

**MINUTES OF THE OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT BANSONS ON 20 OCTOBER 2016**

PRESENT: Cllrs J. Battersby* J. Bicknell* D. Birch
P. Bolden C. Feetham* N. Fletcher
B. Freeman J. Reynolds

*Non committee members

Officers: J. Farr (Deputy Clerk)

Public: No members of the public were present.

Press: No members of the press were present.

Due to the overrunning of the previous meeting this meeting did not start until 8.10 pm.

55/16 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs J. Browning, J. Devonald and P. Keska

56/16 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest

Cllr Reynolds declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 63/16 as an allotment tenant.

Cllr Reynolds declared a pecuniary interest in item 66/16 as an allotment tenant.

57/16 Public participation

There were no members of the public present.

58/16 To agree the minutes of the

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2016 were reviewed and agreed as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.

59/16 Clerk's Report

Allotments

The Council had been unable to ascertain the owner of the damaged gate at the Castle St site. Staff would establish an approximate cost and this would be reported to the next committee meeting.

OAGS

Cllr Battersby volunteered to join the liaison group. The next meeting was scheduled for Thursday 17 November.

ICCM

The AGM Report and Financial Statement for 2016 had been received and were available for Councillors to view.

EFDC Countrycare Annual Report

The report for 2015 – 16 had been received and was available for Councillors to view.

Essex Playing Fields Annual Report 2016

The report for 2016 had been received and was available for Councillors to view.

John Holness Garden

The donation had been received from Kings Head in High St, Ongar. These funds were used to purchase a new memorial bench after the old one was vandalised.

Trees

Ongar Lawn Tennis Club offered to contribute £400 towards the tree work surrounding the tennis courts. The Clerk had written to the club to request the promised donation.

Tescos Bags of Help

The Council had received an email protesting against the Council's application for funding from Tescos Bags of Help. A copy of the email was provided for Councillors attention.

60/16 Finance reports

To note the finance report for the Open Spaces committee up to 30 September 2016. Councillors noted the report.

61/16 Cemetery

To receive an update on the memorial testing programme

The memorial testing undertaken by professional contractors in the 4 new extension sites identified 68 memorials that were unsafe. The Council was unable to contact 18 relatives as there were no current contact details. Testing had yet to be completed on the older sections in front of the Chapel.

It was reported that the invoice had been received which was more than the allocated budget. The Deputy Clerk recommended that a budget be allocated in the financial year 2017 -18 to allow the testing to be completed.

Cllr Freeman proposed that the completion of the memorial testing be completed in 2017 – 18 and this was seconded by Cllr Bolden.

Vote –

For – 4

Cllr Reynolds abstained.

62/16 Manor Square

To receive complaints from members of the public regarding parking in Manor Square and agree any action necessary.

Residents had complained to the Council that access to their properties was restricted by vehicles parking in Manor Square. The land was registered as an area of Common Land under the 1965 Act and parking on the land was illegal under Section 34 of the Road Traffic Act 1988. Properties with existing rights of way over Manor Square were exempt from this restriction and may drive over the land but were not permitted to park on it.

Councillors considered whether the Council should take any action and it was suggested that residents who found their access blocked should complain to the motorists.

Cllr Birch proposed that the Council issue a press release asking residents not to park in this area and to write to neighbouring residents and businesses to remind them of the restrictions. This was seconded by Cllr Reynolds.

Vote –

For – 4

Cllr Bolden abstained.

63/16 Dog Control

i) To receive information on the unauthorised removal of “Keep your dog on a lead” signs from Castle St allotments and agree any action necessary

It was reported that the signs recently provided asking the public to keep their dogs on leads at the allotment site had all been removed. Allotment tenants had requested that replacement signs were erected as soon as possible as they were concerned that dogs were fouling where food produce was being grown. It was suggested that the Council issues a press release asking for the co-operation of the public.

Cllr Fletcher proposed that the signs be reinstated with a more secure fixture and this was seconded by Cllr Freeman.

