

**To Councillors:** J Aldridge, A Baker (*Chairwoman*), S Compton, M Gemmell Smith (*Vice-Chairman*), A Layland, S McGregor, A Read, J Streets, S Sumner.

Notice is hereby given of an Open Spaces Meeting to be held in Rickards Hall on 15 April 2024 at 7:30 pm, which Councillors are summonsed to attend.

Town Clerk  
10 April 2024

To assist in the speedy and efficient dispatch of business members wishing to obtain factual information on items included on the Agenda are asked to enquire of the Town Clerk prior to the day of the meeting.

Council Meetings may be recorded. Any person intending to make recordings is advised to notify the Clerk in advance so that appropriate arrangements can be made

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# Meeting Papers & Report

## 1 Apologies for Absence

## 2 Declarations of Interests, or Predeterminations

The disclosure must include the nature of the interest. If an interest becomes apparent to a member during the course of a meeting that has not been disclosed under this item, the member must immediately disclose it.

## 3 Public Questions

Members of the public, and Members with prejudicial interests on items on the Agenda, may make representations, answer, ask questions and give evidence at this meeting in respect of items on the Agenda. (This is the only opportunity for the public to make a contribution during the meeting.) Both public and Members are limited to three minutes each to speak, and the total time allocated for public questions shall not exceed 15 minutes unless directed by the Chairman of the meeting.

## 4 To receive and sign minutes of the Open Spaces Committee 12 February 2024 - 2023-037/01-10

 Open Spaces | 12 February 2024 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-037/1-10)

## 5 To Receive Analysis of income and expenditure to 31 March 2024

Attached is a copy of the EOY income and expenditure to year-end. However, there is some expenditure budgeted for but is yet to be realised (some works have been booked), and it is proposed to move sufficient funding to Earmarked Reserves (EMR); see the attached and below.

Summary 2023-24 to date:

Summary 2023-24	Budgeted	Actual	+/-
<b>Income</b>	395,468	400,199	+ 4,551.34
<b>Expenditure</b>	379,648	360,831	underspend 21,648
<b>Net difference</b>			<b>26,199.34</b>

**Code 3140 10-year works programme:** Budget £28,469, spend £4,220, projects funding balance £24,249.

Proposal is as previously reported to Committee, to move from the unspent funds £19,314 to Earmarked Reserves (EMR) as some projects have been booked, some have been delayed and to provide a contingency for others. *See attached chart.* Finance Committee had estimated £18k movement.

**Code 3141 Annual maintenance:** Budget £10,295, spend £6,678, £3,617 released to General Reserves.

**Code 3040 Equipment/tools: Surplus is £1,763.** Finance Committee has already supported moving some funds 2023-24 budget to increase the EMR for equipment/tools/vehicles.

**Advance note/reminder** (reported February Committee) - unplanned works 2024

The perimeter Churchyard wall (south side) along Church Street is going to need 'repointing and repairs'. This will need quoting and scheduling for ideally late spring/summer. Last year we moved £8,530 into reserves for the three stone churchyard walls. Quotes to be obtained and presented to committee.

**Do members support the proposed funding allocations, total £19,962, in the 2023-24 budget to be moved to the EMR for future expenditure? The amount for cemetery memorials, £1296 is proposed to be moved under Cemetery EMR, with £18,666 into OS EMR. Do members support this?**

**FT Kent Pitch Grant:** Code 326 (FA Kent pitch grant) received £3,520. Of which code 3026 (Sports Pitch improvements) spent so far £876. The surplus £2,374 will be moved to a specific EMR new code. **Do members support this?**

**Do Members have any further comments?**

📎 Annex 1: 240331 OS Financial Comparison.pdf

📎 Annex 2: 2023-24 3140 EOY proposals movements to reserves.pdf

## 6 **To Ratify Operational Decisions for Open Spaces Activity**

None.

## 7 **Correspondence**

Letter with Cemetery questions was circulated in March to Members via email with the Town Clerk's reply.

