

**MINUTES OF THE OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT BANSONS ON 7 NOVEMBER 2013**

PRESENT: A. Wingfield (chair) A. Kaye (vice chair) D. Gambadella
D. Roberts J. Rushton

Officer: J. Cook (Deputy Clerk)
A. Middlehurst (Clerk)

Public: 7 members of the public.

45/13 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs F. Knights, R. Prosser and B. Surtees

Action

46/13 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

47/13 Public participation

One member of the public addressed the committee on agenda item 55/13 Manor Square. It was reported that the square was common land and the Council was responsible for its maintenance and upkeep. The area was not covered by EFDC's street cleaning regime nor by North Essex Parking Partnership. Residents of Manor Square were concerned about the amount of litter in the square and inconsiderate parking by visitors to local shops and other businesses. The committee was asked to liaise with EFDC on both of these issues. The relocation of some planters may help to reduce the incidents of inconsiderate parking which restricts resident's access to their properties.

One member of the public addressed the committee on the recent rent increases to allotments. It was felt that this was too high compared with the rates charged by other local councils. He enquired how Councillors arrived at the new rate and whether there was a proper accounting system for the allotments. He believed that a law was in place restricting the rent increases of allotments so that they did not rise at the same rate as other leisure facilities.

One member of the public addressed the committee on agenda item 51/13 Allotments. As a tenant of the Ongar Horticultural and Allotment Society (OHAS) he was in favour of the Council including this site in the new lease with the land owner. On behalf of himself and 3 other tenants he expressed the opinion that they would be willing to pay the rent charged to existing Council tenants in return for security of tenure. However, some OHAS plots were not of the same size as Council plots and this would need to be addressed.

48/13 To agree the minutes of the Open Spaces committee meeting held on 12th September 2013

The minutes of the meeting on 12th September were reviewed and agreed as a true record and signed by the chairman.

49/13 Matters arising from the previous committee meeting

There were no matters arising from the previous minutes.

**50/13 Clerk's Report
Allotments**

The rent increase for allotment plots was considered at the Full Council meeting on 10th October and Councillors agreed the recommended increase. Tenants had been notified of the forthcoming increase.

Additional external funding had been secured from ECC Communities Initiatives Fund to provide a mains water supply at Moreton Rd allotments. The work would have to be paid for before Affinity Water would contract to carry out the work. The funding would then be claimed from ECC CIF. Councillors would be informed once a date for the work had been agreed. Tenants have been advised of this improvement.

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It was reported that the notice board purchased with the donation from Ongar Horticultural and Gardening Society (OHAS) had been erected at Castle St allotments and a press release issued.

Ash trees

There have been no reported incidents to date.

Cemetery Rules and Regulations

Amended Rules and Regulation were considered at the Full Council meeting on 10th October. With some amendments these new Rules and Regulations were adopted.

Computer software

It was reported that computer software for allotments and cemetery records had been installed and the initial training completed. All information for the allotments had been successfully loaded and progress made with the cemetery records.

Cycle trail around Ongar

Cllr A. Wingfield requested that the committee consider this proposal. The lack of footpaths that would be suitable to be altered to bridleways (allowing cycles as well as walkers) had meant that this idea had been withdrawn.

Dog waste bins

Epping Town Council manages the dog bin emptying contract with TBS Hygiene on behalf of the Town Council and other local councils. The contract expired on 30 Sept and was renewed for a further year.

Greensted Rd play area

It was reported that the Clerk had received approx 30 emails from parents and the Ongar Mums Group regarding the poor condition of the fence and the lack of gates at Greensted Rd play area. The Clerk was working with the Town Council's solicitor to secure a long term lease which would allow grant funding to be sought for any improvements at the site. Quotes for wooden and metal fences would be obtained for the next committee meeting. Clerk

High St planters

The planters were sown with winter flowers on Sunday 20th October.

Play areas

It was reported that installation of the zip wire had been started and would be completed in approx. 10 days (weather permitting) following a site visit with the contractor to ascertain the best location at Jubilee play area (Love Lane).

It was reported that funding applications for the Rock Stackz had been made and decisions were expected shortly.

