

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

Notice is hereby given of an Open Spaces Meeting to be held in Rickards Hall on 16 September 2024 at 7:30 pm, which Councillors are summonsed to attend.

Town Clerk  
11 September 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 22 July 056/1-7**

 Open Spaces | 22 July 2024 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-056/1-7)

## 5 **To Receive Analysis of Receipts and Payments to 31 August 2024**

Attached is a copy of the income and expenditure for the first five months. Of note:

### **Income:**

310 Rents - £1,996 generated from 2 x children's fair bookings; not budgeted. (Also, £1,000 deposit yet to be refunded). Allotments income: £3,115 from Forge Croft. Marlpit Hil/Swan Lane allotments 35 plots generates approx. £835 income; yearly rent payable on the 1st day of April; there is a cross over with eh financial years but the EOY net is similiar. Estimated outstanding total sports clubs rents due £4,380 (to be invoiced).

326 Grass Pitch Grant - grants approved and to be claimed for 2024-25: Recreation ground £3,520; and Mowshurst £5,332. Both these grants are to fund improvement works for the football pitches which include the decompaction costs, fertilising, goal mouth repairs etc.

### **Expenditure:**

3000 Staff costs - salaries are under budget due to the open spaces vacancy; and the decision to hold off the replacement of a groundstaff employee to April. Est. budget underspend for Open Spaces staffing is expected to be in the region £23k

3140 Annual Maintenance - includes street furniture 4-yearly repaint (£6,686); 2-year tree survey (£5,090); plus some tree works; repairs to Doggetts courtyard; and and Churchyard wall repair.

3070 OS Vehicles - includes new Kubota (£25k); insurance and fuel re tractor supply (expenditure and budget overspend approved April Committee).

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

 Annex 1: OS 31.08.24 Financial Comparison 1.pdf

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

None.

7 **Correspondence**  
None.

8 **Head Groundsman's Report**  
Routine seasonal work

- Routine seasonal work
- Grass cutting, all sites
- Weed treatment
- Maintaining planters through town, including Doggetts barn. and beds in cemetery
- Continuing with the ongoing topping up sunken graves
- Rose pruning
- Flail mowing water meadows and town field
- Pruning of shrubs and bushes
- Pitch marking out

The team have now finished all the marking out for the pending rugby and football season. We have also erected all football goals and installed two new sets of rugby posts on behalf of the rugby club.

We have been pruning various shrubs and hedges across all the Council's sites. We have also been working through the 2-yearly tree report carrying out low level tree work, and with any work outside of our remit being passed on to local contractors for quotations.

The team spent some time jet washing various pieces of street furniture as well as play equipment in the Council's play parks.

We recently spent some time fertilising areas of the Council's sports pitches at the Recreation Ground that see the most action. This should help with providing the best playing surface possible throughout the season.

The in-house summer tree survey has now been completed and a programme of works set for the grounds team. We are also working through recommendations from our 2-yearly external tree survey.

8.1 **To confirm the expenditure under the annual works programme: for the hedge cutting at Council sites £1995; and the sports pitches decompaction £2400**

Prices have been sort for our routine seasonal hedge cutting and sports pitch decompaction. Both contractors previously used have come back with unchanged quotes from last year and this work has been scheduled for the coming months.

**Do Members ratify the expenditure of £1,995 plus vat?**

The annual decompaction works are dependant on weather conditions. Works for 2023-24 were not able to be completed until March this year but we would normally look to do these from October/November onwards. It would be good to book the works with the contractor but will only be done once conditions are suitable. Also, to note these works are now able to be funded through the FA Kent PitchPower grants awarded to both the Rec and Mowshurst.

**Do Member ratify the budgeted expenditure of £2,400 plus vat?**

8.2 **To approve the expenditure for hire of Chipper, £360; and training on safe use of a chipper (costs to be confirmed at meeting)**

I am in the process of seeking a costing for a training course for the grounds team on the safe use of a chipper. We then hope to be able to hire a chipper over the winter months and

recycle our tree cuttings to use on the Council's flower beds and pathways; (will hopefully have updates by meeting).

**Do Members confirm the costs for staff training on safe use of chippers?**

**Do Members confirm the expenditure of up to £360 to hire a chipper for 2-days?**

8.3

**To consider changing the fuel used for the tractor and Kubota from white diesel to a more greener sustainable fuel, Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO)**

The Council has previously received information on switching its fuel used for the tractor and Kubota from white diesel to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) which is a drop-in diesel alternative that offers a cleaner way to fuel your commercial fleets, on and off road has an instant reduction of CO2 emissions without the need for changes to engine infrastructure or machinery. The Council's fuel supplier is supporting this greener alternative to the white diesel.