Vote –

For – 4

Cllr Reynolds abstained.

ii) To consider Cllr Reynolds suggestion that the Council provides signs, at all Council owned open spaces, requesting dog owners to "clear up" after their animal and agree any action necessary. The signs to explain the health hazards of coming into contact with faeces.

Councillors were asked if they wish for signs to be erected at all of the Council's open spaces (cemetery, nature reserve, Jubilee Park Recreation Field, 4 play areas, skate park, both allotment sites, bus shelters, footpaths including those to the rear of Shakletons and Onslow Gardens and St Martin's church yard).

Councillors felt that the suggested wording would not be practical on signs. Cllr Freeman proposed that the Council try to educate members of the public of the dangers using media (press releases, social media, council website and notice boards). This was seconded by Cllr Bolden.

Vote –

For – 4

Cllr Reynolds abstained.

iii) To consider Cllr Reynolds suggestion that the Council makes a Dog Control Order where it would be an offence not to remove faeces and punishable with a substantial fine and agree any action necessary.

Information on dog control orders was provided for Councillors consideration.

Cllr Birch proposed that the Council did not pursue the Dog Control Order and to review the situation in 3 months' time and this was seconded by Cllr Bolden.

Vote –

For – 4

Cllr Fletcher abstained.

iv) To consider the provision of dog waste bins in previously identified areas and any further areas as deemed necessary.

Councillors were provided with a list of locations requested by the public for additional dog waste bins. The budget for the year 2016/17 would allow for one additional bin in the financial year. Any additional bins would also have to be added to the Dog Waste Bin Emptying Contract at a cost of £2.65 per bin per week (£137.80 per year per bin).

It was reported that all of the locations were not on Town Council land and permission should be sought before erecting any dog waste bins.

Cllr Birch proposed that a dog waste bin be installed at the footpath at St Martin's church and the permission from the Church be sought. This was seconded by Cllr Reynolds and agreed unanimously.

v) To consider Cllr Reynolds suggestion that the Council provides dog waste bags and agree any action necessary

The Council would have to purchase dog waste bags to distribute to the public and the committee was asked which budget this cost would be taken from and to agree the method of distribution. Information on sample bags and the cost was provided for Councillors information.

Cllr Reynolds proposed that the Council purchase 500 bags in the first instance. There was no seconder.

Cllr Freeman proposed that no bags should be provided free of charge as this may affect local trade and this was seconded by Cllr Bolden.

Vote –

For – 3

Cllrs Reynolds and Fletcher abstained.

Cllr Fletcher proposed that the Council contacted the local business to work together for the Council to provide bags for a limited time to promote the idea of clearing up after their dogs. This was seconded by Cllr Reynolds.

Vote –

For – 4

Cllr Bolden abstained.

64/16 Notice boards

i) To consider Cllr Reynolds suggestion to replace the notice boards at Love Lane Rec Field

Cllr Reynolds suggested that the notice boards located at Love Lane Rec Field needed to be replaced. Photographs of the existing boards were provided for Councillors information.

Cllr Fletcher proposed that the Council place stickers on the boards to rebadge them to say "Ongar Town Council" and to include Council contact details. This was seconded by Cllr Reynolds and unanimously agreed.

ii) To consider Cllr Reynolds suggestion to replace the notice boards in the street scene
At the Full Council meeting on 4 August 2016 Councillors agreed to refer the possible replacement of notice boards in the street scene to the Open Spaces committee. It was reported that the Council owned 7 boards across the parish.

Cllr Birch proposed that this item be deferred until later in the financial year and if funds were still available to consider this again. This was seconded by Cllr Fletcher and unanimously agreed.

iii) To agree to formally ask permission from EFDC to amend the boards supplied by EFDC

Cllr Bolden proposed that the Council ask EFDC for permission to rebadge the street scene notice boards and to request a contribution of funds towards this project. This was seconded by Cllr Reynolds.

Vote –

For – 4

Cllr Fletcher abstained.

Cllr Bicknell left the meeting at 9.25 pm.

65/16 Play areas

To receive a quote to provide a basketball hoop at the skate park

The Council was asked by a resident to provide a basketball hoop at the Jubilee Park Recreation Field. At the last Open Spaces committee meeting members felt that the lower level of the skate park in Basons Lane would be a better location.

