

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
AMENITIES AND OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE
HELD AT HARTLEY LIBRARY, ASH ROAD
ON MONDAY 15th MAY 2023 AT 10.30a.m.**

Present:

Cllr Larry Abraham
Cllr Laurence Glander – (*Chairman*)
Cllr David Graeme
Cllr Anne Oxtoby

In Attendance:

Mrs H Boden – (*Clerk*)

1. Election of Chairman

RESOLVED: That,

Cllr Laurence Glander be elected Chairman of the Amenities and Open Spaces Committee until the Annual meeting of the Council in May 2024.

2. Election of Vice Chairman

RESOLVED: That,

Cllr David Graeme be elected Vice Chairman of the Amenities and Open Spaces Committee until the Annual meeting of the Council in May 2024.

3. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from the New Ash Green & Hartley Cricket Club.

4. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5. Minutes of previous meeting

RESOLVED: That,

the minutes of the meeting of the Amenities and Open Spaces Committee held on 1st March 2023, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

6. Terms of Reference and Delegated Powers

The Committee reviewed the Terms of Reference and Delegated Powers of the Amenities and Open Spaces Committee, as approved by the Council at its Annual

meeting held on 10th May 2023 and was satisfied that they met the needs of the Committee.

RESOLVED: That,

the Terms of Reference and Delegated Powers of the Amenities and Open Spaces Committee, as approved by the Council at its Annual meeting held on 10th May 2023, be received and noted.

7. Football at Manor Field

(a) The Clerk reported that an email had been received from Hartley De Sales Football Club, advising that over the summer, their young players' coaching sessions will be at Manor Field on Saturday mornings between 9.30a.m. and 10.30a.m.

Members of the Committee commented on the fact that there appeared to be training sessions taking place at Manor Field on additional days of the week.

RESOLVED: That,

(1) the Clerk's report be noted and,

(2) the Clerk be requested to contact the Football Club to obtain a list of training/coaching days and times.

(b) There was no report from the New Ash Green Football Club.

(c) The Committee considered an email dated 22nd March 2023, received from the Kent County Football Association, regarding an opportunity for town and parish councils that have football pitches that are used by grassroots football clubs.

Members noted that the Football Foundation have for some time, offered revenue funding to spend on grass pitch maintenance, though this has generally been clubs and leagues that have been able to apply for the funding.

The funding has now been extended to allow town and parish councils to apply directly.

The fund is tapered over a 6 year period and can be as much as £12,800 for 6 years, per pitch (based on an 11 v 11 pitch rated as poor or basic).

The Clerk reported that she had recently attended a webinar which explained how to apply for the funding and that the next step would be to obtain a PitchPower Assessment Report (by using the free app), which recommends the maintenance works required, before applying.

The Committee agreed that this funding opportunity should be explored further.

RESOLVED: That,

(1) arrangements be made for a PitchPower Assessment Report to be obtained and,

(2) once received, the matter be brought back to the Committee for further consideration.

8. Cricket at Manor Field

(a) There was no report from the New Ash Green & Hartley Cricket Club.

(b) The Committee considered a request received from the New Ash Green & Hartley Cricket Club, for a reduction in fees, due to the non - availability of the Pavilion/changing rooms since the start of the season, owing to issues with the testing of the water services.

The Clerk reported that the cricket season had commenced on 29th April and that although the club had not had a home fixture on that date, the Pavilion had been closed.

The Pavilion had been partially open on the weekends of 6th and 13th May, but the changing rooms and showers had not been available for use.

In view of this, the Cricket Club had requested a full discount for the first weekend and a partial discount for the following two weekends.

The Committee agreed that due to the fact that the Cricket Club had not had a home fixture on the weekend of 29th April, the fact that the Pavilion had been closed was irrelevant and therefore, no discount should be given.

With regard to the following two weekends, the Committee agreed that as the Club had had the use of the field, hall, kitchen and toilets, as a goodwill gesture, a discount of 25% of the weekly charge for both weekends would be applied.

9. Meopham Cricket Club

There was no report from Meopham Cricket Club.

