

**MINUTES OF THE OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT BANSONS ON 15 DECEMBER 2016**

PRESENT: Cllrs D. Birch (chair) J. Bicknell* J. Browning
P. Bolden M. Dadd J. Reynolds

*Non committee members

Officers: J. Farr (Deputy Clerk)
S. Calver (Outside Spaces Supervisor)

Public: No members of the public were present.

Press: No members of the press were present.

68/16 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Devonald, Freeman and Keska.

69/16 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest

Cllr Reynolds declared a pecuniary interest in item 73/16 ii) as he was an allotment tenant
Cllr Reynolds declared a pecuniary interest in item 74/16 v) as he was an allotment tenant

70/16 Public participation

There were no members of the public present.

71/16 To agree the minutes of the 20th October 2016

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th October 2016 were reviewed. There was one typing error and following this correction the minutes were agreed as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.

72/16 Clerk's Report

Magazines / Publications

The CPRE magazines "Field Work" and "Countryside Voice" and the ICCM "The Journal" were available in the office to view.

Draft budget 2017/18

The draft budget for 2017-18 had not yet been considered by Full Council.

Cemetery

Ongar in Bloom had planted 5,000 crocus bulbs on the grass verge outside the cemetery.

Funding donations

Funding donations promised by a resident and Ongar Tennis Club for work to St Martin's Church yard wall and to reduce the fir trees surrounding the tennis courts at Jubilee Park had not yet been paid.

Cllr Reynolds stated that the Tennis Club had not paid the promised donation as it was not possible to ascertain by how much the trees had been reduced.

Cllr Reynolds asked why the resident had not paid the promised donation for the repairs to the church yard perimeter wall and it was reported that no reason had been given. The Deputy Clerk advised Councillors not to rely on donations when considering future work.

High St Planters

Ongar in Bloom expected to receive permission from Essex County Council towards end of December 2016 for additional tubs and planters.

Shelley Park

The Council received complaints from residents regarding balls going over the hedge into private gardens. Following a site meeting with EFDC Housing officers it was agreed to move the small goal posts back approx. 8 metres and to review the situation again in a few months.

Open Spaces equipment

The outside staff are cleaning and maintaining all equipment when the weather is too poor to cut grass or do any other tasks.

Play in the Park

The Council had received a request from EFDC for the Council to fund the Play in the Park sessions for 2017 for Love Lane Recreation Field and Shelley Park. Previously the Council had held sessions on Thursday afternoons at alternate locations. The budget for Play in the Park was part of the Council's Admin budget.

Cemetery

It was reported that there was a water leak in the cemetery which staff became aware of after receiving a very high water invoice. Staff had turned off the water supply and were currently trying to ascertain the location of the leak. Councillors considered the possible necessity of replacing the pipes in the future and were reminded that the Council would need to consult the Church of England as it was consecrated ground.

73/16 Finance reports

i) To note the finance report for the Open Spaces committee up to 30 November 2016
The finance reports for 30 November 2016 were noted by Councillors.

Cllr Reynolds left the meeting.

ii) To consider a virement of funds within the committee budget
The clearance work at both allotment sites had exceeded the allocated budget and it was suggested that funds were transferred to the allotment maintenance budget.

Cllr Birch proposed that funds be vired from the skate park maintenance budget to the allotment maintenance budget. This was seconded by Cllr Browning and unanimously agreed.

Cllr Reynolds re-joined the meeting.

74/16 Allotments

i) To consider repairs to the gate at Castle St
The gate at the entrance to Castle St allotments had been damaged. The Council had been unable to ascertain the owner of the gate. It was reported that repairs would cost approximately £100 as well as staff time (2 people x 1 day). Cllr Reynolds advised the meeting that there had been fly tipping on the site.

Cllr Bolden proposed that the Council effect the repairs and ask ECC and EFDC for a contribution to the work. This was seconded by Cllr Browning and unanimously agreed.

ii) To receive an update on the clearance and letting of plots at both allotment sites

Mr Calver reported that the clearance of the plots had taken more work than expected and at least one plot was in a very poor condition. Since clearance this plot has been let to new tenants.

iii) To receive information on the results of the external funding from Tesco's Bags of Help scheme

The Council had been successful in gaining £10,000 from Tesco's to provide allotment plots for use by less able tenants. The Council had sought the advice of the Allotment Society who put officers in contact with Harlow Council who offered to assist with this project.

It was anticipated that this project would include –

- Improved access to the Castle St site
- Paved area around the allotment space to provide level access
- An additional tap for water access

Quotes were being sought for materials to construct the raised beds and to extend the water supply to a point nearer the plot.

Councillors noted the information. Cllr Birch congratulated Mrs Laws, the Assistant to the Clerk, for her work on this project.

iv) To accept the Tesco's Bags of Help Terms and Conditions for funding

The Council would need to accept the terms and conditions before claiming the £10,000 funding. Further details were provided for Councillors information.

Cllr Birch proposed that the Chairman of the Council and the Clerk sign the Terms and Conditions to accept the funding. This was seconded by Cllr Reynolds and unanimously agreed.