Councillors were mindful that the skate park was not the location requested by the resident. It was suggested that the Deputy Clerk contact the resident to see if the skate park location was acceptable and to gauge opinion if this was still required.

Cllr Birch proposed that the Council did not pursue this project and this was seconded by Cllr Bolden.

Vote –

For – 4

Cllr Fletcher abstained.

66/16 To consider the draft revenue budget for 2017/18 and make a recommendation to Finance and Human Resources committee

A draft budget was provided for Councillors consideration.

Cllr Reynolds proposed that the Council allocated £5,000 to the tree budget as it had not yet been decided on the responsibilities of the proposed charity to manage the Jubilee Park site.

Cllr Birch proposed that the new dog waste bin and dog waste bin emptying budgets be allocated enough to provide 3 new bins in the next financial year (2017 – 18) and 4 in the following financial year (2018 – 19).

Revenue budget

Actual expenditure and income is from 1st April to 30th September 2016 and is listed net of VAT.

	Budget 2015/16	Actual 2015/16	Budget 2016/17	Actual 2016/17	Suggested budget 2017/18
Amenity management (1)	200	60	200	90	200
Cerizay Garden maint grass cutting	600	600	360	160	360
Dog waste bin (new)	325	0	325	0	325 975
Dog waste bin (emptying) (2)	1,000	878	1,200	585	1,200 1,650
Equipment and fuel (3)	1,500	648	1,000	167	1,000
Grounds maint (4)	500	208	0	0	N/A
High St planters	1,500	1,341	1,000	439	1,200
John Holness Garden maint	100	0	100	83	100
Litter picking	0	0	100	8	100
Love Lane Rec Field Includes contract for grass cutting	1,540	1,320	700	465	700
Nature Reserve maint Includes contract for grass cutting	9,000	6,773	3,250	565	3,250
Notice board repairs	500	351	500	0	500
Onslow Gardens grass cutting	300	270	300	200	300
Skate park maint	250	600	250	0	250
St Martin's Church yard maint	500	0	300	0	300
St Martin's wall maint	0	428	1,000	0	1,000
S127 litter bin repairs	150	0	150	0	50
Tree works Includes work at all outside spaces including Jubilee Park (5)	6,000	5,060	5,000	2,995	2,500 5,000
Total	23,965	18,609	15,735	5,757	13,335 16,935

(1) Amenity Management is a “catch all” budget for items which do not fall within other budgets headings. This will include items such as Best Kept Playing Field Competition entrance fee, a donation to the Open Spaces Society, the purchase of weed killer etc.

(2) Dog waste bin (emptying) - this is a joint contract with Epping Town Council and invoices are received quarterly

(3) Equipment and fuel – this may be used across the Council’s assets including cemetery, allotments, Nature Reserve etc. and includes fuel for lawnmowers and the Council vehicle.

(4) Grounds maintenance has been amalgamated within Amenity Management

(5) Tree works – the allowance suggested takes into account that responsibility for the trees at Jubilee Park will transfer to the new charity.

Cllr Reynolds left the meeting at 9.40 pm.

Allotment expenditure

	Budget 2015/16	Actual 2015/16	Budget 2016/17	Actual 2016/17	Suggested Budget 2017/18
Allotment maintenance Includes contract for grass cutting on footpaths (1)	2,000	500	500	7	500
Castle St allotment rent and water (2)	500	250	500	39	500
Allotment deposits Deposits returned to tenants who give up plots	150	150	150	0	150
Moreton Rd water supply	N/A	N/A	0	15	50
Allotment notice board maint	50	0	50	0	50
Total	2,700	900	1,200	61	1,250

(1) Clearance of plots at Castle St has taken place in the last few weeks. The invoice has not been received to date but is likely to be approx. £400.

(2) The annual rent for the Castle St site was increased to £300 during 2015/16 and is due in December 2016.

