

Minutes of the Meeting of Open Spaces held in Rickards Hall on 14 April 2025 at 7:30 pm

Present: Cllrs. Angela Baker (*Chairwoman*), Carey Jacques, Alan Layland, Stuart McGregor, Jeff Streets
In attendance: Open Spaces Officer, Head Groundsman and Cllr Stockdale. No members of the public and no press.

19:30 Chair opened the meeting.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllrs. J Aldridge, S Sumner, S Compton, M Gemmel-Smith and B Cummings.

2 Declarations of Interests, or Predeterminations

Cllr Jacques declared a personal, non-pecuniary interest in item 11 on the agenda.

3 Public Questions

Chair closed the meeting 19:35

None

Chair opened the meeting 19:35

4 To receive and sign minutes of the Open Spaces Committee 03 February 084/01-6

Resolved: the minutes of the Open Spaces Committee meeting of 03 February were signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record of the meeting (084/01-6).

5 To receive analysis of receipts and payments to 31 March 2025

Members noted the expected income and expenditure to year-end. The net balance was £29,999. Income had been higher than budgeted with the additional grant from Kent FA - £5,332; and rents were higher than expected - £3,147. Savings had been made on staffing costs and some planned maintenance costs, which would be moved into earmarked reserves (EMR).

Other movements to EMR:

- Tools and vehicles - £4,000
- Kent Brook repairs - £1,000
- Cemetery wall - £1,000
- Chain link fencing, Blossoms Park - £1,000

Members had no comments.

6 To Ratify Operational Decisions for Open Spaces Activity

Two replacement throw lines for Stangrove Park - £202.76 (Glasdons).

Annual March servicing to the tractor gang mower - found one of the motors needed replacing on one of the units, hence higher costs - £4,797.00 (Kidman), Members,

Ratified: The expenditure of £202.76 for Stangrove Park throw lines and £4797 for servicing and repairs to tractor gang mower.

7 Correspondence

Members noted the correspondence from residents regarding bonfires on Council land at Mowshurst and ongoing parking difficulties near the Recreation Ground, particularly during weekends when rugby and football events are held.

Members discussed the residents question as to whether there are any plans to expand the car park to address the increasing parking demand, especially during busy times and mindful of future increase in housing developments. Members recognised that there is a parking issue

during busy times. Several solutions were considered, including improved signage and better awareness. Members concluded that there was no space to expand the car park without encroaching on the pitches. Members,

Resolved: not to recommend to the Forward Planning Committee for possible inclusion of expanding the car parking at the Recreation Ground on the Councils Strategic Plan.

8 **Head Groundsman's Report**

Members noted the report, including routine seasonal work:

- Weed & moss treatment
- Maintaining planters throughout town, including Doggetts Barn, and beds in cemetery
- Topping up sunken graves
- Winter pitch maintenance
- Pruning of shrubs and bushes
- Pitch marking
- Watering
- Mowing all sites

The football pitches at the Recreation Ground and Nomads scheduled for aeration. This additional work, alongside the autumn maintenance program, had been made possible through the FA grant. New sleeper planters had been successfully installed at Stangrove Park to commemorate 130 years of Edenbridge Town Council. The tractor and gang mowers had been fully serviced and ready for the summer mowing season. With the arrival of drier weather, the team had been able to access their stockpiles of bark at Stangrove Park. This material had been used to tidy up various council flower beds, including those at the cemetery, Leathermarket, and the train station. The team had also dedicated time to clearing debris and undergrowth from several plots at the Forge Croft allotments. Groundstaff completed repairs on several water tanks at the Forge Croft allotments to ensure everything was functioning properly. The Council's street furniture had been jet washed, as well as the gates and surrounding walls at the cemetery along with assisting the Great Stone Bridge Trust (GSBT) with work on land adjacent to the river.

A verbal report was given to members regarding the new price for annual weed spraying as the quote was received after the agenda was committed. There had been a small increase of £30 to cover chemical costs, bringing the total cost for spraying Nomads, Blossoms Park and the Recreation Ground to £1,680. Members,

Resolved: to confirm the expenditure of £1,680 for annual weed spraying.

8.1 **Memorial tree for 130 years of Edenbridge Town Council: to confirm which of the Council's opens spaces to plant the tree**

Members discussed various locations for the memorial tree and,

Resolved: to confirm that they would like the tree planted in Stangrove Park, close to the Leisure Centre. Exact location to be decided by Head Groundsman.

8.2 **To approve expenditure of £750 to repair oil leak on the tractor**

Members were informed that the Councils tractor had a hydraulic oil leak for some time and that it was getting progressively worse. The team had been managing this in house but some repair works were necessary. Members,

Resolved: to approve the expenditure of £750 to carry out the works on the tractor.