Cllr Reynolds left the meeting.

v) To receive feedback on the liaison meeting with OAGS held on 8 December 2016 and agree any action necessary.

Councillors, Amanda Laws and Judith Farr met with representatives of the Ongar Allotment and Gardening Society (OAGS) on 8 December. Notes of the meeting had been emailed to councillors and a paper copy provided at the meeting.

Councillors were reminded of the arrangement with OAGS to provide the hire of Basons free of charge in return for planning the High St planters twice per year. This item would be discussed at the next Full Council meeting scheduled for 12 January 2017.

Cllr Reynolds returned to the meeting.

75/16 Cemetery

i) To consider the draft Rules and Regulations, make any changes necessary and make a recommendation to Finance and Human Resources committee
Proposed changes had been made to the Cemetery Rules and Regulations to reflect the items suggested by ICCM at the course attended by Council staff.

Additionally, the Council had received complaints from members of the public regarding the provision of rose bushes for the cremated remains plots. The roses were supplied in spring and autumn but had been delayed this year due to the continued growing season.

It was reported that roses could not be lifted until they were dormant and the mild weather had extended the growing season. The roses were due to be delivered to the Council the day following this meeting and staff had been instructed to plant the rose for the complainant first.

Cllr Birch proposed that the committee recommended to Finance and Human Resources committee that the wording on Item 32 of the Cemetery Rules and Regulations be amended to read –

The Council will provide a half standard rose bush free of charge at the most appropriate seasonal time of year.

This was seconded by Cllr Reynolds and unanimously agreed.

Cllr Browning proposed that the committee recommended to Finance and Human Resources committee that all other suggested amendments be accepted. This was seconded by Cllr Birch and unanimously agreed.

ii) To consider the draft grave digging instructions form, make any changes necessary and make a recommendation to Finance and Human Resources committee
At the cemetery course attended by Council staff it was suggested that the Council issued instructions to the grave digger. A draft pro-forma was considered by Councillors.

Cllr Birch proposed that the committee recommended to Finance and Human Resources committee that the grave digging pro forma was adopted. This was seconded by Cllr Browning and unanimously agreed.

iii) To consider the draft risk assessment, make any changes necessary and make a recommendation to Finance and Human Resources committee
A draft risk assessment was provided for Councillors consideration.

Cllr Browning proposed that the committee recommended to Finance and Human Resources committee that the Cemetery Risk Assessment be adopted. This was seconded by Cllr Reynolds and unanimously agreed.

iv) To receive a quote to complete the memorial testing regime and produce a site map
The Council was carrying out a memorial testing regime. At the Open Spaces committee meeting held on 20 October 2016 it was reported that the testing had not yet been completed.

Extract of minutes of 20 October 2016 –

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.

A quote to complete the testing and to produce a site map (required by law) had been received for £1,520.00.

Cllr Reynolds proposed that the quote to complete the memorial testing and produce a map was accepted. This was seconded by Cllr Browning and unanimously agreed.

76/16 Litter / street cleaning

i) To receive feedback on the Council's litter pick held on 19 November 2016

At the litter picking on 19 November there were six volunteers (3 members of the public and 3 Councillors). In all 30 rubbish bags of rubbish were collected. All of the local groups who were invited to attend declined.

Cllr Birch asked the Deputy Clerk to thank all the Councillors and residents who attended the event.

ii) To consider signing up for the Keep Britain Tidy "Great British Spring Clean" in March 2017.

The committee had previously agreed to take part in this event. Councillors were asked if they wish to formally sign up for this event which would then be advertised on the Keep Britain Tidy website.

Cllr Browning proposed that the Council sign up for the event and this was seconded by Cllr Reynolds.

Vote –

For – 3

Against – 1

77/16 Play areas

i) To receive an update on repairs for the play areas

Council staff had completed all the repairs they were able to.

Councillors noted this information.

ii) To receive quotes for the repairs to be completed by the contractor

The Council's contractor had provided quotes for work to be completed in Cerizay, Shelley Park and Love Lane.

Cllr Bolden proposed that the Council seek at least one further quote for this work. This was seconded by Cllr Birch and unanimously agreed.

iii) To consider replacing the see saw and slide at Greensted Rd

Councillors had previously considered replacing the dilapidated play equipment at Greensted Rd play area. Suggestions for replacing the slide at Greensted Rd were provided for Councillors consideration. A quote to replace the see saw with a 4 way springer was provided for Councillors consideration.

Councillors asked for quotes to be sought for a slide approx. 2 metres high and for a see saw not springy.

78/16 St Martin's church yard

To receive the notes of the meeting with the PCC held on 6 December 2016 and agree any actions necessary

Notes of the meeting were provided for Councillor's information.

Cllr Browning proposed that the proposal by Ongar in Bloom to provide wildlife habitat for the church yard was accepted if agreed by St Martin's PCC. This was seconded by Cllr Reynolds and unanimously agreed.

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm

Signed

Chair

Date