## 8 **Head Groundsman's Report**

### 8.1 **To receive Head Groundsman report**

Routine seasonal work

- Grass cutting all sites
- Weed treatment
- Maintaining planters through town, including Doggetts Barn and beds in cemetery
- Topping up sunken graves
- Rose pruning
- Winter pitch maintenance

The team have been renovating the benches in the Millennium Wood. We aim to have this completed in the coming weeks. We spent some time filling in potholes in the car park at Mowshurst. This has vastly improved the surface and with better weather now on the horizon these works should see us through to next year.

Due to adverse weather conditions the pitch decompaction didn't take place before Christmas. I am in regular contact with the contractor who will be carrying out said works and as soon as ground conditions allow we will make a start.

The team spent some time jet washing the Wall of Remembrance and the surrounding paved area. We also replaced the small decked area that is used for flower vases ect.

We have now applied the sand and soil top dressing mix to the worst areas on our pitches at the rec. With the award of more funding from the FA this will be something we look to do more regularly going forward.

The team have spent the last few months removing ivy and dead wood from trees across all

of the councils sites. This also includes branches that effect the areas we mow.

8.2

**To receive a report on the current condition of the Kobota, and to consider if to continue with maintenance of the machine as a short-term measure or to consider the expenditure for a new one, est. £25k**

The Council's Kubota ride on mower was recently taken for its annual servicing. Upon inspection the machine itself was seen to be good working order but the cutting deck was found to be unsafe for use. The cutting deck is repairable but at significant cost - region of £3k. The machine is nearing the end of its expected life and was due to be replaced within the next year or two. A new Kobota is in the region of £25k.

The Council's Earmarked reserves could be used to fund this, as funding has not been included in the budget 2024-25.

**What action do the councillors wish to take on resolving this issue? Do members want to repair the Kobota in the short term, or put these costs towards a new one?**

The chassis on one of our pedestrian Honda mowers has recently formed a crack meaning the machine is unusable. Although its an older machine it was in good working order prior to this. Repair costs are in the region of £500, however a new machine would be about £1,400.

The equipment replacement budget code 3040, is £7,000.

**What action do the councillors wish to take on resolving this issue?**

9

**Open Spaces Business**

At the end of February, the then new Open Spaces Officer resigned. The position remains vacant and recruitment advertising for a replacement is in the process of being finalised. In the meantime, work is being monitored by the Town Clerk and Head Groundsman. We have also engaged Kathy who has been helping with some elements including allotments administration.

**Kent FA Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund:** A grant has already been awarded for the pitches at Recreation Ground. It has recently been confirmed that a 6-year grant to the value of £25k has been awarded for the pitches at Nomads. We are yet to fully read the conditions and improvement work recommendations and will report on this at the June meeting.

**Pavilion replacement windows and new electric shutters update:** These works will take place end My/early June to coincide with other Rugby Club end of season. Details of the contract and deposit are being finalised.

**Signage:** Following the playground inspections last year, there was a comment re the notices at the Rec playground. These have now been updated, as well as a new general notice poster at Blossoms Park.

**Items for consideration not specified on the agenda, so to be ratified at the June meeting:**

**Seesaw replacement, Stangrove Playground:** *This item should have been on the agenda for approval.* At the September Committee meeting, £2,500 was approved for a replacement seesaw. An order was placed, but transpires that the old base will need to be removed, replaced and some surface repairs. Unfortunately, the contractor was slow obtaining a revised quote to include the grounds work, and was not received in time for this agenda. The revised quote is now £3,595.65 which is above the approved amount. £5k is set aside in the 30-year maintenance to help build the reserves for equipment replacements. Members could use this to cover the costs of the seesaw or small projects budget. Lead time for work from order is 10-12 weeks. **Do members support to proceed with the replacement seesaw and grounds work and expenditure of £3,595.65?**

**Saturday Waste Freighter collections:** The next collection will be late June (date to be published nearer the time). However, the February collections had issued with fly-tipping at the Spitals Cross Estate location; this was not the first time unmanageable amounts of rubbish had been dumped in advance. It has been publicised previously that such behaviour could jeopardise. The Council has received requests for this service to be provide at other locations around Edenbridge including the new estate off St John's Way and Lingfield Road/Coombe Field. SDC would need to assess suitability of any new location.

