

MINUTES OF THE OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT BANSONS ON 25 JULY 2013

PRESENT: A. Wingfield A. Kaye D. Roberts J. Rushton B. Surtees

Officer: J. Cook (Deputy Clerk)

Public: None

19/13 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr F. Knights

20/13 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

21/13 Public participation

No members of the public were present.

22/13 To agree the minutes of the Environment and Open Spaces committee meeting held on 13 June 2013

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2013 were reviewed and agreed as a true record and signed by the chairman.

23/13 Clerk's Report

Allotments

It was reported that the Clerk had visited the Council's solicitor and negotiations for the new lease at Castle St allotments was ongoing.

Ash trees

Tree Warden Alan Brett was asked to assist with tree inspection. No ash die back on Council owned or managed property had been identified to date.

CCTV

The additional cameras for Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Field play area (Love lane) and Cerizay play area had been ordered and work started on 16th July.

Dog waste bin

Emptying of the new bin installed to the rear of Castle Street was delayed as the contractor was unable to locate it. This had now been rectified and emptying would take place weekly.

Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT)

The EWT magazine Spring edition had been received and was available for Councillors to view.

Open Spaces Society

The Open Spaces Society Newsletter for Summer 2013 had been received and was available in the Council offices for Councillors to view.

Play area inspection training

The Deputy Clerk and two members of staff undertook class room and onsite training. A short report was attached for Councillor's information.

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Shelley Park

At the last Open Spaces committee meeting it was agreed that Open Spaces staff would repair the fence to prevent unauthorised access from the park into a neighbouring property. EFDC Housing had offered to replace the garden fence on the resident's side of the hedge.

Skate board park

The Council's Open Spaces team had fitted railings and cleared a safety zone to the rear of the ramps. The heras fencing had been removed and the park had been reopened.

Q E II Jubilee Recreation Field (Love Lane)

It was reported that permission had been given to a local under 10's rugby club to use the Recreation field.

Councillors felt that as the Recreation Field was not part of the land leased to OSSC the Council should be sure that any clubs using the field had the appropriate safe guards in place (eg Risk Assessments and policies).

24/13 Cemetery

i) To consider banning dogs from the Cemetery and amending the current Rules and Regulations if necessary.

The Open Spaces Supervisor was concerned that members of the public were taking their dogs (sometimes several at a time) into the cemetery. The dogs foul on the grass or urinate on the memorials. Notices had been posted that dog owners should keep the dogs on a lead and not allow them to foul the area but this was not always adhered to.

Councillors were concerned that legitimate users would be punished for the actions of an inconsiderate few.

AGREED

- Notices to be erected appealing for owners not to allow their dogs to foul in the cemetery
- The Council to issue a press release on this item
- Ask Council staff to report all incidents witnessed so that Councillors can measure the problem
- Review this decision in 6 months time

ii) To receive a report on the Cemeteries management and Exhumation course

The Deputy Clerk attended a course on Cemeteries management and Exhumation. A short report was provided for Councillors information.

Items raised on the course that were already being addressed –

- The Deputy Clerk would contact the Chelmsford Diocese to request a replacement consecration certificate.
- As part of the Council's new IT software packages the burial records would be transferred to an electronic register.
- All stone masons who carry out work in the Cemetery were required to be BRAMM registered and comply with BS8415.
- A Risk Assessment and Policy on memorial inspections would be drafted for consideration at a future committee meeting.
- A copy of the cemetery plan was held off site.

Copies of the current Rules and Regulations and Interment Notice were provided for Councillors information.

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RECOMMEND to Full Council

- The suggestions made at the course be incorporated into the Rules and Regulations
- A draft of the new Rules and Regulations to be considered by Full Council with a recommendation from Open Spaces committee to adopt all items
- A time limit on the length of the permission given to place memorials to be decided by Full Council
- The Council to consider publishing a leaflet on the cemetery with a synopsis of the Rules and Regulations and Fees

25/13 Nature Reserve

i) To consider replacing the Perspex on the notice board at the entrance to the Nature Reserve
At the Environment and Open Spaces committee meeting on 29.11.12 it was agreed not to replace the Perspex in the notice board after it was vandalised. The board was relocated to the entrance of the Reserve near the steps and bus stop. Replacement Perspex would cost approx £290 + VAT.