Manufactured from 100% renewable and sustainable waste, Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) is a paraffinic drop-in fuel that can be used as a replacement for diesel, meeting EN15940 standards. FAME, Sulphur and fossil free, it is made using vegetable fats and oils. Unlike conventional biodiesel, hydrogen (rather than methanol) is used as a catalyst, which makes HVO cleaner burning and ensures a long shelf life. HVO is winter grade all year round.

The Council's fuel supplier is advocating the change and say:

Why use HVO?

- If your business is reliant on diesel, HVO provides a real opportunity to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by up to 90% instantaneously.
- Longer shelf life (Up to 10 years).
- Low temperature performance CFPP to -30 degrees
- Completely biodegradable
- Fossil/FAME free and odorless
- Improved combustion over some diesel alternatives
- NO Palm oil

Why choose Certas Energy? "As well as helping your business lower its emissions, we're taking significant steps to reduce our own carbon emissions by 20% before 2025. We're introducing HVO and bio fuels into our own fleets, and developing solutions focused on future fuel technology with a long term view. So, you can rest assured that we're fully committed to transitioning to a low emission future".

The price is now much the same as white diesel. Attached is a HVO fuel brochure, Cartas approval certificate

**Do members wish to switch from white diesel to a more greener sustainable fuel, HVO?**

 Annex 2: Certas Energy HVO Fuel Product Brochure FINAL 10Sept21.pdf

 Annex 3: Certas RFS Approval Document 2022.pdf

 Annex 4: OEM Approvals Aug 23.pdf

9

**To receive and update on the 2-yearly tree inspection report work**

The full 2-yearly tree report was presented to Committee at the last meeting and the grounds team have been working through recommendations and carrying out some of the works themselves. Committee did approve for works identified in the tree programme could go ahead, assuming within budget (£4320). Works include:

Felling of poplar in the top North West corner of the Stangrove Park, fell to stump height 1m - £800 (May 2024)

2 Limes adjacent to the play area at the Recreation Ground to remove deadwood - £300 (to be done)

Dead Sycamore Blossoms Park, fell to ground - £300 (to done; details agenda item 9.2)

9.1 **Stangrove Park: To approve the expenditure of £600 to reduce an oak tree by 3m on the boundary of resident's garden, on the property side**

A resident contacted the Council a couple of months back regarding an oak tree overhanging their property. The tree report has not identified this tree for work, but there are some dead branches. The tree surgeon the Council uses has now looked at the overhanging branches confirming the tree could benefit by 3m reduction (tree no 1810). The is money available in the annual tree works budget currently.

**Do members confirm the works to the oak at the rear of a resident's property, tree no 1810, and the expenditure of £600?**

9.2 **To note additional feedback on two trees raised for in tree report: Sycamore (Blossoms Park) and Austrian pine (Stangrove Park)**

Two trees were identified in the tree report for further inspection. The report has now been received:

Sycamore T54 at Blossoms Park: "This is completely dead. It is not dangerous but clearly it needs to be removed before too much longer and could be incorporated with the next treework operation. As it is peripheral to the site and growing in a 'wild' patch, the surveyor suggest that all the wood is heaped around the stump as dead wood habitat". A quote has been received from the tree surgery contractors, £300, and is included in the annual tree works (updated agenda item 9).

The Austrian pine T1760: "is a spectacular tree and although it leans to the south-west, it has been so for a great many years. The tree is clearly healthy and in good condition and the root system will have grown adaptively to accommodate the asymmetry..... There was also concern expressed about the structural integrity of the multiple stems. To have such a multiple stem formation suggests that there was a loss of the single stem in the distant past, resulting in responsive shoot growth. The unions at the base of each secondary stem are all sound and I could not see any indications of decay or fracture. The formation is not "crowded" where diameter growth might induce internal pressure". The the surveyor saw no reason to doubt the tree's stability and can confirm that the pine does not present any unacceptable level of risk.

**Do Members have any questions or comments?**

10 **Open Spaces Business**

**Byelaws update:** The accompanying report summarising Council's reasons for the updates to the byelaws has been drafted, this is hopefully the last bit of detail before the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) can confirm the updated Byelaws.

**High Street street furniture 4-year repaint:** Following approval for the expenditure of this works from the 10-year maintenance plan, these works have now been completed. There was a question over the gold paint. The paint supplier discontinued 'gold' in there smooth metal product a while back. So had to change supplier for the gold equivalent called 'brushed gold' for the 'metalshield' range of exterior solvent based products.

**Playground Inspections:** The annual playground inspections for Council sites are booked and were expected to take place in August. However, Wicksteed are having to look for new inspector before confirming the dates.

**Pound Green:** SES Water has been undertaking pipe replacement works along Lingfield Road since February. There needed to be some rerouting works, and it had been advised that this would be through Pound Ground. We have now been advised “the scope has now been reduced and the installation of any pipe through Pound Green is no longer required. Instead, work will involve removing the existing valve covers in the green for the main that is to be abandoned. These covers will be reinstated with grass (likely topsoiled and re-seeded), and no new apparatus will be installed on the land”.

