

Minutes of the Meeting of Open Spaces held in Rickards Hall on 13 April 2026 at 7:30 pm

Present: Cllrs. Angela Baker (*Chairwoman*), Sarah Compton, Carey Jacques, Alan Layland, Michael Stockdale (*Vice-Chairman*)
In attendance: Open Spaces Officer and Facilities Manager. There were six members of the public and no press
The meeting started at 19:30

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received, noted and accepted from Cllrs Aldridge, McGregor, Streets and Gemmell Smith.

2 Declarations of Interests, or Predeterminations

None.

3 Public Questions

19:31 *The Chairman closed the meeting and invited any members of the public who wished to speak to raise their hand.*

A member of the public confirmed that she wished to address the Committee in relation to Item 9.3.1 (Review of the Temporary Structures Policy). She requested that the maximum permitted size of polytunnels be increased from 2.4 metres to 3 metres, noting that the larger size is the industry standard and more readily available.

Another member of the public spoke in relation to Item 9.4 concerning vandalism and trespassing at Forge Croft Allotments. She advised that tenants remain very concerned about the ongoing issues, particularly at the community plot. Members reiterated the importance of reporting all incidents to the police.

19:39 *The Chairman re-opened the meeting.*

The Chairman proposed to bring forward agenda items 9.3.1 and 9.5.2 for discussion following the procedural items, as there were representatives from the public present. Members agreed unanimously and,

Resolved: *to bring forward items 9.3.1 To review the Temporary Structures policy; and 9.5.2 Lingfield Farmer's Market - To consider continuing to waive the market license fee imposed on commercial markets under the Council's Market Licensing Policy, to be discussed before proceeding with other items on the agenda. Details are minuted sequentially to follow the agenda order.*

4 To receive, approve and sign the minutes of the Open Spaces Meeting held on 26 January 2026 (pages 2023-123/1-8).

Resolved: that the minutes of the Open Spaces Committee 26 January 2026 be signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record of the meeting (pages 2023-123/1-8).

5 To Receive Analysis of Receipts and Payments to 31 March 2026

Members noted the income and expenditure from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

Members had no comments.

6 To Ratify Operational Decisions for Open Spaces Activity

The 2025 playground inspections highlighted some maintenance requirements for certain items of play equipment in the Stangrove Park playground: Replacement chains, fixing and shackles for the basket swing, totalling £510.48. Members,

Ratified: the expenditure of £510.48 for the replacement chains, fixing and shackles for the basket swing in the Stangrove Park playground.

7 Correspondence

None.

8 Head Groundsman's Report

Members noted the Head Groundsman's report including:

- Routine seasonal works continued across all Council sites, including weed treatment, maintenance of planters (notably at Doggetts Barn and the cemetery), topping up sunken graves, pruning, pitch marking, and grass cutting.
- A new path was installed at Mowshurst, improving year-round access to the woodland and nature trail. A top dressing machine was hired, and 20 tonnes were applied to football pitches at the Recreation Ground, alongside earlier winter fertiliser treatments. These improvements were supported by an FA grant and contributed to ongoing pitch quality enhancements.
- To mark the Council's 130th anniversary, the team rebuilt the gardener's hand cart at Doggetts Barn, jet washed the courtyard, sanded and re-oiled all benches, and began preparing window frames for repainting.
- Remedial playground works began following a recent inspection, including replacing swing chains at the Recreation Ground and Stangrove Park. Cemetery safety training was completed by two staff members, enabling additional routine safety checks.
- Spring pitch decompaction was scheduled for the week commencing 20th April, subject to ground conditions, at Nomads and the Recreation Ground.
- Two new wooden planters were installed at Market Yard car park, enhancing the area alongside new hanging baskets. Several posts were also replaced at Marsh Green due to ageing and ground conditions.

Members had no questions, but wanted to commend the ground staff on their hard work.

8.1 To approve the budgeted expenditure of £1,690 for the annual selective weed spraying

A quote had been obtained for the annual selective weed spraying programme carried out on the Council's sports pitches at The Recreation Ground, Blossoms Park, and Nomads. The quoted cost was £1,690, representing an increase of £10 compared to last year. Members discussed weed spraying practices, and health and safety implications. It was confirmed that the Council had a weed spraying policy and that the contractor would be undertaking a risk assessment before carrying out any works. Members,

Resolved: to approve the the budgeted expenditure of £1,690 for the annual selective weed spraying.

