

**MINUTES OF THE OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT BANSONS ON 9 OCTOBER 2014**

PRESENT: Cllrs A. Wingfield (chair) A. Kaye (vice chair) F. Knights
P. Gode S. Jackman D. Roberts
J. Rushton B. Surtees

Officer: J. Cook (Deputy Clerk)

Press: No members of the press were present.

Public: One member of the public.

Action

56/14 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr S. Adcock

Clerk

57/14 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

58/14 Public participation

The resident addressed the committee on the possible allotment rent increase for tenants and reminded Councillors that a rent increase had already been agreed from 1st November 2014.

59/14 To agree the minutes of the Open Spaces committee meeting held on

The minutes of 4 September 2014 were reviewed and agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

Cllr Wingfield

60/14 Matters arising from previous committee meeting

It was reported that Council staff were working with volunteers to clear the vegetation from the hedge at QEII Jubilee Recreation Field.

The Council had received an offer of assistance from Epping Forest District Council Animal Welfare officer regarding dog fouling in the cemetery.

61/14 Clerk's Report

Allotments

Moreton Rd

A lock and notice for the gate had been ordered.

Castle St

The Council would be providing a skip at Castle St allotments to assist with the clearance of unwanted rubbish.

Rent demands for 2014/15 had been sent to all tenants which was due on 1st November.

Several instances of vandalism had been reported at the Castle St site and the tenants were advised to contact Essex Police.

Cemetery

It was reported that the Outside Spaces Supervisor would be working with the 3rd Ongar Cubs in November to make a Bug Hotel to be placed in the cemetery as part of the Council's commitment to providing habitats for wildlife. He would also be helping cubs/scouts to gain a merit badge by observing the wildlife that live in the bat and bird boxes.

Open Spaces committee minutes 09.10.14

There was a Leyland Cyprus that was leaning quite heavily and needed to be removed. This work was identified in the tree survey.

The amended Rules and Regulations had been referred to Human Resources committee and had been added to the agenda for 9th October.

The Finance committee on 23 October would consider a possible increase in Cemetery fees.

Cerizay Garden

EFDC had agreed that the Council could provide an additional bench in the garden. The bench that was agreed at the Open Spaces meeting on 5 June 2014 (item 08/14) had been ordered and an invoice would be issued to Ongar and District Twinning Association who had agreed to pay half of the cost.

Cllr F. Knights asked for any further updates on this item and to be consulted by Council staff when the bench had been received.

Essex Playing Fields Association (EPFA)

It was reported that the Council had won a Best Kept Playing Field Award. Prizes would be presented at the EPFA AGM on 23 October at Essex County Cricket Club.

Greensted Rd play area

The Clerk had submitted an external funding application to provide new swings in this play area. The decision was expected in November.

High Street Planters

OAGS would be replenishing the planters on Sunday 19 October.

John Holness Garden

Spring bulbs had been planted to complete the refurbishment of the garden. The memorial bench was vandalised on 19 Sept and the damage reported to the police. It may be possible that a volunteer from Ongar Rotary Club would be able to refurbish the bench.

Litter pick

The litter pick on 27 Sept was attended by 4 cllrs, 2 staff and 3 volunteers. Invitations were sent to pupils from Brentwood County High School, adverts were placed in St Martin's church, Council noticeboards, social media and newsletter, members of Shelley Residents Association and Chipping Ongar Primary School parents and pupils were invited and a press release was sent to local newspapers and Ongar News.

St Martin's church

It was reported that the next liaison meeting with the PCC would take place on 13th October.

Shelley estate walkabout

Cllr A. Wingfield attended the walkabout on 10th September with EFDC Housing officers. A number of issues were raised and the Town Council would liaise with the appropriate authorities to reach a solution.

Shelley footpath

Cllrs A. Wingfield, D. Roberts, B. Surtees and A. Kaye attended a site meeting with Debbie McCauley, EFDC Housing officer, to discuss the problems in this area. EFDC had agreed to remove the fence, repair the footpath and remove some trees.

Zip wire

The contractor had confirmed that there were no alternative sets available for the zip wire.

62/14 Allotments

- i) To consider a request to keep bees at Castle St site

The Council had received a request from a new tenant to keep bees at Castle St allotments. It was reported that it was lawful for tenants to keep livestock, including bees, but permission was at the discretion of the Council. Bee keepers should be a member of the British Bee Keepers Association and have their own Public Liability Insurance.

AGREED

- The Clerk to contact the tenant to suggest she contacts British Bee Keepers Association to look for suitable sites to keep bees in Ongar. Clerk

- ii) To consider information from Council solicitor regarding the lease for Castle St site

It was reported that the Council's solicitor had been in negotiation with Castle Farm Trustees regarding a written lease for the site. The Trustees had requested an increase in the annual rent from £35 to £300. Rental income and expenditure on each allotment site was provided for Councillors information.