**Recruitment for the Open Spaces Officer:** unfortunately we have not yet made an appointment. A new advert is due to be placed using online recruitment platforms and Council’s Facebook and website.

**Stangrove Park new planting programme:** June Committee meeting approved to proceed with the low-cost project to create suitable flower beds at the frontage of Stangrove Park. Due to other work, preparation works hope to start in the autumn ready for the bulbs to flower spring time.

**Stangrove Park pond, Lifebuoys:** Committee July confirmed the order of two new lifebuoy rings and casing for the pond. These are on order.

**Seesaw replacement Stangrove Park:** Approved works to replace seesaw at April Committee meeting. There has been a delay with these works, but are expected to be carried out Friday 13 September.

10.1 **To receive the Burial Report**

Burials and ashes for:

July: 1 burial (as reported at meeting 22 July)

August: 1 ashes

September: 1 burial; 2 ashes

Cemetery activities the past two months have included booking enquires, corresponding with funeral directors liaising with families with perspective burials/ashes. There are quite a few who have the ashes but have not arranged the interment (currently have eight ongoing enquiries).

10.2 **Cemetery matters**

Continuing with work to ensure the standards of the cemeteries and consistency with the rule book and the memorials, a recent cemeteries audit identified 12 memorials not compliant (some new, some previously written to). Letters have been sent to those Grant of Right holders, and rectification works carried out either by the GOR or the grounds team. The solicitor’s letters to GOR holders re non-compliant memorials has resulted in some success to return memorials to the approved specification. There is also another matter currently with the solicitor and a letter sent.

There has been some unpleasant behaviour the office staff have had to be subjected to, details have been recorded and reported accordingly.

**Do Members have any questions?**

10.2.1 **To approve the draft artwork and wording for the new cemetery signage**

Attached (confidential as draft) is a copy of the proposed artwork and signage for the new cemetery signage. The proposed sign will be approx. 1500mm x 900mm (to the point of the arch). Expenditure of £1,500 was approved Committee February meeting.

**Do Members confirm the draft work and wording for the cemetery signage?**

### 10.3 **Allotment matters & updates**

All allotment rents have been paid for Forge Croft and Marlpit Hill/Swan Lane sites. Total allotments income £3,374.95; of which £40 needs to be paid to the EAGA for the insurance and membership.

The replacement doors to the stores/garage at the Forge Croft allotments (approved Committee July 24) has been ordered and is expected to be fitted fairly soon.

The EAGA has signed the formal Allotments Agreement with the Council. This outlines the obligations of the EAGA, to the best of its ability, exercise the authority delegated to it by the Town Council to oversee the general day-to-day running of the Allotment Gardens; and outlines the Council's obligations in maintaining the area and its responsibilities. The Agreement is for the duration of 5-years, to 2029 when it will be reviewed again.

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

Routine annual works are being worked through including tree works; arranging the hedge cutting; Mill Leat and Recreation Ground pumps annual service.

The playground inspections were booked and confirmed June/July with a 12 week lead time. however, we have been advised this week (11 September) that the inspector which Wicksteed used has left and they are currently looking to engage another. I had confirmed that we would still like the playgrounds inspected, but will also investigate others in case they can do the annual inspections quicker.

Works on the annual schedule for later in the year, yet to be reported on and considered include Blossoms Park - skate park chainlink fencing replacing. Budget £5,600.

#### 10.4.1 **Annual gully post clean for Market Yard car park and East car park, Recreation Ground**

The annual works include the gully pots emptying at Market Yard car park, and the east car park at the Recreation Ground. Description of works include: to provide combination (jet/vac) unit with suitably trained operatives. Vehicle to mobilise to site and carry out the following scope of works:-

- Set up safe working area as required
- Combination (jet/vac) unit to uplift non-hazardous silts and debris from drainage using suction hoses
- Operatives to high pressure water jet silts and sludges to assist with loading.
- Operatives to high pressure water jet associated surface water drainage to clear pipework of silts and debris.
- Once loaded, to transport the waste to a suitably licensed facility for disposal.

Costs £708 for the hire of the vehicle and staff; £190 est. for up to 2 tonne waste. If there is more work and waste, charged at £118 per hour, and £95 per extra tonne. Looking back at previous years, the waste has been under 6 tonne

The budget had only allowed only £756. Expected cost to be £898 plus vat. There will be an over spend of £142. Budget 2025-26 will note and allow for the increase costs.

**Do Members ratify the annual gully clearances and the expenditure of £898, noting there may be additional costs if the waste exceeds 2 tonnes.**

### 10.5 **Vandalism report**

Nothing to note. Some small graffiti on noticeboards, cleaned by Community Warden.

