

Hartley De Sales FC – 1 no 11 v 11 pitch (with respect lines)

New Ash Green FC - 1 no 9 v 9 pitch (without respect lines). With the possibility of an additional 1 no 7 v 7 pitch (without respect lines) to be confirmed)

Ebbsfleet United Women's FC – 1 no 11 v 11 pitch (without respect lines).

The representative from Hartley De Sales FC asked whether the grass cutting regime could be extended, as they had experienced issues with the grass being too long on occasions during the previous season.

The Committee had previously agreed that it had no objection to the Club making arrangements for additional grass cuts to be carried out, provided that prior permission was sought from the Council, that a contractor approved by the Council was used and that the Club met the cost of the cut/s.

However, should contracted cuts be missed during the cutting period, the cost of the relevant number of cuts would be met by the Council.

(b) The Committee had been requested to consider a quotation for the setting out of the required pitches, but the Clerk reported that due to the fact that the Clubs' requirements had changed since the quotation had been sought, it could be used as an estimate only.

The Clerk reported that only one quotation had been sought, but reminded the Committee that a quotation invitation exercise for the setting out of football pitches had been undertaken in August 2021 and that Landscape Services had been appointed.

The Committee agreed that it was satisfied with the work carried out by Landscape Services, as they had been responsible for setting out the Council's football pitches for a number of years.

In view of this, the Committee considered that it would be in the best interests of the Council to continue engaging the services of the current contractor, provided that the cost did not significantly increase.

RESOLVED: That,

the Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee, be authorised to accept the relevant quotation from Landscape Services for the setting out of the required pitches, once the requirements of the Football Clubs have been confirmed.

(c) The Committee considered a request received from Hartley De Sales FC, for the use of the Pavilion during matches.

Members were reminded that New Ash Green FC and Ebbsfleet United Women's FC had requested the use of the Pavilion for their girls' teams, as this was a requirement of the FA.

It had been agreed at the last meeting, that they would be charged the sum of £20 for each use.

Concern was expressed that should the use of the Pavilion be required every weekend, the Parish Council could lose revenue from potential hirers of the hall.

The representatives from the football clubs confirmed that fixtures would commence no earlier than 10.00a.m. and end no later than 2p.m.

The Committee agreed that the football clubs would be required to submit a list of fixtures to the Clerk at the start of the season and to confirm the dates that they would require the Pavilion, to enable the Clerk to be able to respond to booking enquiries from potential hall hirers.

Members agreed that Hartley De Sales could have the use of the Pavilion for the sum of £20 per use.

RESOLVED: That,

(1) the request received from Hartley De Sales FC for the use of the Pavilion during its matches, be granted, at a cost of £20 per use and,

(2) prior to the start of the season, the three Clubs be requested to submit their fixture lists and confirm the dates that they would require the Pavilion.

The representatives from Hartley De Sales FC and New Ash Green FC left the meeting at 7.16p.m.

5. Cricket at Manor Field

The representative from the New Ash Green & Hartley Cricket Club reported that numbers were currently not good, but that the season had gone well.

The representative reported that there had been an issue with the showers the previous week, inasmuch as there was minimal flow.

The representative asked whether the Council would have any objection to the club making arrangements for a water outlet to be installed adjacent to the cricket square.

The Chairman responded that should the request be approved by the Council, it would have to be funded by the Club and the water would need to be metered and paid for by the Club.

RESOLVED: That,

(1) the report received from the New Ash Green & Hartley CC, be noted;

(2) arrangements be made for the showers to be inspected by the boiler servicing contractor and,

(3) a detailed proposal for the installation of a water outlet adjacent to the cricket square be submitted for consideration by the committee.

The representative from the New Ash Green & Hartley CC left the meeting at 7.29.p.m

6. Meopham Cricket Club

The Clerk reported that the Club had advised that they are working to get the square back in to full use for the summer of 2024.

RESOLVED: That,
the above report be noted.

7. Financial Report

The Committee considered a financial statement setting out detailed income and expenditure by budget heading in respect of the Allotments, Open Spaces and the Pavilion, as at 10th August 2023.

RESOLVED: That,
the financial statement setting out detailed income and expenditure by budget heading in respect of the Allotments, Open Spaces and the Pavilion, as at 10th August 2023, be received and noted.

8. Budget 2024 – 25

The Committee had been requested to consider a draft budget for 2024/2025, for the allotments, open spaces and the Pavilion.