10. Financial Report

The Clerk reported that the Council accounts for 2023/24 were in the process of being set up following year end and that a financial statement, setting out detailed income and expenditure by budget heading in respect of the Allotments, Open Spaces and the Pavilion, was not available.

11. Trees

(a) Gorse Wood

At the meeting of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee held on 1st March 2023, the Committee considered a request received from a resident of Gorsewood Road, for trees adjacent to their property to be reduced/removed, as they considered that the roots *may* be affecting their property.

At the meeting it was noted that arrangements had been made for two Tree Surgeons to inspect the trees, but that differing opinions had been received in their reports.

In view of this, the Clerk made arrangements for an additional Tree Surgeon to inspect the trees.

This had not been carried out in time for the meeting of the Committee and the matter was deferred.

An inspection was carried out on 7th March 2023.

The matter was considered by the full Council at its meeting held on 1st March 2023 at which, Members noted that none of the three inspections had been conclusive and

that it had been suggested that the only way to find out for certain would be for the resident to arrange for a qualified Structural Engineer to carry out a survey, as the needless removal of trees could affect the water table and cause issues.

In view of the fact that neither the resident nor the Tree Surgeons could categorically state that the trees in question were affecting the property, it was agreed that the Council could take no further action without advice from a suitably qualified professional.

It was noted that there did appear to be some dead wood on the trees located at the side of the garden and it was suggested that this be removed.

In addition, it was considered that the tree located adjacent to the garage of the property had become overgrown and required some pruning.

It was resolved that:

“1) the Clerk be requested to contact the resident to suggest that they make arrangements for a suitably qualified professional to carry out an assessment and provide a report to the Council;

2) the resident be advised that without such a report, the Council is unable to assess whether any work is required and;

3) the Clerk be authorised to make arrangements for the dead wood and the overhanging branches to be removed/cut back by a Tree Surgeon.”

The Clerk reported that she had contacted the resident by telephone on 24th March, to advise them of the Council’s decision, inasmuch as no further action could be taken without an assessment report from a suitably qualified professional.

Members noted that the Clerk had also informed the Parish Council’s insurers of the situation.

The Clerk reported that no further communication had been received from the resident and that a quotation was still awaited for the removal/cutting back of the dead wood and overhanging branches at the property.

RESOLVED: That,

(1) the Clerk’s report be noted and,

(2) once received, the Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee be authorised to accept the quotation for the removal/cutting back of the dead wood and overhanging branches at the property, up to a maximum of £500.00.

(b) Porchester Close

The Committee considered an email dated 7th March 2023, received from a resident of Porchester Close, regarding trees adjacent to their property.

The resident is concerned that the trees are overhanging the garden at the rear of their property causing mould and damp.

In addition, the resident has requested that the trees at the side and front of the property be reduced in height to allow more light in.

The Clerk reported that the trees at the front of the property were on land owned by the District Council and that she had requested that they inspect the trees and take any action considered necessary.

The Clerk reported that she had asked a Tree Surgeon to inspect the trees located on land owned by the Parish Council and that a report was awaited.

RESOLVED: That,

(1) the Clerk's report be noted;

(2) consideration of the Tree Surgeon's report be carried out at the next meeting of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee and,

(3) prior to the next meeting, the Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee be authorised to accept a quotation for any works highlighted in the Tree Surgeon's report as being necessary due to health and safety reasons.

12. Gorse Wood

At the meeting of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee held on 1st March 2023, Members considered the recent increase in fly-tipping.

It was noted that one of the fence panels in the Council's metal fence on the boundary of Gorse Wood and Caxton Close car park had been stolen.

In addition, the wooden fence owned by West Kent Housing Association (WKHA), on the boundary of Gorse Wood and the alleyway which runs from no 66 – 72 Caxton Close, had been vandalised. Both of which now allow unrestricted access to the woods.