10.6 **Gardening Competition feedback**

Awards for this year's winners of Edenbridge Garden's in Bloom were presented on 2 September with special guest Neil Miller, Head Gardener at Hever Castle, handing out the honours. Over 40 residents attended the awards, receiving some great prizes including days out at Penshurst Place, Wakehurst Place, cinema tickets and other local attractions as well as some vouchers. Categories were: allotment, front & back garden, youth/school groups, young gardener, window boxes & hanging baskets, and the strangest/unique space to create a colourful display. (Link to website post below.)

**Do Members want to continue with the competition for 2025-26?**

<https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/edenbridge-gardens-in-bloom-celebrating-community-creativity-and-green-thumb-glory/>

10.7 **Summer Family Fun Days feedback**

Four fun days took place, one session is funded by SDC and three funded by the Town Council. Activities provided include everything from crafts and games to sports and face painting in a friendly, safe environment for children up to 12-years old, and must always be supervised by a parent or guardian.

All sessions went well and were popular, though unfortunately the final session was affected by heavy rain.

**Do Members confirm support for budget 2025-26 to continue with funding three sessions?**

10.8 **Bulky Waste collections - Saturday 21 September**


The next collection is 21 September, with the next one 16 November. The same four locations: Church Street (9.15-9.45 am), Skeynes Road (10.00-10.30 am), Stangrove Park (10.45-11.15), and Spitals Cross (11.30-12 noon). The June collections SDC sent two freighters which helped to lessen the issues with fly tipping.

**Do Members have any questions?**

10.9 **Spitals Playground relocation: To receive an update following the recent movement of the playground**

Attached (confidential) are some photographs of the newly relocated playground. The Town Clerk and Head Groundsman have met with the contractor and SDC to raise some questions and concerns. Following this Cllrs Baker and Gemmell Smith also met with the TC and HGM to discuss some of the concerns and issues. Also attached (confidential) is a copy of the playground from the planning application. A verbal report will be given at the meeting.

**How do Members want to proceed?**

 Confidential Annex 6 (omitted from public documents):

 Confidential Annex 7 (omitted from public documents):

10.10 **To receive a request to consider a resident's dog's ashes at Stangrove Park**

A resident has written to the Council to ask if they could scatter their dog's ashes at Stangrove Park (op end of the park near one of the large trees)? It was somewhere they walked often and close to home; and also wondered if they could plant a couple of white crocuses there in his memory.

Ashes can be scattered on public land, but a person would need the landowner's permission, in this case it is the Town Council.

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

10.11 **To consider investigating costs for a pond clearance and cutback of the trees at Stangrove Park**

Back in 2019 the pond had a severe issue with duckweed, the likely contributing factor was the hot summer. An eco friendly treatment was applied which aimed to break down the mulch, but this did not eradicate the weed. This was noted by Committee and that a more effective form of action would need to be explored (July and September 2019). Duckweed has not been a major issue in recent years as the past few summers have not been as hot. However, the pond water appearance is not great and some residents have asked what is the Council doing to improve the pond. The other contributor to the water condition would be the trees with leaf droppage into the water. Thinning of the trees would help to reduce this and increase light.

The pond does benefit from ducks and ducklings each year, but other wildlife could thrive better. This year there were minimal tadpoles and newts.

To most effective way to improve the condition and appearance of the the pond would be to have the which have the added benefit of being able to access the trees to be be cut back.

This would be a substantial project which would need to be budgeted for in 2025-26, more likely for 2026-27 budget. There may also be the opportunity for grants. Before officers do any work to investigate costs and potential grant sources, do Members want to see improvements to the pond appearance and pond wildlife, and if so is this a project that could be considered as a potential future project?

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

10.12 **Open Spaces walkabout for councillors**

Due to weather, staffing or annual leave we have not been able to confirm a date to visit some of the Council's sites. A proposed date would be this week, 18 September 10.00 am if any members are able to attend?

### **Are Members available 18 September or would they prefer a date late October?**

11 **Update on Streetlights 2024-25 replacement programme**

The confirmed replacement programme 2024-25 (budget £45k) now has a total spend of £36,606, reported June meeting. UKPN are expecting to undertake its work to streetlights 25 Church Street, 31, 33 and 32 Croft Lane, 109 and 111 MYCP, 118 and 117 Marsh Green Road on 9, 10 and 11 September. 120 and 122 Marsh Green Road has a road closure so will need to be booked separately so are tbc. Streetworks work on these columns will be similar period. In addition to this, Council has approved to include street light 110 Market yard car park, cost £3,492. These works are yet to be booked in.

### **Do Members have any questions?**

12 **News Release**

13 **Date of next meeting - 04 November 2024**