AGREED

- To replace the Perspex in the notice board

ii) To consider improvements to the entrance to the Nature Reserve

Changes to the bank at the High Street entry to the Nature Reserve were needed to improve the appearance of the entrance. It was suggested that this area was sown with grass seed and the crowns lifted on the trees. In the long term it was suggested that this area be terraced and planted. An estimate for terracing would be approx £4,000.

AGREED

- To turf the bank
- To make a budget bid for terracing or the next financial year

iii) To consider access arrangements for residents of 14 – 17 Turners Close and agree any action required to improve entry

Cllrs D. Roberts and A. Kaye met with the Deputy Clerk to consider suitable garden access arrangements for the residents of Turners Close. The access gate from Turners Close to the easement area was bordered by a small fence. The removal of this fence would allow residents to access their gardens with wheelbarrows or similar while still preventing vehicles accessing the area. The second gate into the Reserve would prevent vehicles accessing the Reserve.

AGREED

- To remove the fence adjacent to the external gate
- To review this arrangement in 6 months time

iii) Update on arrangements for Open Day on 14th September 2013

The Council in conjunction with Countrycare will be holding an Open Day on Saturday 14th September between 12 and 3 pm. Attendance has been confirmed by several local clubs and charities. In addition, Countrycare would be holding a hedge laying demonstration. The Epping Forest Hawk and Owl Sanctuary had requested a donation of £100.

Funding for this event would be shared with EFDC Countrycare and the Council had secured grant funding towards the cost of the event from ECC Community Games.

Councillors asked the Clerk to invite local schools to the event.

Cllr A. Wingfield left the meeting at 9.10 pm

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26/13 St Martin's church

i) To receive a report on the working party meeting with St Martin's PCC held on 2 July 2013 and consider the action points suggested

Cllr D. Roberts and the Deputy Clerk met with Rev Cooper on 2nd July. Notes of the meeting were attached. Councillors were asked to consider the items agreed by the working party and decide whether to accept the recommendations.

AGREED

- Cllr B. Surtees to join this working party
- To remove the shed from the church yard

Cllr A. Wingfield rejoined the meeting at 9.13 pm

ii) To consider the draft Risk Assessment and make recommendation to Human Resources committee

A draft Risk Assessment had been completed by the Deputy Clerk and Rev Cooper. Some changes were made to the draft Risk Assessment.

AGREED

- The Council and St Martin's PCC to agree how often tree surveys need to be carried out

RECOMMEND to Human Resources committee

- To adopt the amended draft Risk Assessment

27/13 Skate park

i) To consider replacing the stolen gate

At the last Open Spaces committee meeting it was agreed to postpone a decision on replacing the stolen gate until a decision had been made regarding the renewal of the lease. At the Full Council meeting on 4th July it was agreed to renew the lease. The annual independent inspection did not highlight the need for gates to be fitted (similar to the layout at Greensted Rd play area which is an open access). A new gate would cost approx £300.

AGREED

- Not to replace the gate

ii) To review the Risk Assessment

The skate park Risk Assessment was agreed in February 2010. Councillors were asked to review the Risk Assessment and some changes were made.

AGREED

- To erect a sign to advise users of what to do in an emergency
- Notices to be put on bins to advise that they are multi use (dog waste allowed)

RECOMMEND to Human Resources committee

- To adopt the amended Risk Assessment

28/13 AGREED to suspend Standing Orders to allow the meeting to continue past 10 pm

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29/13 Open Spaces Committee Budget 2013/14

i) To receive information on the committee budget

Councillors noted the budget report.

ii) To agree to divide the skate park removal budget to -

- skate park maintenance
- provision of CCTV at this location
- Nature Reserve management

and make a recommendation to Finance committee

The original skate park removal budget was for £6500. It was suggested that £1250 be set aside for skate park maintenance for the year. £437 had already been spent on heras fencing, repairs cost £213 not yet invoiced and £250 for rent for the site. Approximately £3000 would be used to provide CCTV coverage at the site. It was recommended that the remainder of the budget be transferred to Nature Reserve management.

RECOMMEND to Finance committee

- To agree the recommendation and vire the funds as specified

30/13 Unlisted items

Cllr A. Wingfield suggested that the Council considers establishing a bicycle trail around Ongar

Cllr B. Surtees asked that the Council considers carrying out a public consultation e.g. town or neighbourhood plan

The meeting closed at 10.15 pm.

Signed

Chair

Date