### **How do Members want to proceed?**

#### 9.1 **To receive the Burial Report**

Burials and ashes for:

February: 1 burial; 2 ashes

March: 1 burial; 2 ashes

April (to date): 3 burials; 2 ashes

There has been quite a few cemetery queries the past few months, ranging from Grant of Right queries and some transfers; new memorials and Wall of Remembrance plaques; research on family members in the cemeteries; and we have also been updating some of the files and Epitaph records. The next significant project would be to scan the historic paperwork records on to Epitaph at some point in the future.

#### 9.2 **To receive an update on memorials in cemeteries which are not compliant with memorial regulations**

**Outstanding Memorial issues:** This has been reported at meetings since September when officers started to write to Grant of Right holders where several memorials had breached the memorial regulations having expanding the permitted size, area, and/or placed photos, badges, artificial flowers/plants and other items. Following contact with the Grant of Right holders, most had since been rectified, but some had raised complaints insisting that were not aware of the regulations and questioned why now. However, Committee has considered several individual requests and with each of these it had been agreed to uphold the regulations. For now, there was no plan to reconsider or renege on these.

The past couple of months, officers have paused this work, but the notices to advise those who tend to individual plots and visitors to the cemeteries, that artificial flowers are not permitted and will be removed, are about to go up at the cemeteries. A new audit will be carried out and new letters sent to each Grant of Right holder giving notice to rectify any issues.

**New noticeboard/signage in cemetery:** This has been put on hold due to staff resources, but plan as a project in the coming months.

### **Do Members have any further comments?**

#### 9.3 **Allotment matters**

Following on from the February meeting:

**The Allotment Tenancy Agreements** for the Forge Croft and Swan Lane tenants has been finalised and issued including the temporary structures policy, with the renewals for signing.

**Agreement between the EAGA and Council** has been finalised with both parties agreeing the document. This was being presented to the EAGA's AGM and I am awaiting confirmation.

**Swan Lane renewals:** All bar 5 plots have returned new signed Tenancy Agreements and

fees paid; the last few are currently being followed up.

**Forge Croft renewals:** These are managed by the EAGA.

**New Community Group** (2 plots) at Forge Croft site: Following the last meeting, the Plot Officer and I have agreed the conditions and written to the Community Garden Group with the new Tenancy Agreement, and request for their risk assessment, insurance, safeguarding policy. I am yet to hear back, but they have been liaising mostly with the Plot Officer.

#### 9.4 **To receive an update on the Annual Works Programme**

#### 9.5 **Vandalism report**

##### **March:**

**Skate ramps:** There was graffiti to the main ramps covering quite a large area. The Groundstaff has managed to remove most of it.

##### **April:**

**Stangrove Park notice board:** The perspex to one side had been smashed. Fortunately, we had a replacement panel already so was replaced promptly.

**Picnic benches at Recreation Ground playground:** Last weekend the two benches were damaged by fires on both tables. Given the recycled plastic material this has melted the tops. Groundstaff will look to smooth this for now. Replacement cost would be in the region of £770 plus fixings. These had been gifted to the Council as part of the Welcome Back Funding grant via SDC.

**Replacements:** Following the last meeting the replacement button seat for zip wire at the Rec Playground was ordered and was fitted at the end of March. The two replacement bins for MYCP and Stangrove Park were delayed at the supplier end, they are expected delivery within the coming week.

#### 9.6 **Byelaws update**

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) confirmed receipt in February and raised a couple of questions, which I have responded to and confirmed the Town Council owns (some are on long leases and two the Council are sole managing trustee) and maintains all sections of land referred to in the draft proposed byelaws. Therefore, the application is being made under powers in both section 164 of the Public Health Act 1875 and sections 12 and 15 of the Open Spaces Act 1906.

We have been asked to submit an accompanying report summarising Council's reasons for the updates and the processes undertaken in preparing the revised/updated Byelaws; most of this has already been provided to them but they need it in a report. I have advised this will be submitted late April.

#### 9.7 **Gardening Competition**

The Community Warden (CW), Planning and Admin Officer (P&AO) and Communications Officer (CO) have confirmed the details of the competition and categories. Posters and social media will start over the coming days.

This year's Edenbridge Garden's In Bloom competition categories are: allotment, front & back garden, youth/school groups, young gardener, window boxes & hanging baskets, and the strangest/unique space to create a colourful display. Closing date for entries 12 July. Applications forms will be available from the office, online and Facebook.