The Council won 3 gold certificates from Essex Playing Field Association for play areas maintained to a high standard (Shelley Park, Cerizay and Jubilee/Love Lane) and a gold certificate and a silver cup for the most improved play area (Cerizay).

Nature Reserve

It was reported that the tree surgeon had been instructed to carry out the agreed work to the white poplar tree near the entrance steps. A date had yet to be confirmed as this would depend on weather conditions.

The fence at the gate at Turners Close entrance had been removed.

The dog waste bin near the footbridge had been vandalised beyond repair. A replacement bin had been ordered.

The foot path sign near the entrance steps had been vandalised. The Open Spaces staff had reinstated this once but it was vandalised again.

Feedback from the Open Day – it was announced that the site had now been registered as Queen Elizabeth II Fields in Trust and had achieved the Essex Wildlife Trust "Living Landscapes Award". The QE II plaque was unveiled by Cllr B. Surtees. The event was

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attended by EFDC Councillors Tony Boyce, Gary Waller, Paul Keska and Derek Jacobs and ECC Cllr Maggie McEwen. The Council received lots of positive feedback from members of the public on the condition of the Reserve and the improvements made in the last few years.

Risk Assessments for open spaces

The Deputy Clerk met with the Council's Health and Safety advisor who visited all the Council's open spaces and reviewed the existing Risk Assessments and monitoring procedures. A full written report would be provided shortly.

Shakletons Bridge

The Council had received a complaint regarding the slippery condition of the footbridge between Shekletons and the Love Lane footpath. This and the footbridge at the Nature Reserve were assessed by the Council's Health and Safety consultant who would advise on any measures to be taken. Clerk

Skate Park

A new sign had been ordered to be placed at the skate park in Basons Lane.

Trees

Urgent work to fallen branches and trees resulting from the storm on 28th October have been dealt with.

Youth Service Consultation

It was reported that ECC was carrying out a public consultation on the youth service. Adults and young people were encouraged to respond on

<http://surveys.essexinsight.org.uk/TakeSurvey.aspx?PageNumber=1&SurveyID=72LM9n2&Preview=true>

Alternatively, responses could be made by telephone on 01245 436632. The consultation started on 10th October 2013 and ends on 20th November 2013

51/13 Allotments

To consider including the allotments currently rented to Ongar Horticultural and Allotments Society in the new lease for Castle St allotments

At the last Open Spaces meeting the Clerk was asked to ascertain whether the Castle Farm Trustees would be willing to include the land currently rented to Ongar Horticultural and Allotments Society (OHAS) within the new lease for the site at Castle St.

The Deputy Clerk met with a Trustee who agreed to include the OHAS site within the new lease between the Council and the Trustees. A 15 year lease with a one year break clause on either side was offered.

Cllr D. Roberts proposed that the Council include the additional land in the lease and to charge the tenants the same rate as existing Council tenants immediately the land becomes the Council's responsibility.

RECOMMEND

- To Finance committee that the Clerk instructs the Council's solicitor to include the additional land in the draft lease Clerk
- That new tenants to be charged the same rent as existing tenants as soon as the lease is signed

The Chairman proposed that agenda item on Manor Square be addressed next.

52/13 Manor Square

To receive complaints regarding the cleanliness of Manor Square

It was reported that the Council had received complaints from neighbouring residents regarding the cleanliness of Manor Square. This area was the Town Council's responsibility and was not covered by EFDC's street cleaning routine.

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AGREED

- The Clerk to ask the immediate neighbouring businesses to place cigarette butt receptacles on or near their premises
- The Clerk to request that EFDC include this area in their regular cleaning regime
- The Clerk to ascertain why this area was registered as common land
- The Clerk to ascertain the cost of relocating the planters
- The Clerk to ascertain the cost of jet washing the area
- The Clerk to write to neighbouring residents and businesses to remind them that it is common land and to be respectful of their neighbours when parking

Clerk

53/13 Cemetery

To note the feedback from the judges of the Best Kept Church yard competition
The Council entered Ongar Cemetery into the Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE) competition for the Best Kept Churchyard. The judges provided a lot of positive feedback including and mentioned some areas that need to be improved. The Clerk and the Open Spaces supervisor were working on these suggestions.