It was resolved that:

“ 1) the Clerk be requested to seek a quotation for a replacement panel for the metal fence at the entrance to Gorse Wood from Caxton Close car park;

2) the Clerk be requested to contact WKHA to ask whether, in view of the fact that their wooden boundary fence at the rear of 66-72 Caxton Close has been vandalised, allowing easy access to the woods, they would be prepared to contribute towards the cost of clearing the fly tipping;

3) the Clerk be requested to contact WKHA to ask them to make arrangements for the repair of their boundary fence at the rear of 66 – 72 Caxton Close and,

4) the Clerk be requested to contact the CSU at the District Council to ask whether they would consider re-instating the CCTV in the car park at Caxton Close.”

The Clerk reported that a quotation had been sought for a replacement panel for the metal fence at the entrance to Gorse Wood from Caxton Close car park, but that this had not yet been received.

Members noted that the Clerk had contacted WKHA regarding the wooden boundary fence at the rear of 66 - 72 Caxton Close, but that they were currently disputing ownership of the fence and alley way.

The Clerk reported that she had obtained confirmation from the District Council that the land in question had been transferred to WKHA and that WKHA were in the process of confirming this with their legal department.

Members noted that the Clerk had contacted the District Council to ask whether they would consider re-instating the CCTV in the car park at Caxton Close.

On 14th April, the Community Safety Officer had advised that they would be visiting the site to obtain the relevant information required regarding the installation of a camera.

The Clerk reported that no further communication had been received since.

RESOLVED: That,

(1) the Clerk be requested to pursue the fencing contractor for a quotation for a replacement panel for the metal fence on the boundary of Gorse Wood and Caxton Close car park;

(2) the Clerk be requested to continue to pursue WKHA regarding the repair of the wooden boundary fence at the rear of 66-72 Caxton Close and,

(3) the Clerk be requested to continue to pursue Sevenoaks District Council with regard to the installation of a CCTV camera in the car park at Caxton Close.

(b) The Committee considered emails dated 6th April 2023 and 24th April 2023, received from the Environmental Enforcement Officer at Sevenoaks District Council, regarding fly-tipping in Gorse Wood.

The Clerk reported that the cost of the removal of the previous fly tipping from Gorse Wood and Rectory Meadow in March 2023 had amounted to £783.00 + VAT.

RESOLVED: That,

(1) a quotation be sought from Sevenoaks District Council for the removal of the fly tipping in Gorse Wood and,

(2) the Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee, be authorised to accept the resultant quotation.

13. Pavilion

(a) Legionella Testing

Members received a report on the outcome of the testing of the water samples taken from the Pavilion and the actions taken to eliminate the Legionella bacteria identified in the wash hand basin in the WC located off the main entrance hall.

The Clerk reported that Brodex Trident (the water testing contractor) had treated the system and following this, additional samples had been taken.

Members noted that the home and away changing rooms and the WC had been locked and closed to hirers whilst awaiting the results of the samples.

The Clerk reported that the cleaners had been instructed that cleaning and water temperature testing/flushing in those areas, would not be required to be undertaken until a negative result had been received.

Brodex Trident had advised that the kitchen and the ladies, gents and disabled toilets on the other side of the building could remain in use for hirers, due to the fact that this side of the building is mains water fed, as opposed to using stored water.

During their last visit, Brodex Trident had reported that the tap on the wash hand basin in the home team changing room was not working and required replacement.

The Clerk reported that a new tap had been ordered and would be fitted as soon as it was received.

RESOLVED: That,
the above report be noted and the Clerk's actions be confirmed.

(b) Hire Charges

The Committee reviewed the charges for the hire of the Pavilion.

Members noted that at the meeting of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee held on 17th August 2022, an increase of £1 per hour had been approved.

The current hire charges are as follows:

- An hourly charge of £11 for the weekday hire of the Pavilion, discounted to £10 for regular hirers
- An hourly charge of £13 for the hire of the Pavilion at the weekend. This excludes regular hirers whose hourly charge would remain at £10
- Requests from hirers for a reduction of the hire charge in respect of events organised for charitable purposes, to be considered on an individual basis.

