

**MINUTES OF THE OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT BANSONS ON 18 AUGUST 2016**

PRESENT: Cllrs D. Birch (chair) P. Bolden (vice chair)
J. Battersby* J. Bicknell J. Browning
J. Devonald C. Feetham* B. Freeman
J. Reynolds

*Non committee members

Officers: J. Farr (Deputy Clerk)

Public: Three members of the public.

Press: One member of the press.

23/16 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Fletcher.

24/16 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest

Cllr Reynolds declared an interest in item 30/16 as he was an allotment tenant.

25/16 Public participation

A member of Ongar in Bloom (OIB) addressed the committee to explain the recent work of the group. OIB have met with Essex County Council Highways to discuss locations for additional planters on railings and tubs in the High Street. OIB expressed their support for the renovation of the Castle sign (item 31/16) but declined to maintain the John Holness Garden.

26/16 To note the minutes of the Jubilee Park and Open Spaces committee meeting held on 16 June 2016

The minutes were approved at Jubilee Park meeting on 11 August 2016 and were provided for information only.

27/16 Clerk's Report

Allotments

The gate post at Castle St allotments has had to be removed to allow Council staff to effect repairs.

It was reported that the ownership of the gate was still to be ascertained.

Cemetery records

A new Deed of Grant book and a new Burial Register book have been received.

The re-interment of ashes that had been exhumed from another cemetery had been completed.

Leases

It was reported that the Council's solicitor was progressing the leases for Castle St allotments and Greensted Rd play area.

Litter pick

Brentwood County High School visited in July and carried out a public survey on litter in Ongar. They also collected the names and contact details of 6 residents who would be willing to assist the Council on the next litter picking event.

Councillors asked to see the results of the survey at the next appropriate meeting.

Ongar in Bloom

OIB met with ECC Highways on 3 August to discuss locations for railings troughs and cider barrel tubs. It appears that the Town Council did not have a licence for its troughs so OIB would apply for a licence for all the troughs, both new and old. The licence would be granted in perpetuity so would not need to be renewed.

Skate Park

The litter bin in the park had been set alight twice in the last few weeks.

28/16 Finance reports

To note the finance report for the Open Spaces committee up to 31 July 2016
The committee noted the report.

29/16 Ongar in Bloom

i) To receive the notes of the meeting held on 25 July 2016

The working group met with representatives of Ongar in Bloom on 25 July and notes of the meeting were provided for Councillors information.

Councillors noted the report.

ii) To receive the Ongar in Bloom Portfolio for 2016

Ongar in Bloom have issued their portfolio of aims and achievements. A copy was provided for Councillors information.

Councillors expressed their thanks and support to OIB for their work so far and for a job well done.

iii) To consider membership of the liaison group

Following Cllr Wingfield's resignation the committee was asked to appoint a third member to the liaison group together with Cllrs Devonald and Feetham.

Cllr Battersby volunteered for this role.

Cllr Reynolds left the meeting.

30/16 Allotments

i) To receive the notes of the meeting with OAGS held on 27 June 2016

Notes of the meeting held on 27 June were provided for Councillors information. It was reported that the next meeting was scheduled for 25 August 2016.

Councillors were concerned that the notices to advise owners to keep their dogs on a lead had been removed. Councillors asked that staff check this at the next visit and provide costs for replacement notices at the next meeting (if necessary) and to issue a press release asking for visitor's co-operation.

- ii) To review the Allotment Rules and Regulations and make a recommendation to Full Council

The liaison group reviewed the current Rules and Regulations and agreed that this was still valid. No alternations were recommended to the committee.

Cllr Browning proposed that no alternations be made to the Rules and Regulations and this was seconded by Cllr Bicknell. Unanimously agreed.

- iii) To receive complaints from tenants regarding overgrown plots and agree a course of action

Tenants have made complaints to the Council regarding the condition of some plots at the Castle St site. Those plots that were let had been contacted by the Council to ask them to cultivate the plot as required by their tenancy agreement.

Those plots that were **not** let will be cut down and covered by Council staff when time allows over the winter months.

Councillors noted the information and requested an update at the next committee meeting. Members also asked that a press release be issued to advertise available plots. Part plots would be considered.

Cllr Reynolds returned to the meeting.

31/16 Castle sign

To receive information on the approximate costs to refurbish the sign

In principal, EFDC were willing to share the cost of the refurbishment of the Castle sign. OIB had obtained two quotes for this work and the Council would also contact the contractor recommended by EFDC. This information to be considered at the next committee meeting. Members asked that Council staff clean the board.

32/16 Cemetery

- i) To receive information on the recent programme of memorial testing

The Council's contractor had carried out a programme to test all the memorials in the cemetery. This identified several memorials that were unsafe and these were laid flat as a precaution to prevent any further damage. It was reported that the Council had tried to contact the grave owners affected to inform them of this but not all the owners' addresses were current.

Members asked that a press release be issued to ask relatives to inform the Council of any change in their contact details.

- ii) To consider the ground clearance to provide space for additional cremated remains interments.

The trees and vegetation had been removed but the ground still needs to be levelled and grassed over. As this was not urgently required councillors agreed to defer this until the next financial year. Cllr Browning suggested that should another use be found for the Chapel then the open spaces staff will have to be found alternative premises and that this area may be suitable.

iii) To receive complaints regarding unauthorised memorials and agree a course of action
The Council had received complaints from residents that there were several unauthorised memorials on grave (e.g. vases and urns, wind chimes and ornaments).

Councillors agreed that a notice be erected on the Cemetery notice board and a press release be issued to remind relatives of the Rules and Regulations. This item to be reviewed by the committee in three months.

33/16 John Holness Garden

To consider a replacement bench and agree a course of action

It was reported that the memorial bench had been damaged beyond repair. Examples of alternative seats were provided for Councillors consideration.

The Council was approached by the manager of the Kings Head who offered to donate up to £380 to allow the Council to purchase a new bench.

Cllr Browning proposed that the Enviro Moulded Park bench be provided as a replacement and this was seconded by Cllr Freeman and unanimously agreed.

Cllr Freeman proposed that Council accept the kind offer from Kings Head and this was seconded by Cllr Bicknell and unanimously agreed.

34/16 Play areas

i) To receive a report following the annual independent inspection

The inspection took place in the week beginning 27 June. Full reports on each play area were emailed to all Councillors for information.

Estimated costs from the contractor were not received in time for the meeting. Councillors noted the amount of remedial work to be completed by Council staff and the impact this would have on their day to day tasks.

This item was deferred until the quotes were received.

ii) To consider replacing the safety surface with wet pour

At the Open Spaces meeting in February 2016 it was agreed to consider repairs to wet pour safety surfaces after the annual inspection had been completed.

It was agreed that this item be deferred until the next committee meeting.

35/16 Tree surveys

To consider the cost of the necessary work to –

- St Martin's church yard
- Jubilee Park

and agree a course of action

Copies of the tree surveys were provided for Councillor's information.

Cllr Browning proposed that all the recommended work at St Martin's church yard be completed and this was seconded by Cllr Freeman. This was unanimously agreed.

Open Spaces committee 18.08.16

Following discussion Cllr Freeman proposed that only the following recommend work at Jubilee Park be completed for the moment –

Nos. 11, 12, 13, 14, 17 to remove branches away from wires

Nos 65 and 69 to cut back limbs from flood lights and remove dead tree no 69

To top out the fir trees surrounding the tennis courts by 15 feet.

This was seconded by Cllr Bicknell and unanimously agreed.

The meeting closed at 9 pm.

Signed

Chair

Date