54/13 Jubilee play area (Love Lane)

- i) To consider the information for further improvements to the play area

A site meeting was held with Cllrs D. Roberts and A. Kaye, the contractor and the Deputy Clerk.

Cllrs considered the suggestion that the nest swing in the middle swing bay be replaced with 2 x swings which would cost approx. £400 (excl VAT). The nest swing could be provided on a separate frame at a cost of £3,190 (excl VAT) including 21m² of grass mat surfacing.

Councillors considered the suggestion that swing barriers be installed at a cost of £1,660 (excl VAT) for four (3 on the triple frame and 1 for the nest swing).

AGREED

- To move the nest swing onto a separate frame
- To replace the nest with two flat swings
- Not to provide swing barriers
- The cost of improvements to be taken from Play Area Improvement ear marked funds

Clerk

- ii) To consider replacing the perimeter fence

Quotes had been received to replace the existing wooden fence with either a bow top powder coated fence or a galvanised flat top fence with gates to match.

AGREED

- The Clerk to obtain new quotes for powder coated flat top fence and galvanised bow top fence with gates to match.

Clerk

55/13 Litter pick

- i) To receive feedback on the Council's litter pick held on 12th October

The Council held its second litter pick of the year at the southern end of Ongar. Volunteers included 3 members of the public, 3 Councillors and 4 members of staff.

Councillors noted this information.

- ii) To consider the requirement for future events

Councillors felt that it was worth while continuing with these events.

AGREED

- To hold two more litter picking days in 2014 in May and October
- Locations to be decided nearer the time

Clerk

56/13 Nature Reserve

To consider and agree the removal of small trees surrounding horse chestnut tree and work to willow tree

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The Council had been advised that the removal of small trees and scrub bushes may help the health of a horse chestnut tree which had been infected with leaf minor (insect borne disease). The Council had also received a request from a resident of Rodney Rd to cut back a sloe tree that was overshadowing her garden which was one of the trees to be removed. The willow tree next to the bench had been identified as requiring some work to remove branches.

AGREED

- The Clerk to instruct the contractor to carry out these works

57/13 Ongar Community Orchard

Clerk

- i) To receive a report on the progress of the Ongar Community Orchard

The Friends of Ongar Community Orchard had been unable to agree terms of a lease with EFDC for the land at St Peter's Ave. However, EFDC had offered to run this project themselves and the Friends would provide voluntary labour.

Councillors noted this information.

- ii) To agree the retention of funds already granted

The Town Council provided £250 in funding for the Friends of Ongar Community Orchard to assist with insurance and seed capital for funding. As this project would now be run by EFDC the Friends have requested that they were allowed to keep the funding to cover their expenses to date.

AGREED

- The Friends of Ongar Community Orchard would not have to return the funds
- The Clerk to request that the Friends of Ongar Community Orchard be asked to provide receipts to prove they had spent the funds in good faith

Clerk

58/13 St Martin's church yard

To note a report from the last meeting of the working party

The working party met with representatives of St Martin's church PCC on 16th October. Notes of the meeting were provided for Councillors information.

Councillors noted this information.

59/13 Terms of Reference

To review the committee's terms of reference and make recommendation to Full Council.

Following the amendments to the committee structure the committee was asked to review the current terms of reference and make a recommendation to Full Council.

RECOMMEND

- To Full Council the suggested amendments to the Terms of Reference

60/13 Open Spaces committee budget 2013/14

Clerk

- i) To receive information on the committee budget

Councillors noted the budget spent to date.

- ii) To consider budget suggestions for 2014/15 and make recommendation to Finance committee

Councillors suggested changes to the proposed budgets.

AGREED

- The Clerk to ascertain ownership of River Meadow
- The Clerk to investigate funding opportunities for bulbs and wildflowers for the Nature

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Reserve

Clerk

RECOMMEND

- To Finance committee the amended budget bid for 2014/15
- To Finance committee that the policy of providing a rose bush for each cremated remains plot be reviewed

Clerk

61/13 Unlisted items

There were no unlisted items.

The meeting closed at 10 pm.

Signed

Chair

Date