Allotment income

	Budget 2015/16	Actual 2015/16	Budget 2016/17	Actual 2016/17	Suggested Budget 2017/18
Allotment rent	1,100	989	1,100	28	1,100
Allotment deposits Deposits from new tenants	150	0	100	0	100
Total	1,250	989	1,200	28	1,200

Allotment rents are due 1st November 2016 for this financial year.

If all plots are let the maximum income will be -

Moreton Rd = £214.50

Castle St = £975.00

Total = £1189.50

Cllr Reynolds returned to the meeting at 9.42 pm.

Cemetery expenditure

	Budget 2015/16	Actual 2015/16	Budget 2016/17	Actual 2016/17	Suggested Budget 2016/17
Memorial benches maint	100	0	100	0	100
Cremated remains plots roses (1)	250	210	250	0	250
Cemetery maint	1,500	1,984	2,000	958	1,500
Cemetery rates	600	576	600	291	600
Cemetery utilities	300	371	300	29	300
Plot re-purchases (2)	500	0	0	0	0
Memorial testing (3)			1,500	0	2,000
Total	3,250	3,141	4,750	1,278	2,750 4,750

(1) Roses are ordered at the end of September for planting in early October.

(2) The Council may receive requests to buy back unused/unwanted plots at original purchase price (Rules and Regulations 10).

(3) The invoice for memorial testing has not yet been received.

Cllr Birch requested that the contractor be asked to complete the memorial testing for a fixed price.

Cemetery income

	Budget 2015/16	Actual 2015/16	Budget 2016/17	Actual 2016/17	Suggested Budget 2017/18
Transfer of Exclusive Right of Burial	600	1,498	600	834	600
Interments	4,000	6,411	4,000	2,702	4,000
Memorials	2,000	1,994	2,000	2,019	2,000
Plot purchases	5,000	5,470	5,000	4,516	5,000
Memorial benches maint	100	0	100	0	100
Total	11,700	15,373	11,700	10,071	11,700

As recommended by EALC no income should be budgeted for as this is unquantifiable. An allowance had been made for the budget to remain the same as the year 2016/17.

Cllr Reynolds proposed that the draft revenue budget be recommended to Finance and Human Resources committee. This was seconded by Cllr Freeman and unanimously agreed.

Commuted sums

Play area maintenance budget also includes grass cutting for Love Lane, Greensted Rd and Shelley Park play areas.

67/16 To consider budget bids for 2017/18 and make a recommendation to Finance and Human Resources committee

At the Open Spaces meeting on 15 September 2016 the committee considered budget bids for –

New see saw at Greensted Rd play area	Quote received and provided for Councillors consideration. It was suggested that this cost be taken from the funds available in the Play Area Improvement budget (£13,004).
Additional adult gym equipment	It was reported that each item was priced individually. The committee would need to consider which item it would like to provide to enable exact costs to be obtained.
Repaint St Martin's Church railings	It was agreed that this item be put out to tender and therefore this process was still ongoing. The only quote received so far was for £4126 (not including VAT). The Clerk had been unable to source any external funding for this project as it is ongoing maintenance.
Replace Castle sign	Formal permission to change the sign had been received from EFDC as well as the offer of a donation towards the cost.
New concrete raft for cemetery	Quote received and provided for Councillors attention.

Cllr Freeman proposed that the item to replace the see saw at Greensted Rd play area may be cheaper if bought and installed with other equipment. As the slide would also need to be replaced shortly it was suggested that this item be deferred and considered at a future committee meeting.

It was agreed not to add another item of adult gym equipment as none had been requested by residents.

It was agreed to allocate £5,000 for repainting the listed railings at St Martin's church yard.

It was agreed to allocate £2,200 for a new concrete raft and that additional quotes for this work be sought and considered at a future meeting. Cllr Birch proposed that the cemetery fees be reviewed at a future meeting and an increase considered to offset the cost of the concrete raft. This was seconded by Cllr Freeman and unanimously agreed.

It was agreed to allocate £1,000 to replace the Castle sign.

Cllr Fletcher proposed that this draft committee budget be recommended to Finance and Human Resources committee. This was seconded by Cllr Freeman and unanimously agreed.

The meeting closed at 10.05 pm

Signed

Chair

Date