9 Open Spaces Business

Members noted the Open Spaces business, including the following:

- Summer Play Scheme: The Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) funded day, along with the three additional days had been booked in for 6, 13, 20 and 27 August. Additional activities and entertainment would confirmed at the June meeting.
- South and South East in bloom competition: Entered the cemetery, park, conservation and town centre categories for 2026 as approved by Members at the November 2025 meeting.
- Hanging Baskets: At the January meeting, Members resolved to change hanging baskets suppliers for 2026. The hanging baskets for this year had been arranged and were expected to be installed in early June.
- Market Archway: The archway had been installed in the Market Yard Car Park, along with the removable bollards.
- New bins: Two new waste bins had been ordered for Stangrove Park and the old Police Station site.

Members had no questions or comments.

9.1 To receive the burial report

Members noted the following burial report:

January: 0 burials; 1 ashes interment.

February: 1 burial; 1 ashes interment.

March: 0 burials; 0 ashes interments.

9.2 To note the 10 and 30 year maintenance plan update for 2026-27

Members noted that the 10 year maintenance plan for 2026/27 budget allocation had allowed for:

- Skate park sheet repairs
- Re-paint Warden shelter exterior in Doggetts Barn Courtyard
- Re-point section of courtyard concrete slabs (carried over from 2025/26)
- Paths and roads repair in the Churchyard and Cemeteries (carried over from 2025/26)
- Mowshurst Car Park pothole repairs
- Biannual tree survey
- Updated playground signage
- Marsh Green Seats - refurbish and paint

30 Year maintenance plan for 2026/27 budget allocation had allowed for:

- Street light replacement programme
- Skatepark boundary fencing (carried over from 2025/26) if needed
- Churchyard wall repairs, if needed

9.3 Allotment matters

Members noted the allotment matters including the following:

- Swan Lane renewals: Two tenants had vacated their plots. Both plots had been allocated to new tenants.
- Forge Croft renewals: These were managed by the EAGA (Edenbridge Allotment Garden Association).

We had been notified that both the EAGA Plot Officer and Secretary intended to step down from their positions. The Association was currently in the process of identifying replacements.

9.3.1 To review the Temporary Structures policy

Following a request from a resident to increase the size of the polytunnels to 3 meters, Members,

Resolved: to confirm to continue with the Temporary Structures Policy, and remain under annual review along with the amendment to the size of polytunnel permitted, increasing to 3 meters.

9.4 Vandalism report

Members noted the following vandalism report:

Forge Croft Allotments had been experiencing issues with trespassing and vandalism, including damaged sheds and polytunnels. In March a tenants wooden shelter was burned down. The costs would fall to the plot holder, but was an incident for noting.

Over the weekend of 28 and 29 March and again on Monday 30 March, youths were seen digging holes and creating bike ramps at the Recreation Ground, causing damage to the grass, though they avoided the Rugby/Football pitches.

All incidents had been reported to the police.

9.5 Market Activity

9.5.1 To receive an update on the external appraisal of the market carried out by a NABMA market specialist

At the January meeting Members confirmed to approve the expenditure for a site visit from an external market sector specialist from NABMA (National Association of British Market Authorities). This site visit was carried out on 19 March to gain a detailed understanding of current issues and opportunities.

The advisor carried out discussions with officers on how to improve the market and would provide a report summarising key findings and recommendations which would be presented to Committee at the June meeting.

Members had no questions.