RECOMMENDED: That,

(1) the hourly charge for the hire of the Pavilion remain at £11 per hour during the week and £13 per hour at the weekend (to exclude regular hirers whose hourly charge would remain at £10 per hour, both during the week and at the weekend);

(2) the current policy whereby the Council considers, on an individual basis, any requests from hirers of the Pavilion for a reduction of the charges in respect of events organised for charitable purposes, remain the same and,

(3) the next review of the charges for the hire of the Pavilion be carried out in March 2024.

(c) Fire Risk Assessment

The Clerk reported that the last fire risk assessment of the Pavilion had been carried out on 4th August 2022, by Mr Lawrence Vesey (Health & Safety Advisor NEBOSH), with a recommendation that reviews be carried out on an annual basis.

RESOLVED: That,

the Clerk be requested to contact Mr Lawrence Vesey to ask whether he would be prepared to carry out a fire risk assessment of the Pavilion in August 2023.

14. Manor Field – Car Park Re-surfacing

The Chairman reported that he, the Clerk and Cllr Ramsay had met with two of the three preferred contractors.

The Clerk reported that she had contacted the third contractor to arrange a meeting, but that to date, she had received no response.

Cllr Glander explained that the purpose of the site meetings was to ensure that the contractors' interpretation of the specification fully meets the Council's requirements.

In addition, in view of the time elapsed since the original quotations were received, the contractors had been requested to submit revised quotations.

The Clerk reported that one revised quotation had been received, but the other was still awaited.

Members noted that an email had been received from the Parish Council's Solicitor advising that there had been no further communication received from the land owners Solicitors.

At the meeting of the full Council held on 10th May 2023, it was agreed that should negotiations with the landowner be slow to progress, the car park and footpath works be undertaken separately, to enable the car park resurfacing to be carried out without further delay.

RESOLVED: That,

(1) the above report be noted and,

(2) the revised quotations for the re-surfacing and footpath works be considered by the full Council at its meeting to be held on 12th June 2023.

15. Security of Open Spaces

Following the recent unauthorised encampment at Woodland Avenue, the Committee had been requested to consider arrangements for increasing the security of the Parish Council's open spaces.

The Chairman reported that a bund had been created around Woodland Avenue recreation ground, using the spoil from the recent gas works.

This had been carried out as an emergency measure to prevent future incursions.

Cllr Malham had given his time free of charge and the gas board had kindly assisted by moving the spoil to various locations along the fence line.

The Committee agreed that top soil would be required to be placed on top of the bund, with grass seed added.

The Committee noted that the wooden fence at Woodland Avenue, damaged as a result of the unauthorised encampment, had been repaired by Cllr Malham, as an emergency measure to prevent future incursions.

The Clerk reported that Cllr Malham had provided his labour free of charge and the Council had only paid for materials.

It was agreed that Hoselands Green would benefit from having bollards installed from the bus stop, back towards Wellfield, with a collapsible bollard to allow the grass cutting contractors to obtain access to the green.

The Committee considered that the remaining open spaces owned by the council did not require additional security measures.

RESOLVED: That,

(1) quotations be sought for the bund recently created around Woodland Avenue recreation ground to be finished with top soil and grass seed and,

(2) quotations be sought for the installation of bollards around Hoselands Green from the bus stop back to Wellfield, including a collapsible bollard to allow access for contractors' access.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.40a.m. to allow questions from a contractor, regarding work required as a result of the recent Quantified Tree Risk Assessment.

The meeting resumed at 12.00p.m.

Cllr Graeme left the meeting at 12.00p.m.

16. Quantified Tree Risk Assessment

(a) The Committee had been requested to consider any update received, regarding the Scout Leader's offer to locate and replace the ground markers in Hartley Wood, highlighted in the Quantified Tree Risk Assessment carried out in September 2021.

The Clerk reported that no update had been received, but that the Scout Leader had previously confirmed that the matter is in hand.

RESOLVED: That,

(1) the matter be deferred until the next meeting and,

(2) the Clerk be requested to contact the Scout Leader to ask whether there has been any progression with the location of the ground markers.

(b) The Committee had been requested to consider any quotations received for the works highlighted in the Quantified Tree Risk Assessment report dated 24th November 2022.