8.3 **To receive an update on the Annual Works Programme**

Members noted the annual works programme which included:

- Playground inspections will be booked for late August/early September.
- Amenity spraying.
- Jubilee clock servicing.

8.4 **10 and 30 year maintenance plan update for 2025-26**

Members noted the 10 and 30 year maintenance plan update for 2025-26.

10-year budget allocation had allowed for some:

- Path repairs which will be assessed and presented at the next meeting.
- Repointing to section of courtyard. Nothing was done 2024-25 budget. The courtyard will be assessed and reported to June meeting.
- Recreation Ground seating review to be carried out with possible replacement bench.
- Blossoms Park skate park annual maintenance repairs as needed following ongoing H&S inspections (2024-25 did not use budget).

30-year budget allocation had allowed for:

- Streetlights.
- Playground contingency.

9 **Open Spaces Business**

Members noted the Open Spaces business which included:

Bandstand: A CIL bid was submitted to the SDC Board who meet in July for funding towards a bandstand for Stangrove Park (a project identified in the new Strategic Plan and Objectives). This project is dependant of funding being made available.

Signage: New welcome to Edenbridge signed had been installed on the green opposite Stangrove park, celebrating 130 years of Edenbridge Town Council.

Stangrove Park: Two new planters were installed at Stangrove park, with circular signs celebrating 130 years of Edenbridge Town Council.

Hanging baskets: Hanging baskets had been ordered and booked in, approved by Members at February meeting. Installation due to take place towards the end of May/early June. This years colours are red, yellow and orange.

South and South East in bloom: Entered the usual categories, cemetery, conservation and park. Two extra categories entered this year, town centre and town of the year. Approved by members at February meeting.

New bins: Two new waste bins installed outside the pavilion at the Recreation Ground, replacing existing tired and damaged bins.

9.1 **To receive the burial report**

Members noted the following burial report:

January: 1 burial; 1 ashes interment.

February: 0 burials; 0 ashes interments.

March: 2 burials; 0 ashes interments.

9.2 **Cemetery Signage update**

Members noted that the cemetery signage outlining the rules and regulations had been installed and that new audit of memorials would be carried out, and grant of right holders written to if needed.

Members had no questions.

9.3 **Vandalism report**

Members noted the following vandalism report:

Damage to play equipment at Recreation Ground playground: Two swing seats and the zip wire seat were damaged and deemed unsafe, leading to their removal. The damage was believed to have been caused by a dog attack, which was witnessed by a member of the public. All three

seats have since been replaced at a cost of £394.93

Fire at Mowshurst: Large fire created, including burning a substantial amount of books, trees also damaged.

The Communications Officer (CO) had shared details of the incidents on social media.

The total expenditure for vandalism for 2024-25 was £1,666.43. This was lower than 2023-24, but does not reflect the time removing graffiti, officers time reporting incidents and arranging replacement equipment.

Members had no questions.

9.4 Fly tipping

Members noted that an error in a post led to the incorrect bulky waste collection date being advertised. Whilst the post was quickly removed (within a few minutes), a screenshot was shared on social media. Residents at most sites removed the waste they had put out on the incorrect date, with the exception of the Skeynes Road collection point, where rubbish was left unattended, including items not permitted for bulky waste. Rubbish was still being added well after the collection time had passed. The Council had to pay to have this waste removed.

There were no reported issues from any of the sites when the freighter attended on 15 March.

9.5 Allotment matters

Members noted the following allotment renewals update:

Swan Lane renewals: Five tenants had vacated their plots, the remainder had renewed and paid. Four of the five vacant plots had been reallocated, the remaining plot had been offered to residents on the waiting list.

Forge Croft renewals: These were being managed by the Edenbridge Allotment Garden Association (EAGA).

9.5.1 To receive an update on the community plots and consider continued support

Committee and EAGA agreed last year to pilot two community plots at the Forge Croft Allotments for a one year trial period, with fees waived.

Members were informed that last year, the community garden project made good progress. Half of one plot was cultivated, producing a variety of vegetables shared among five regular volunteers. Two grants totalling £1,750 were secured from GSBT and the KCC Combined Member Grant. These funds were being used to prioritise the purchase of a polytunnel and storage shed, seating for the plots, leaflets for community awareness, and third-party liability insurance.

Plans for this year included expanding the volunteer team, increasing 'drop-in' sessions, cultivating a second plot with a pond, flower beds, and soft fruit area, and setting up the polytunnel and shed. Regular volunteer sessions will be held on Thursday mornings and alternate Sundays, with open days planned to raise awareness.