9.5.2 Lingfield Farmer's Market - To consider continuing to waive the market licence fee imposed on commercial markets under the Council's Markets Licensing Policy

At the September 2025 meeting, Members resolved to:

Grant a one-year licence for the Lingfield Farmer's Market as a community based market in recognition of their stated aims

Waive market pitch fees until April 2026 under the community category and for the arrangement to be reviewed at the April 2026 meeting

To issue a refund to Lingfield Farmers Market for £75.00 (£100.00 had already paid for four market dates, less the £25.00 annual administrative fee)

The Lingfield Farmer's Market Operator had confirmed that the market would continue to operate as a community based market for 2026/27, and that they had made several charitable contributions over the past year. They had also completed an updated market application form and had confirmed all relevant insurances are in place. Members,

Resolved: to confirm that Lingfield Farmer's market meets the community organisations criteria (as outlined in the policy 5.ii),

Resolved: to continue to waive the market fees under the community-based criteria and,

Resolved: to confirm the market licence for the monthly Sunday market as a community-based group for a further year, to be reviewed in April 2027

9.5.3 To consider the provision of a bench in the Market Yard Car Park and the expenditure of up to £657.05

Members were advised that at a recent Councillors' Surgery, a resident requested that seating be introduced in the Market Yard Car Park (MYCP) to provide a place for people to sit during market days.

In response, three bench options were identified along with associated costs. Members,

Resolved: to support the introduction of permanent seating in the MYCP. A bench from Blossoms park has been resighted close to the vehicle entrance to MYCP.

9.6 To approve the expenditure of up to £1,300 for a new notice board in Stangrove Park

The existing notice board in Stangrove Park had deteriorated significantly and had reached the end of its usable life. For safety and maintenance reasons, it had been removed. The cost of a new notice board, comparable to the previous one, would be to be up to £1,300. This is unbudgeted but could be funded from the Open Spaces EMR. Members,

Resolved: to approve the unbudgeted expenditure of up to £1,300 for a new notice board in Stangrove Park, funded from the Open Spaces EMR.

9.7 To approve the budgeted expenditure of £5,575 for the biannual tree survey

Quaife Woodlands had provided the cost for the two-yearly arboricultural tree survey for Town

Council sites. They provide a detailed inventory and survey of all significant trees at the sites listed below, including adjacent neighbouring trees where they present a significant risk or major inconvenience to Council property. The sites were: Blossom Park, Marsh Green, Edenbridge Cemetery, Forge Green, Forge Croft Allotments, Stangrove Park, Swan Lane Allotments, Mowshurst and the Millennium Wood, Pound Green, and Lingfield Road Recreational Ground, along with the handful of trees in the Market Yard car park. The survey would record pertinent dimensions, species, estimated age, and condition.

Where a tree was identified as having a defect or other feature that constitutes a risk that required attention they would provide a specification for remedial or preventative works together with a priority. They would provide a separate appendix listing all such works which could be used for tendering purposes.

To allow for approximate number of trees to be around 500, the survey was offered at a fixed fee of £5,575 plus VAT. Quaife Woodlands had confirmed relevant insurances. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to confirm Quaife Woodlands to once again undertake the tree survey and the budgeted expenditure of £5,575.

10 To receive quotations for proposed work to Land outside Old Police Station, appoint a contractor and approval of the expenditure of up to £8600

Members were presented with three quotes for the landscaping work for the Land outside Old Police Station.

Works were to include shrub removal, tree stump removal, excavation of concrete, brickwork repairs and levelling the ground. There was £5,000 reserved for this project and it was proposed that the additional expenditure be funded from the Open Spaces EMR.

Contractor A - £7,960

Contractor B - £7,050

Contractor C - £8,600

Members,

Resolved: to approve the expenditure of up to £7,050 for the landscaping work for the Land outside the Old Police Station,

Resolved: to confirm that the additional expenditure of up to £2,050 be funded from the Open Spaces EMR and

Resolved: to confirm Contractor B as the preferred contractor

11 Capital projects

11.1 To receive tenders for the construction and installation of a Bandstand at Stangrove Park and appoint a contractor

Members were advised that the tender opportunity for the construction of a bandstand in Stangrove Park was published on 8 February and closed on 18 March.

A total of 18 companies requested tender documentation. Of these, two completed tenders were received and presented to committee.

Following evaluation:

Option A Matched the brief and was within the allocated budget.

Option B Matched the brief but significantly exceeded the allocated budget. Members considered the submitted tenders and,

Resolved: to appoint Contractor A to deliver the project costing up to £41,478.70 funded by SDC and ETC CIL award

11.2 To receive tenders for the associated groundworks for a Bandstand at Stangrove Park and appoint a contractor

Members were advised that the tender opportunity for the groundworks associated with the bandstand in Stangrove Park was published on 8 February and closed on 18 March.