One of the contractors invited to quote had attended the meeting earlier, to request clarification as to the location of several of the trees highlighted in the report and the scope of works required.

The contractor had expressed concern that the tree assessment in its current form, was not as useful to the Council as it could be and that other types of inspections

were available and could be of more use to the Council when assessing the urgency of any works required.

The contractor explained that he had been unable to provide a quotation using the descriptions and maps showing the defective trees.

The Committee agreed that clarification was required from the author of the report, to enable quotations to be obtained.

RESOLVED: That,

the Clerk be requested to contact the tree inspector to obtain clarification as to the locations of the trees highlighted in the report as requiring attention and the scope of works required.

The Committee agreed that advice should be sought as to the scope of future risk assessments and the most appropriate type of risk assessment.

The Clerk reported that a condition of the Parish Council's insurance at renewal on 1st June 2023, is for a tree maintenance programme to be in place.

Members noted that the Clerk had contacted the Parish Council's insurer to ask whether the current arrangements are adequate to comply with the condition.

The Clerk reported that a response from the insurer was still awaited.

RECOMMENDED: That,

(1) quotations be sought from suitably qualified professionals, to inspect all of the trees on land owned by the Parish Council, using an alternative appropriate inspection method and,

(2) the Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee be authorised to accept the most suitable quotation up to the sum of £2,000.

17. Routine Maintenance Contract

The Committee had been requested to consider any quotations received for the Parish Council's Routine Maintenance Contract 2023/24.

The Clerk reported that the current contractor did not wish to submit a quotation for the forthcoming year.

Members noted that despite advertising the contract in the Parish Council's newsletter and placing an advert on the noticeboards, only one quotation had been received.

It was agreed that the deadline should be extended and the position advertised for a second time to allow any additional interested parties to come forward.

It was suggested that the current contractor be asked to provide details of the time spent each week on the required tasks, to enable an assessment to be made as to whether it may be more beneficial in future years, to employ someone rather than to contract the work out.

RESOLVED: That,

(1) an advertisement be placed in the June edition of the Parish Council's newsletter, seeking quotations from interested parties for the routine maintenance contract to commence on 1st July 2023;

(2) the Clerk be requested to contact the contractor that had submitted a quotation, to advise that the deadline has been extended and,

(3) the Clerk be requested to contact the current contractor to obtain details of the time spent each week on the required tasks, to be considered by the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee at its next meeting.

18. Allotments

The Committee considered an email dated 23rd April 2023, received from an allotment plot holder, regarding the security of the fence at the Woodland Avenue entrance to the allotments.

RESOLVED: That,

the Routine Maintenance Contractor be requested to inspect the fence and repair as required.

19. Playgrounds

(a) Woodland Avenue

(i) The Clerk reported that the team swing has been vandalised and removed for safe keeping.

The Committee noted that a quotation for its repair/replacement had been requested and was still awaited.

RESOLVED: That,

(1) the Clerk's actions of arranging for the team swing to be removed and stored for safe keeping, be confirmed and,

(2) consideration of a quotation for its repair/replacement be considered by the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee at its next meeting.

(ii) The Committee considered a complaint received from a resident regarding the slippery condition of the surface of the MUGA.

The Clerk reported that this area had been highlighted as a low risk finding in the recent Playground Inspection Report and that quotations had been sought to clean the surface.

In view of the above, the Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman of the Council and the Chairman of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee had accepted a quotation received from Safeplay, for the sum of £995.00 + VAT, to clean the surface.

RESOLVED: That,

the Clerk's actions, in consultation with the Chairman of the Council and the Chairman of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee, of the

acceptance of a quotation received from Safeplay for the sum of £995.00 + VAT, to jet wash the entire surface of the MUGA and to ensure that the area is completely free of dirt and moss, be confirmed.

(b) Operational Inspection

(i) The Committee considered the Operational Inspection Report dated 13th March 2023, received from the Parish Council's Playground Inspector.