Members were asked if they would like to continue to waive the allotment fees for the two community plots and,

Resolved: to approve waiving the fees for a further year.

9.5.2 To consider introducing deposits for new allotment tenants

Members were informed that the Open Spaces Officer recently attended a training session on allotment law and management, where various best practices were discussed. One key takeaway from the group discussions was that many councils charge a deposit to cover clearance fees for allotment plots left in poor condition. The deposit serves as a preventive measure, ensuring that plots are maintained to an acceptable standard and reducing the financial burden on the Council for cleaning up neglected plots. Whilst not wanting to discourage potential new plot holders, there had been an increasing amount of neglected plots that require work from the Ground Staff.

It was proposed to charge a £50 deposit to new plot holders from 2025/26 (not existing plot holders) for both the Swan Lane and Forge Croft sites, to be refunded on the basis that the plot is in satisfactory condition when vacated at the discretion of the Council. Members,

Resolved: to confirm that new plot holders from 2025/26 would be required to pay a £50 deposit.

9.5.3 To review the Temporary Structures Policy

Members were presented with the temporary structures policy, adopted by Committee in February 2022 and,

Resolved: to continue with the policy and keep it under review annually.

9.6 Market activity

Members noted the Market activity update, including the 2024-25 finance overview below:

Market	Budgeted income	Actual income
Market rents	£9,000	£9,599.30
Market waste services	£0.00	£1,090.00
	Budgeted expenditure	Actual expenditure
Market	£12,714	£10,548.75
Market waste services	£0.00	£1,215.95
	Totals	
	-£3,714	-£1,075.40

Members were also informed that there would be a VE Day themed market on 8 May, and that the Love Your Market campaign (organised by The National Association of British Market Authorities - NAMBA) will be taking place from 16 -31 May.

9.6.1 To consider application for a licence agreement for new market in Lingfield

Members were informed that a request was received to establish a new monthly farmers market in Lingfield, to be held on Sundays from 9:00am to 1:00pm. Under the Food Act 1984, Part III (52), the Council holds market powers, to be able to determine market days and regulate market events within a six and two thirds mile radius of its own market, a boundary that includes Lingfield and has recently confirmed its powers with a Licencing Policy which can be found on the Council's website.

The applicant has also requested that the Council consider waiving or reducing the market fees for the first two markets to assess their success. The first market was planned for 13 April, which Council has not imposed its Policy and right to charge as it was a first event. The Market Policy stipulates that fees are set to cover administrative costs and are based on the estimated number of stalls and event frequency. It is not known how many stalls are expected but estimate approximately 10-30.

Members considered the request and,

Resolved: to approve the new market request and waive the fees for the first market only. For subsequent markets the commercial rate fees to be upheld.

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

Following report to committee in February, confirming that issues with the work regarding the relocation of the playground had been addressed, Members were advised that a site visit was carried out on 4 April by Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) after additional concerns were raised.

Issues included odd placement of bench in playground, placement of slide, damaged fence, loose fixing on multi play, missing bin liner, and placement of picnic bench.

Members discussed SDC responses to these concerns and concluded that what had been delivered was not what was promised, and that the Council would not be taking responsibility for the playground until the issues had been properly addressed.

An update on progress will be provided at the June meeting.

9.8 Edenbridge Gardens In Bloom 2025

Members noted the update regarding this year's Edenbridge Gardens in Bloom competition and that the closing date for this year's competition will be 14 July, with the presentations to take place on 3 September.

Categories will include:

- Front and back garden.
- Herb/vegetable garden.
- Window boxes and hanging baskets.
- Young gardener.
- Tallest sunflower.
- Unique display to celebrate 130 years of Edenbridge Town Council (could be a celebration garden, rockery, water feature representing the River Eden, garden ornaments that refer to the town etc).
- Peoples choice.
- Youth category: Eggshell cress heads.

Update on prizes and presentations to be provided at June meeting.

9.9 To consider the viability for a bin outside Swan Lane Allotments

Members were informed that there was space available for a bin on Council land just outside of the allotment fence without affecting the limited parking.

It was proposed to repurpose an old bin removed from the Pavilion as a trial, allowing time to assess its use and community response before committing to the purchase of a new bin. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to approve the trial of a bin just outside the Swan Lane Allotment site.

9.10 Site visit dates

Members,

Resolved: that the site visit would take place on 15 May between 10am and midday.

10 To confirm creating a woodland trail at Millennium Wood

Members noted that feedback from the 2024 South and South East In Bloom judgement said, "overall the area is well maintained, however there are signs of minimal vandalism and the paths ways were in need of some maintenance, as ruts and pot holes were evident. Maybe a more hard standing surface to make the area accessible all year round. The area could also benefit with some more directional signage and a few more information boards highlighting the local wildlife and flora that would enlighten the visitor experience".

