m) from the car park to the playground had been prepared, and members considered a range of indicative costings to decide the sum requested. It was

**Resolved:** to choose compacted stone base with compacted Breedon gravel top surface finish with timber edging, at £5,000 plus VAT

The potential project start date (weather and ground conditions permitting) was late spring.

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

Off-site construction of the project Members approved for the skate ramps began last month, but owing to illness of the designer/manager, it is now expected to be completed by the end of February, with the team due to come to site to confirm ground fixings.

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

Members considered information from the Highways officers regarding potential cost of constructing the crossing and access pavement required under the Equalities Act 2010 to serve the proposed bus shelter. There was concern that the total project cost at possibly up to £17,000 had become uneconomical, and it was

**Resolved:** to ask the Highways officers for their own recommendation for locating a bus shelter on Swan Lane, and to investigate the possibility of altering the bus route to include Ridge Way.

### **9.3.4 Additional street lighting, Westways**

It was noted the project was progressing – Highways' support had been confirmed, and the required forms had been provided for the application, for which there will be a fee of £127.50. The contractor had updated his previous 2021 costing to install two extra columns, and had confirmed the installation price remained at £2,350 plus VAT, with

UKPN tariff for connections increased by £372 to £2,436 (subject to actual positioning of the columns on the ground). Consultation with residents had been carried out with a deadline of the committee meeting date. Responses had been majority in favour, including from the two properties outside which it was proposed to install columns, but with a request for discussion of exact column position. It was

**Resolved:** to submit the application to Kent Highways to install the two light columns.

#### **9.4 To consider the next Sites Monitoring visit**

Members noted the next sites monitoring visits were set for 1<sup>st</sup> March, and 6<sup>th</sup> September. It was proposed to start at 9.30am, and members decided to begin at Mowshurst on 1<sup>st</sup> March.

#### **9.5 To note the report on bulky waste collections**

The second of the free Bulky Waste Collection dates took place on Saturday 22nd January, with the collection vehicle again 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 early January. Again there had been no reports of any difficulties. The subsequent bookings this year are for 7<sup>th</sup> May, 30<sup>th</sup> July and 8<sup>th</sup> October.

A resident from the new development west of Enterprise Way had questioned the locations for the collections, and asked members to consider adding a fifth pick-up point to serve that area. After consulting with SDC direct services, members felt that a suitable location had not been identified. It was

**Resolved:** not to amend the collection points at this stage, but to review the decision when more of the new housing development was completed.

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

It was noted that following Council's letter to the Police and also the Police and Crime commissioner, a meeting was arranged with ACI Stubberfield, and Sgt. Savill from the Community Safety Unit at Sevenoaks. Council members and officers received confidential update on recent police activity and statistics, and in turn highlighted issues of community concern.

The importance of two-way information exchange was highlighted, and it was acknowledged that the absence of the regular PACT meetings during the past couple of years had not helped. These had been reinstated (in-person) and the first of them held in January. The new "e-Watch" link was also publicised, giving twice-weekly information to people who sign up to receive it through My Community Voice.

A site meeting with a Kent Highways officer had taken place to consider restricting the access for pony and trap down the slope to the GSBT watermeadows from Mont St Aignan Way. A chicane of short barrier sections across the path was a possibility being considered.

**Resolved:** to take no further action at this stage.

#### **9.8 To consider allotment requests**

Members considered a proposed policy to cover requests for temporary structures such as small polytunnels and sheds, and

**Resolved:** to adopt the policy as follows:

1. Small poly-tunnels will be allowed as temporary structures, for the purpose of extending the growing season and range of produce, provided that the following criteria are met for size and materials:
  - within a maximum size of 2.46m (8ft) wide, by 6.15m (20ft) long (the width of the plot) and 2.3m (7ft 6ins) high
  - of strong construction with either aluminium or plastic hoop frames, covered in clear or opaque PVC, and with anchor fixings to the ground (not guy ropes) to withstand wind.

The permission is conditional on the poly-tunnel being removed at the end of the tenancy.

2. Small wooden sheds will be allowed as temporary structures, provided that the following criteria are met for size and materials:

- within a maximum size of 1.8m (6ft), by 1.2m (4ft) and 2m (6ft 6ins) height, of robust construction in wood with either apex or sloping roof, from which tenants are encouraged to collect rainwater for use on their plot.

The permission is conditional on the shed being removed at the end of the tenancy.

### **9.9 To consider Edenbridge In Bloom Competition**

Members noted it was uncertain whether SDC would organise an In Bloom competition this year, and given previous popularity of a local Edenbridge In Bloom event, it was proposed the Town Council should organise such a competition this year, with the assistance of the Community Warden. Members considered some suggestions for the framework, and

**Resolved:** Cllrs Baker and Layland would work with the Community Warden and Deputy Clerk on the organization of a local In Bloom competition.

### **9.10 To consider repairs to the Retention Dam on the River Eden**

Members considered a report on the condition of the Retention Dam bridge on the river, south of Church Street, its function and the history of its installation. They noted the possible cost if a replacement bridge was required, and advice that an appropriate surveyor be sought to request a costing for an assessment. It was

**Resolved:** to seek a surveyor to assess the bridge structure and ascertain the cost.

### **10. NEWS RELEASE**

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

**Resolved:** to highlight the streetlighting project at Westways when completed; the Jubilee Beacon; and the In Bloom competition.

Meeting closed at 9.03pm