Members noted that Chantry Avenue and Longfield Hill recreation grounds had been assessed as "moderate risk" and that Woodland Avenue Recreation Ground had been assessed as "low risk".

The Clerk reported that the "moderate risk" item highlighted in the report for Chantry Avenue recreation ground, related to one of the grips on the activity equipment – multi play unit, which had been severely damaged.

The Committee was informed that upon receipt of the report, the Parish Council's routine maintenance contractor had removed the damaged grip.

Members noted that the "moderate risk" item highlighted in the report for Longfield Hill recreation ground, related to the free standing slide. Parts of the steel on this item had corroded excessively and the metal had perforated in places.

The Clerk reported that quotations had been sought for its repair and that in consultation with the Chairman of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee, a quotation received from Safeplay for the sum of £474.50 + VAT had been accepted and the required work had now been completed.

RESOLVED: That,

the Clerk's actions of accepting a quotation received from Safeplay for the sum of £474.50 + VAT, in consultation with the Chairman of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee, for the repairs to the free standing slide at Longfield Hill, as highlighted in the Playground Inspector's report, be confirmed.

The Committee noted that there were various other "low risk" items highlighted in the Inspector's report, relating to worn equipment/parts rather than just general maintenance issues:

Woodland Avenue

- Multi play senior - Replacement shackles
Replace damaged rope connectors
Rope net worn – tape affected areas to delay any further deterioration
- Spinning Pole - Replace worn bearing
- Adventure Trail - Replace spring cover
- Roundabout - Replace worn bearing

Chantry Avenue

- Multi play Junior - Re-secure slide run out into ground, new wet pour surface to be installed once the legs have been secured
- Swings – Cradle - Replace swing chains
Replace swing bushes
- Swings – Junior - Replace swing seat connectors

The Committee noted that two quotations had been sought for the above works, but that to date, only one had been received.

The Clerk reported that there were insufficient funds remaining in the playground maintenance budget.

RECOMMENDED: That,

(1) the Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee, be authorised to accept the most suitable quotation for the above works to be undertaken and,

(2) the total cost of the works be met from the Parish Council's general reserves.

The Clerk reported that the routine maintenance contractor had been requested to undertake the required minor works where possible.

RESOLVED: That,

1) the Operational Inspection Report dated 13th March 2023, received from the Parish Council's Playground Inspector, be noted and,

2) the routine maintenance contractor be requested to undertake the required minor works, as highlighted in the inspection report (where possible).

(ii) The Committee considered a renewal quotation received from the current playground inspection contractor.

The Committee was reminded that a quotation seeking process had been undertaken in 2021.

Pursuant to Financial Regulation 11.1 (a) ii, the Committee considered that it would be in the best interests of the Council to retain the specialist services of The Play Inspection Company, particularly as there had been no significant price increase from last year.

RESOLVED: That,

1) the quotation received from The Play Inspection Company for the sum of £262.50 + VAT, to carry out an annual inspection of the Council's 3 playgrounds, be accepted and,

2) the quotation received from The Play Inspection Company for the sum of £661.50 + VAT, to carry out 3 no operational inspections of the Council's 3 playgrounds, be accepted

20. Rectory Meadow

(a) The Committee considered an email dated 11th April 2023, received from a resident regarding various issues at rectory Meadow.

Members noted that part of the fence has been removed from the gate at the north entrance to the field and two kissing gates have been damaged.

The Clerk reported that the routine maintenance contractor had repaired the fence on 3 occasions, but it had been vandalised each time.

RESOLVED: That,
quotations be sought for the repair of the fencing and kissing gates, for consideration at the next meeting of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee.

21. Risk Assessments

The Committee had been requested to review the Council's current risk assessments relating to the amenities and open spaces.

The Clerk reported that she had not had an opportunity to send them out to Committee members prior to the meeting, so it was suggested that the risk assessments be emailed to Members after the meeting and any comments be considered at the next meeting of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee.

22. Date of next meeting

To be arranged.

The meeting closed at 12.30 p.m.

Signed:..... Date:.....

Chairman of the Amenities and Open Spaces Committee

