

Minutes of the meeting of the OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE held in Rickards Hall at 7.30pm on Monday 12 June 2023

Present: Cllrs. Jon Aldridge, Angela Baker (*Chairwoman*), Michael Gemmell Smith, Alan Layland, Angela Read, Bob Todd

In attendance: Cllrs M McArthur and B Todd (Chairman of the Council)
Town Clerk, Deputy Clerk, and Head Groundsman

There were 10 members of the public and no press.

1 ELECTION OF COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Cllr B Todd proposed Cllr A Baker as committee chairman, seconded by Cllr A Layland. There being no other nominees, members

Resolved: that Cllr A Baker be elected committee chairman for the ensuing year

2 ELECTION OF COMMITTEE VICE-CHAIRMAN

Cllr Todd proposed Cllr M Gemell Smith as committee vice-chairman, seconded by Cllr Layland. There being no other nominations, members

Resolved: that Cllr M Gemell Smith be elected committee chairman for the ensuing year.

3 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received, noted, and accepted from Cllrs S Sumner, S McGregor and S Compton. Cllr S Taylor was absent.

4 Declarations of Interests, or Predeterminations

None.

5 Public Questions

The Chairman adjourned the meeting.

A member of the public asked if there was any update on the request to fly electric powered aircraft at the Recreation Ground. He was advised that a meeting with the Rugby Club as lease holders of the Recreation Ground had taken place, and the Rugby Club is taking the matter forward in contact with the resident.

The meeting was re-convened

6 To Receive and Sign the Minutes of The Open Spaces Meeting held on 17 April 2023 (pages 9905-9910)

Resolved: that the minutes (9905-9910) be signed by the committee Chairman as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

7 To Receive Analysis of Receipts and Payments to 31 May 2023

Members noted the report was not available for the meeting owing to the recent office disruption, but would be presented up to 30 June at the Open Spaces committee meeting 10 July.

8 To Ratify Operational Decisions for Open Spaces Activity

None

9 Correspondence

9.1 Resident re: Retention Dam works at the River Eden

Members had received a copy of the letter from the private landowner on whose property the north end of the Dam is resting. They would like to meet with members of the Council to consider future possibilities of the riverside area behind the eastern end of Church Street and further beyond the railway embankment. It was

Resolved: to arrange a meeting with one or two councillors and two officers after the summer.

9.2 Town Band re: free summer concerts in Stangrove Park

The Town Band had made its annual request to present a short series of free summer concerts in Stangrove Park: Wednesday evenings 21st June and 19th July, and Sunday afternoon 30th July. The Hiring Agreement had been completed and required documents submitted for the Standard Conditions of hiring. Members

Resolved: to permit this activity, at no charge for a community event.

9.3 Resident re: Take The Jump family fun event 17th June Stangrove Park

A local resident had requested permission to hold a family fun event in the Park, highlighting community sustainability issues. It had been publicised without contacting the Council to request permission in advance.

The free to attend event was part of Great Big Green Week, and was being organised with some parents at Edenbridge Primary school, under the umbrella of Take The Jump. It is an organisation which aims to support communities to lower their carbon footprint and live with 'less stuff and more joy'. A Hiring Agreement had now been completed, with evidence that the organiser was a registered social worker, and had current DBS check. As part of the Standard Conditions of hire a basic risk assessment and evidence of insurance had been requested – the latter had arrived, but Risk Assessment was still outstanding at the time of the meeting. It was

Resolved: to permit this activity, subject to receipt of a suitable Risk Assessment, at no charge for a community event.

Councillors were also asked if they wished to consider investigating more about the group and potential community sustainability. It was

Resolved: to nominate the committee chairman and vice-chairman to explore the viability of a potential partnership activity.

9.4 Galliford Try re: bus shelter and street lighting for Edenbridge Medical Centre development

The Town Council had been contacted by construction company Galliford Try (GT) concerning provision of street furniture related to the Edenbridge Medical Centre development. A separate contact had been made regarding additional street lighting, because the road layout was being altered and designated uncontrolled crossings were being installed.