AGREED

- To accept the rent demand from the land owner Clerk

- iii) To consider increasing the rent from 1st Nov 2015 and make a recommendation to Finance committee

Councillors were reminded that the allotment rents would increase on 1st November 2014.

RECOMMEND

- That the Finance committee consider a reasonable rent increase for allotment plots from 1st November 2015 Clerk

- iv) To receive information on the drainage ditch at Castle St site

The Council was contacted by EFDC's Land Drainage Inspector regarding the drainage ditch in Castle St allotments which runs parallel with the main footpath and to the rear of the properties in Livingstone Close. It was reported that it was unclear who the ditch belongs to (either Castle Farm Trustees or householders) and further information would be provided once the position was known. Clerk

63/14 Cemetery

- i) To consider locking the main gates to increase security for the Chapel

It was suggested that locking the gate would increase security for the Chapel, grounds equipment and the Council van. Pedestrian access to the cemetery would still be possible via the gate in Love Lane. Cllr D. Roberts proposed that both vehicle gates were locked and this was seconded by Cllr S. Jackman.

AGREED

- To lock both vehicle gates Clerk
- Pedestrian access would be via the gate in Love Lane

Open Spaces committee minutes 09.10.14

ii) To note the number of unauthorised memorials and to agree a course of action
The Open Spaces Supervisor had noticed an increase in the number of unauthorised vases and pots which had been left next to memorial plinths.

AGREED

Clerk

- The Clerk to contact the owners of the graves where unauthorised memorials exist
- To give the owners two months' notice to remove the items
- To place a notice on the Cemetery notice board informing visitors of this decision

iii) To agree the change of wording on the Fees document
At the last Open Spaces committee meeting Councillors queried the wording of the definition in the first paragraph. A revised version was provided for Councillors consideration.

AGREED

Clerk

- To revise the wording in the first paragraph

iv) To note concerns regarding the use of mechanical diggers
A resident had contacted the Council to express her concerns regarding the use of mechanical diggers in the Cemetery. It was reported that a local Funeral Director had offered the resident a replacement wooden memorial free of charge

AGREED

Clerk

- The Clerk to inform the resident of the Funeral Director's offer
- To allow the resident a further two years before applying for a permanent memorial
- To amend the Cemetery Rules and Regulations to include the use of ground boards whilst digging graves
- The Clerk to carry out a Risk Assessment before each funeral

64/14 Play areas

To consider providing notices at Rock Stakz and Outdoor Gym
The Independent Inspector and the Health and Safety representative had suggested that the Council should provide advisory notices for both the Rock Stakz and Outdoor Gym. This would include information on the suitable age range to use the equipment and Council contact numbers. Each board may cost up to £250.

AGREED

Clerk

- The Clerk to investigate alternative designs and suppliers for the information boards

65/14 Vandalism

To receive information on the number of instances of vandalism and criminal damage on Council property
A database of criminal damage that had occurred to Council property to date had been completed.

Councillors **NOTED** the information.

Open Spaces committee minutes 09.10.14

66/14 Open Spaces committee budget 2014/15

- i) To receive information on the committee budget

The committee budget information up to 30th September was attached for Councillors information.

Councillors **NOTED** the information.

- ii) To agree to transfer funds to Public Relations committee

The funds were required to pay for professionally produced newsletters in this financial year.

AGREED

- To transfer the River Meadow budget of £360 and £500 of the St Martin's church yard budget to Public Relations committee to be used to publish Council newsletters

Clerk

- iii) To consider draft committee budget for 2015/16

The draft budget for 2015/16 was provided for Councillors consideration.

RECOMMEND

- The draft budget to Finance committee.

Clerk

- iv) To consider transferring unspent revenue from 2014/15 to 2015/16

The committee was asked to agree to transfer unspent revenue funds forward to the financial year 2015/16.

RECOMMEND

- To Finance committee that the transfer forward of unspent revenue funds be agreed by Finance committee

Clerk

- v) To consider alternative projects for Nature Reserve planting budget

This budget was set aside for planting but it was reported that the project was not likely to be achieved this year.

AGREED

- To transfer any unspent funds from this budget to General Reserves

Clerk

67/14 Open Forum

Cllr A. Wingfield advised that the public phone box in St Peter's Ave was going to be removed. The notice at Shelley Park advised the public to use this phone box in case of emergencies and this notice may need to be changed.

Clerk

The meeting closed at 9.50 pm

Signed

Chair

Date