A total of 20 companies requested tender documentation. Of these, two completed tenders were received and presented to committee.

Both submissions were within the allocated budget.

Option A was broadly in line with the expected cost for this work, based on guidance and initial quotations. The Open Spaces Officer met with this contractor at the site to discuss the project.

Option B was significantly lower in cost; however, it was understood that this contractor had not visited the site. Members reviewed the tenders and concerns were raised that contractor B had not visited the site or discussed this project with the Open Spaces Officer, as a result, Members,

Resolved: to appoint contractor A as the preferred contractor for the groundworks costing up to £20,740 funded by SDC and ETC CIL award

11.3 To receive an update on the proposed new playground at Marsh Green

Members were informed that the tender opportunity for the refurbishment and upgrade of Marsh Green Playground had been published on the Government's Contracts Finder portal.

The tender process was live, with a submission deadline of 29 May. Following the closing date, all received tenders would be evaluated in accordance with the Council's procurement procedures.

A report summarising the submissions, together with a shortlist of tenderers, would be presented to the Committee at its June meeting, with a view to appointing a contractor and progressing the project to the delivery stage.

Members had no questions.

12 To consider the provision of dog waste bags and dispensers on Council owned open spaces

Members were asked to consider the introduction of free dog waste bag dispensers at selected Council open spaces.

The Open Spaces Officer created a report outlining the background to the issue of dog fouling, evidence from other councils, indicative costs, and the advantages and disadvantages of such a scheme. It also set out a proposed pilot at three locations, together with associated costs and funding. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to approve the proposed pilot scheme, including the purchase and installation of three dispensers and supply of bags as detailed and the expenditure of up to £793.74.

14 To consider a request to operate the Children's Fun Fair in Stangrove Park in May

Members were reminded that last year we had two successful children's fun fairs, both were well attended. When they were here, the children's fair was well received by the community, we had no issues, and they were accommodating with arrangements to protect the ground at Stangrove Park. Total income raised from the two fairs was £1,996.53.

They had once again requested to operate the fair in Stangrove Park from 2-4 May and 8-9 May and Members,

Resolved: to confirm to permit the children's fun fair to operate in Stangrove Park from 28 April to 11 May, subject to receipt of insurances and risk assessments.

15 To consider permitting Church and Village Fete at Marsh Green on 18 July 2026

The Marsh Green Church and Village Community had requested the use of Marsh Green on 18 July 2026, between 2.00pm and 5.00pm (with access for set up from 8.00am and take-down until 7.00pm), to hold a community fete, social and fundraising event, which would include a

performance by the Town Band.

They had also requested permission to utilise the Council's TN8 Premises Licence, which covers its open spaces for licensable activities. Members,

Resolved: to approve the request for the Church and Village Fete at Marsh Green on 18 July 2026, along with the use of the Council's TN8 Licence, at no charge for a community event, subject to the provision of appropriate insurance documentation and risk assessments.

16 To receive a request for the hire of Stangrove Park from Edenbridge Town Band

The Town Band had made a request to hire Stangrove Park on Wednesday 24 June at 7pm (with Wednesday 1 July as a back up date in case of adverse weather) and Sunday 16 August at 2pm for performances. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to approve the request for the Town Band to perform at Stangrove Park, at no charge for a community event, subject to the provision of appropriate insurance documentation and risk assessments.

17 Streetlights maintenance replacement programme

17.1 Streetlights maintenance replacement programme: 2026-27 Update

At the November meeting, Members ratified an ETC CIL application for £40,000 to fund the vast majority of streetlight replacements on Cedar Drive and Park Avenue, the CIL application was approved. The CIL application for an additional streetlight in Church street was also approved, and the work was being carried out.

Members had no questions.

17.2 2025-26 Streetlight programme update

Members were informed that the 2025/26 Streetlight programme had been completed and that column 50 in Four Elms Road had also been removed.

Members had no questions.

18 News Release

Members considered items from this meeting to be the subject of a news release and confirmed the intention to publicise the the Church Street street light and the bench in MYCP, both occurring from feedback at councillors surgeries.

19 Date of Next Meeting - 15 June 2026

Noted.

The meeting ended at 20.25