Bus shelter

The original e-mail in May asked whether a proposed type of shelter met Council requirements for design and maintenance. It prompted several queries, as to the exact location and land ownership, any choice on shelter design, installation responsibility, and ongoing maintenance budget provision. GT's response was: the location was on Highways land to the west of the Medical Centre entrance. There was little option on design as limitations of space, due to the existing pavement width and visibility splay requirements, which meant the shelter would need to be 1m deep with a back but no sides. The costs of supply and installation would be covered by GT.

The design indicated was not in keeping with the style of existing shelters already maintained by ETC, and was intended to "seamlessly blend into a city environment" – which Edenbridge is not. There was no budget for on-going maintenance. It also appeared two shelters were now being proposed, the second on the opposite side of Four Elms Road across from Bray Road, opposite a

junction and some distance from the Medical Centre.

Street lighting

To the east of the KCC column opposite the entrance to Bray Road and Eden Centre, ETC owns/maintains the lights illuminating the footway, in particular the one opposite Fircroft Way. Members noted those in Fircroft Way itself are maintained by KCC. The Town Council had been advised that two new columns need to be installed, on opposite corners, at the junction of Four Elms Road and Fircroft Way. To ensure the safety of road users, these would need to be at a Highways compliant lighting level, and Highways standard minimum P4 class lighting (8-10m height) is to be used.

Town Council street light stock is for footway illuminations, at a height of 5m, and the Council does not provide taller lights for road junction safety. When the Bray Road development was completed, Kent Highways set a precedent by installing the new column opposite the junction. It was

Resolved: to refer the bus shelter issue back to the developers and KCC.

Resolved: to reply that members believe the street lighting provision is the responsibility of KCC Highways.

10 Head Groundsman's Report

10.1 Routine and seasonal activity

Members noted the routine and seasonal work carried out by the groundstaff. This included annual review of COSHH assessments and updating as necessary, also topping up the level in the Mill Leat water feature in the High Street for which being able to use the "tap" in an adjacent property had speeded up proceedings.

All football goals had been taken down at the Recreation Ground and stored for the off season. Any required maintenance had been reported to the Rugby Club. All goal mouths and worn areas at the Recreation Ground had been over seeded. With the current weather and regular watering said areas should be in good shape for the coming season.

With all football pitches at the Recreation Ground having been inspected and the outcomes submitted to the Pitch Power pitch maintenance programme, these were graded as "GOOD". The process of applying for the £17,000 grant (spread over six years) which Council is entitled to claim will begin shortly. The inspections included taking several soil samples and pictures of all pitches and answering questions on all aspects of the maintenance programme. A photo opportunity was provided by Kent FA for the Council Chairman and Head Groundsman receiving the recognition plaque to be displayed at the Sports Pavilion. The process of repeating the application procedure for recognition, and hopefully funding, for Mowshurst will begin.

Members recorded their congratulations to the grounds team on the quality of the sports pitches and maintenance.

Members noted team attendance on a three-day First Aid course, and a day's ARC welding course, both in April. Purchase of equipment is being investigated to facilitate small welding repair works in house.

The team would be marking out 10 Frisbee pitches in the coming week, in preparation for the upcoming tournament being hosted at the Recreation Ground at the weekend 17/18 June.

11 Open Spaces Business

11.1 To receive the Burial Report

Members noted the record of Cemetery activity April/May: one interment of ashes, one burial, and one Grant of Right.

11.2 To receive a report on allotment activity

Resigning tenants had been advised of action being taken under the site rules agreed last June, to charge for removing and disposing of materials left on site. This prompted them into removing most

of the items left on their plots. One tenancy had been terminated in line with the clauses of the Tenancy Agreement (including not resident in the parish throughout the period of the tenancy).

Interest in entering the Ready Steady Grow gardening competition (see item 11.7 below) led to a school arranging a successful visit to Forge Croft allotments, hosted by members of Edenbridge Allotment Gardens Association. It was hoped that the activity could be repeated next year.