The CW has secured several great prizes already including days out at Penshurst Place, and other local attractions as well as some vouchers. The P&AO has been in touch with Hever who will again offer some prizes and Neil Miller, Head Gardener will attend the presentation event (date tbc in September). CW has liaised with last year's judges to do this again. Publicity will be going out over the coming days.

#### 9.8 **Summer Family Fun Days**

This year's Family Fun days at Stangrove Park have been confirmed:

Thursdays 01, 08, 15 and 22 August. SDC has confirmed it will fund one session (8th August) with ETC funding the other three. We are currently looking at the additional activities and have approached the balloon and magic man used previous as he is always very popular. Details will be published in due course.

#### 9.9 **Site visits dates**

The dates confirmed at the last meeting were agreed prior to the resignation of the Open Spaces Office. The April date has not taken place due to staffing, and the 2 July is no longer viable. A new date will be circulated for June/July.

### 10 **Streetlights maintenance plan and works update**

#### 10.1 **Update 2023-24 works programme**

**2023-24 update:** Reminder, the November meeting included the additional 30 lights being replaced for 30 LED funded partially by a reserves movement and a UK Power Networks (UKPN) refund. Members had already approved a budget overspend to facilitate the LED upgrades.

2023-24 replacement programme update: Columns 241 (Swan Lane), 244 (Victoria Road); and the two pole boxes 81 and 82 (Hilders Lane) have been replaced. Columns 137, 138 and 139 Mill Hill are outstanding. 139 is sited in the old hospital grounds so cannot be replaced currently.

These had been expected to be completed February/March however, UKPN has since issued a credit note (£7,154) as the works had not yet been carried out. Columns 137 and 138 Mill Hill have been re-costed, now £5,481 plus Streetworks costs £2,700. This will leave a credit of £1,576 with UKPN against future works. £2,700 will need to be moved in to Earmarked Reserves (EMR) for when the work is carried out.

30-year maintenance budget code 3145 update: Budget had allowed £25k, Committee November agreed a total spend £31,713 (less a UKPN refund of 5661 (net £4718) recorded under income code 325). Actual spend shows £33,325 but with the refund and an EMR release of £2,832, the actual total spend to date is £25,775.

**Do members confirm to move £2,700 for replacement columns 137 and 138 to EMR, as expenditure was approved for 2023-24 budget spend?**

#### 10.2 **Update on proposals for 2024-25 replacement programme**

**2024-25 replacement programme:** Committee has previously agreed a proposal for 10 replacement columns, three pole boxes, and the twin set in MYCP in 2024-25. The 30-year Plan allowed **£45k budget**. The costs from UKPN and Streetlights have now been received, and is over budget; see *the below table*.

To remain within budget, the proposal would be to remove from the programme column 55

(Four Elms Road outside Elmwood Cottage, currently a steel column) as the most costly (saving £5,337); or not to replace MYCP twin set (centre of car park, saving £3,995).

**How do Members want to proceed?**

**Details of 2024-25 proposed and costs:**

Column No.	Road	UKPN costs £	Streetlights £	Total £
25	Church Street	1707	1300	3007
111 (A&B)	MYCP	2695	2050	4745
109	MYCP	2596	1300	3896
31	Croft Lane	2697	1300	3997
32	Croft Lane	1511	1300	2811
33	Croft Lane	1511	1300	2811
51 (layby/carpk)	Four Elms Road	2689	1300	3989
55 (Elmwood)	Four Elms Road	4037	1300	5337
117	Marsh Green Road	1489	1300	2789
118	Marsh Green Road	2574	1300	3874
120	Marsh Green Road	3922	1300	5222
122	Marsh Green Road	1634	1300	2934
126	Marsh Green Road	3922	1300	5222
85 Pole box	Lingfield Road	0	610	610
87 Pole box	Lingfield Road	0	610	610
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>32,984</b>	<b>18,870</b>	<b>51,854</b>

NB: UKPN will have a credit of £1,673 to come off the above costs (see above 2023-24 note).

11 **News Release**

12 **Date of next meeting - 03 June**