To enhance the experience of Millennium Wood for children and families, it was proposed that we create a woodland trail, including local wildlife information, updated signage and fairy doors.

The estimated budget required for this project would be up to £700, which could be funded from small projects. Members,

Resolved: to confirm the expenditure of up to £700 for the creation of a woodland trail.

11 To receive a request for permission to install defibrillator to the outside of the Rugby Club from the Bonfire Society

Members were advised that the Edenbridge Bonfire Society (EBS) proposed donating a public

defibrillator to support the First Responders in the area. Given the event's long-standing presence at the Recreation Ground sports pitches, EBS felt this would be a fitting contribution to the local community.

EBS requested the Committee's permission to install a mains-powered defibrillator and cabinet on the exterior of the Pavilion. The unit was a plug-and-play model used throughout Edenbridge, and its installation would require a Council approved electrician. Members,

Resolved: to grant EBS permission to install the defibrillator, and to liaise with the Open Spaces Officer with the installation.

12 **Summer Fun Days**

Members were informed that SDC would once again fund a Summer Fun Day in Stangrove Park. In previous years, the Council has also funded three additional days shared with Westerham Town Council, splitting the day into morning and afternoon sessions to help reduce costs. These fun days, organised by Play Place, included a variety of activities such as craft tents, clay fun, board games, soft archery, racket sports, football, multi-sports, an inflatable castle, and more.

For this year, the fun days had been provisionally booked for 31 July, 7, 14, and 21 August, with each session costing £643 plus £200 for risk visits and planning, bringing the total for all three sessions to £2,128. 2025-26 budget was £3,300.

Additionally, Play Place offered optional add-on activities, including drumming for 7 August at £200 and face painting for 21 August at £250.

Popular entertainer Andy Hiccup had quoted £225 to attend the 14 August fun day for two hours. Members,

Resolved: to confirm the budgeted expenditure of £2,128 for three extra summer fun days and £675 for the additional activities and entertainment.

13 **Children's fun fair at Stangrove Park**

Members were reminded that last year there were two successful children's fun fairs. Both were well attended and well received by the community, there had been no issues, and they were accommodating with arrangements to protect the ground at Stangrove Park. Total income raised from the two fairs was £1,996.00.

The fair had once again requested to operate the fair in Stangrove Park from 28 April to 18 May and Members,

Resolved: to permit the fun fair to operate in Stangrove Park from 28 April to 18 May.

14 **Self defence classes for women and girls: To consider funding classes and the expenditure of £2,600 for six sessions**

At the Annual Town Meeting on 31 March a resident asked if the Council would be running more self defence classes for women and girls, these were previously funded by SDC and held at Edenbridge Leisure Centre in November and December 2024.

After enquiring with SDC, they had confirmed that at present there was no future funding in place for this.

If the Council were to fund the classes the cost was estimated to be £2,940 for a six week course or £2,450 for a five week course, consisting of a one hour session for girls aged 13-17 and a one hour session for women over 18 each week. Members support edclasses and,

Resolved: to agree in principle to fund the classes, subject to further research through an expression of interest. An update will be provided at the June meeting.

15 **Streetlights maintenance replacement programme**

15.1 2024-25 Streetlight programme update

Members noted that 2024-25 programme for 14 replacement columns (included two pole boxes) had been completed. In addition, streetlight 111 in Market Yard car park was added to allow for the new archways and five LED upgrades, total expenditure was £45,075. However, £3,393 for column 111 had since been covered by the UK Prosperity Funding for the archway so this was proposed to be moved to EMR. Total budget was £45k. Total costs 2024-25 was £45,075 less £3,393. Members'

Resolved: to move £3,393 to reserves to allow for additional LED upgrades or column replacements.

15.2 2025-26 Streetlight programme update

Members were reminded that 2025-26 replacement programme approved at the November meeting, estimated costs were £24,296, based on UKPN quotes valid for 90 days at the time, and 2024 column costs which were £1,000; budget was £25k. However, updated UKPN quotes had increased slightly and streetlight replacement columns increased to £1,515. The updated costs total £25,642. Members were asked if they approved of the additional costs and a £642 budget overspend and,

Resolved: to confirm the additional costs of £25,642 and £642 budget overspend.

16 News Release

Members suggested a news release for the possible self defence classes for women and girls, to gauge interest before committing.

17 Date of next meeting - 2 June 2025

Members noted the date of the next meeting.

20:45 Chair closed the meeting.