

**MINUTES OF THE OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE MEETING  
HELD AT BANSONS ON 6 AUGUST 2015**

PRESENT: Cllrs A. Wingfield (chair) P. Bolden J. Browning  
P. Gode S. Jackman\* A. Kaye\*  
J. Reynolds D. Roberts J. Rushton

\*Non committee members

Officers: A., Middlehurst J. Farr (Deputy Clerk)

Public: 5 members of the public, one member of the press

**24/15 Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Cllr N. Fletcher. Cllr B. Freeman was absent without apology.

**25/15 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest**

Cllrs J. Reynolds and P. Bolden declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 30/15 as they were both members of Ongar Allotment and Gardening Society (OAGS).

**26/15 Public participation**

No members of the public wished to address the committee.

**27/15 To agree the minutes of the Open Spaces committee meeting held on 2 July 2015**

The minutes were agreed as a true record and signed by the chairman.

**28/15 Clerk's Report  
Allotment Fees**

Allotment fees were reviewed at Full Council on 30 July 2015 and the recommended increase was AGREED with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2016.

**Cemetery**

Cemetery Fees were reviewed at Full Council on 30 July 2015 and the recommended increase was AGREED with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2015.

A water leak was discovered at the Cemetery and this resulted in an increased water bill from Affinity Water. The leak has been repaired and water was available to all taps in the cemetery.

At the last Open Spaces committee meeting it was agreed that the Council contact Resident B to ascertain if they would accept an alternative plot. This offer was refused and Resident A had been advised.

Work on the new access ramp to Cremated Remains graves was completed which will enable the Council to provide an additional 100 plots (approx.).

**Jubilee Park Recreation Field**

The Council contacted the commercial soccer school who have withdrawn the advertised sessions from Council land.

### **Litter pick**

The Council had written to Mr Brett to thank him for his assistance with these events. The items agreed to be purchased at the last Open Spaces meeting had been ordered.

### **Play areas**

The insurance settlement for the claim for the damage to the play house at Cerizay play area had been received.

### **St Martin's Church PCC**

A meeting with members of St Martin's Church PCC was yet to be arranged.

### **Terms of Reference**

The committee's Terms of Reference were reviewed and adopted at Full Council on 30 July 2015.

### **29/15 Dog waste bin**

At the last Open Spaces committee meeting it was agreed to place an additional dog waste bin near the footpath from Woodland Way to Chipping Ongar Primary School. It had not been possible to ascertain the landowner. Cllr Reynolds stated that there may be a possibility of a sponsor for this bin.

### **AGREED**

- To complete a land search to ascertain the land owner
- To write to neighbouring properties to ensure there were no objections to the proposed location of the bin
- The Clerk to establish the legality of sponsorship of council items

### **30/15 Allotments**

➤ To receive the notes of the liaison meeting with Ongar Allotment and Gardening Society (OAGS) held on 16 July 2015

Cllr Wingfield and the Deputy Clerk met with OAGS on 16 July 2015. Notes of the meeting were provided for Councillors information.

### **AGREED**

- The Deputy Clerk and Cllr A. Wingfield to inspect both allotment sites and contact those residents who were not cultivating their plots
- To review the current Rules and Regulations with regard to non-cultivation of let plots

➤ To receive a report from the Council's solicitor regarding the proposed lease for Castle St allotments

The committee considered the recommendations of the Council's solicitor. Cllr Reynolds asked whether a quote could be sought to clear the plots on the Horticultural Society land to prepare them to let. The Clerk advised that it might be several months before the lease was agreed and that the quote would then be out of date. Councillors noted that Stamp Duty Tax may be payable on this lease.

### **AGREED**

- Not to pursue a chancel check for this land
- To instruct the Council's solicitor to renegotiate the break clause item to allow the Council to give one year's notice to its allotment tenants
- To ascertain what type of survey the solicitor had recommended
- To ascertain the likely cost of this survey

➤ To agree a course of action regarding the proposed new lease and make a recommendation to Finance committee

The items agreed above did not require a recommendation to Finance committee.

### **31/15 Memorial Management**

The Council's Health and Safety representative recommend that that a rolling programme of memorial inspection be carried out to ensure that all memorials were inspected at least every 5 years. A draft Risk Assessment was provided for Councillors information. Memorials under 3 feet high could be inspected by Council staff. Those over 3 feet high would need to be done by a competent person with specialist equipment (not Council staff) and quotes had been requested from 3 contractors. One quote had been received to date.

It was reported that there were 105 memorials over 3 feet high, 668 under 3 feet high and 93 cremated remains plaques. It was reported that it may be difficult to trace relatives for the older memorials. Cllr J. Browning PROPOSED and Cllr D. Roberts seconded that Council staff begin a programme of inspecting memorials as soon as possible. Unanimously agreed.

### **AGREED**

- To obtain 2 more quotes for inspections
- To ascertain the cost to lay flat each memorial
- Council staff to begin inspecting memorials
- To include memorial testing in the budget process for the next financial year

### **32/15 Play areas**

All four play areas and the skate park were inspected by an independent company. The conclusions were included in the reports with recommended actions provided to Councillors. It was reported that some of these actions would be completed by Council staff but others would require attendance by the contractors. It was reported that equipment at Greensted Rd play area was more than 40 years old and nearing the end of its useful life. It was suggested that a local business be approached to sponsor a new swings set.

### **AGREED**

- Council staff to carry out as many repairs as possible
- To instruct contractors to carry out necessary repairs
- To report progress on this item to the next committee meeting
- To apply for external funding to replace the swings set
- The Clerk to establish the legality of sponsorship of council items

### **33/15 Open Spaces Committee Business Plan**

The current committee Business Plan was adopted by Full Council in August 2014 and was reviewed by the committee. Several alterations were suggested and it was reported that the responsibility for Youth had been moved to Full Council. It was suggested that youth be included in the Public Relations committee remit with a view to setting up a Youth Council.

**AGREED**

- To include Youth Council on the next Public Relations agenda
- To recommend the revised Open Spaces business plan to Full Council

**34/15 Grounds maintenance contract**

It was reported that the existing grounds maintenance contract would come to an end in April 2016. A full list of all grounds maintenance work was provided to the committee detailing which work could be carried out by Council staff and those items to be carried out by a contractor. Cllr A. Wingfield PROPOSED that the contract be accepted and this was seconded by Cllr J. Browning. Unanimously agreed.

**AGREED**

- To use the draft contract to obtain 3 quotes.

**35/15 Open Spaces committee budget 2015/16**

Income and expenditure on the committee budget between 1 April and 29 July 2015 was noted by the committee.

The meeting closed at 8.15 pm.

Signed

Chair

Date

DRAFT