11.3 To receive a report on works to the Retention Dam

Removal of the bridge above the Retention Dam, expected to take place during the summer, was carried out at comparatively short notice in the week following the Coronation Bank Holiday. The contractor had availability in their work schedule, and the ground conditions were suitable to proceed. Both adjoining landowners were satisfied with the works. The metal barrier had been secured, and stolen signage replaced.

11.4 To consider parking management

An exploratory meeting had been held with a representative of a parking management company. There was a wide range of possible management solutions (and likewise wide range of costs), which could be tailored to the varying use patterns of individual sites. The Parking Working Group would receive and consider the report from the meeting, and would make a recommendation for Open Spaces committee to consider in due course.

11.4.1 Update on parking issues at Blossoms Park

Members were advised that parking by residents had continued, at several times taking up all spaces. Early morning would-be users of the park arrived to find there was no space due to residents' overnight parking. Their request was for stronger control measures to be put in place.

Members had received proposals from the Cricket Club regarding replacement surface of the clubs' additional parking area, and possible extension with extra spaces. It had been confirmed that car park extension does not fall into the scope of permitted development rights for local authorities, as it relates to engineering operations. A planning application will be required – for which there would be a fee related to the size of the application circa £300. Pre-planning advice if sought would also attract a fee c. £400. Subject to the Club meeting any Planning requirements and project costs, members

Resolved: to approve the proposal and to share the fee costs 50/50 with the Cricket Club.

The Club had also included a proposal to increase irrigation for the cricket square. Subject to the Club meeting any Planning requirements and project costs, it was

Resolved: to approve the proposal to increase irrigation for the cricket square.

11.5 To consider works scheduled for 2023/24 in the 10 and 30 year Open Spaces maintenance Plans

Members had previously received the schedule for small works included in the 10-year maintenance plan, and noted the annual service of the Jubilee Clock on Little Oaks nursery building had been carried out. Costings for repair to Mowshurst car park surface, path repairs in Cemetery One, and re-pointing a paving slabs section in Doggetts Courtyard would be presented to the July meeting.

11.6 Review of the Byelaws

11.6.1 To receive an update regarding a request to fly electric powered model aircraft

Members noted a meeting with the Rugby Club as lease-holder of the Recreation Ground had taken place 7th June. The Club was keen, following receipt of a Risk Assessment, to facilitate the activity, manage the risks and control the flying activity. The Town Clerk added that the meeting had been very positive, with the Rugby Club looking at a Hiring Agreement with the newly formed Edenbridge Flyers club, and hoping to facilitate an arrangement to satisfy both clubs, and the users of the open

space. The Rugby Club had already contacted the Flyers club to arrange a meeting.

11.6.2 To receive an update regarding boundary issues at the Recreation Ground

The Council's contractor had reinstated the fencing, with the groundstaff's assistance re-planting hedging, which had been removed without authority at the western side of the Recreation Ground (reported to Council 15 May). Members noted that the resident had now accepted shared costs and a Charge on the Deeds until paid.

11.7 To receive an update on Ready-Steady-Grow gardening competition

Cllr M McArthur joined the meeting during 11.7

The seven children's groups interested in entering the competition were delighted to receive their "starter packs" delivered by the head groundsman – a variety of tools, gloves, pots and growing medium. In one case this led to a school visit to Forge Croft allotments hosted by Edenbridge Allotment Gardens Association (*see item 11.2 above*).

The competition was due to close on 30th June and banners were being displayed to support the on-going publicity on social media, Council's website, and notice boards. Purchasers of the garden waste bags had also been provided with flyers since the competition launched at Easter.

Members nominated Cllrs Layland, Todd, Baker and McArthur as judges for the six categories of entry.

11.8 To receive a report on the Coronation Big Lunch – Stangrove Park 7th May

Due to very wet ground conditions, the event was transferred at short notice to the Recreation Ground, with support of the Rugby Club. The event was fortunate with dry weather, and sunny skies in the afternoon. It was well received by the community and people enjoyed the free activities provided. A report was received by Council (15 May).

12 News Release

Items from the meeting identified for publicity included the Ready-Steady-Grow competition.

13 Date of Next Meeting – 10 July 2023

Meeting closed at 8.10 pm