The Committee agreed that further investigation was required regarding likely increases to the grass cutting regime and routine maintenance contract, before a budget could be set.

RESOLVED: That,
consideration of a draft budget for 2024/2025, for the allotments, open spaces and the Pavilion, be deferred until the next meeting

9. Trees

Chantry Avenue

The Committee considered a request received from a resident of Chantry Avenue, for a tree at the rear of their property, on land owned by the Parish Council, to be cut back, as it was overhanging their garden.

The Committee considered a report received from the Tree Surgeon, advising that there were currently no health and safety issues with the tree,

RESOLVED: That,
(1) in accordance with the councils tree policy, the resident be advised that no works will be undertaken at the present time, as the tree does not appear to be dead, dying or dangerous, but the situation will be monitored and,
(2) the resident be advised that they are at liberty to arrange for any overhanging branches to be cut back to the boundary at their own expense.

10. Gorse Wood

(a) The Committee considered a quotation for the replacement of the missing fence panel in the Council's metal fence on the boundary of Gorse wood and Caxton Close car park.

RECOMMENDED: That,

(1) a quotation for the sum of £280.00 + VAT be accepted for the supply and fixing of 1 new steel panel, fixings and steel plate to cover the fixings and,

(2) the total cost of the works be met from CIL monies A and B.

Cllr Oxtoby reported that the kissing gate at the Gorsewood Road entrance to Gorse Wood had been damaged and required repair.

Due to uncertainty as to ownership of the gate, further investigation was considered necessary.

RESOLVED: That,

(1) the Clerk be requested to make enquiries as to whether the gate is owned by the Parish Council or Kent County Council and,

(2) should it transpire that the gate is owned by the Parish Council, quotations be obtained for its repair.

(b) The Committee had been requested to consider an update on the possible installation of a CCTV camera in the car park at the rear of Caxton Close.

The Clerk reported that the District Council had advised that it would be liaising with its Environmental Enforcement Department and would update the Parish Council following this.

RESOLVED: That,

the Clerk's report be noted and the matter be deferred until the next meeting.

(c) The Committee had been requested to consider a progress report on the preparation of a Woodland Management Plan for the future maintenance of Gorse Wood, to be prepared by the North West Kent Countryside Project.

The Clerk reported that no further updates had been received.

11. Pavilion

(a) Fire Risk Assessment

The Committee considered quotations for a fire risk assessment to be carried out at the Pavilion.

The Clerk reported that there were insufficient funds remaining in the maintenance budget, but that due to the fact that the risk assessment is a legal requirement, pursuant to Financial Regulation 4. Budgetary Control and Authority to Spend, 4.5 it was considered necessary expenditure.

RECOMMENDED: That,

(1) a quotation for the sum of £320.00, to carry out a fire risk assessment at the pavilion, be accepted and,

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

(b) Monthly Water Temperature Checks

The Committee considered the results of the monthly water temperature checks carried out at the Pavilion as part of the water safety programme.

The Clerk reported that the temperature of the showers and some of the hot taps, were not reaching the required temperature.

Members noted that the water heater serving these outlets had recently been repaired due to issues with the temperatures, but that the engineer had advised that it would need to be replaced in the near future.

RESOLVED: That,

the boiler servicing contractor be requested to inspect the water heater as soon as possible.

(c) 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, it had been agreed that the hire charges introduced in May 2018, be increased.

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 remains 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,

there be no increase to the hire charges introduced in August 2022.

12. Manor Field

Memorial Bench

The Committee considered a request from a resident for a memorial bench to be installed at Manor Field.

RESOLVED: That,

the request received from a resident for a memorial bench to be installed at Manor Field, be approved, subject to the following conditions:

- details of the proposed style and size of the bench be submitted to the council for prior approval;
- should the resident require a memorial plaque to be fitted to the bench, details of the design, size and wording of the plaque be submitted to the Council for prior approval and,
- details of the proposed fixing method for the bench and the contractor to be used, be submitted to the Council for prior approval.

13. Security of Open Spaces

The Committee considered the option of the installation of additional benches and the planting of trees around Hoselands Green, to prevent unauthorised access.

Cllr Oxtoby suggested that mature trees be purchased and planted along the Ash Road side of the green.

It was suggested that the Woodland Trust and the Forestry Commission be approached to find out whether there are any grants available.

RESOLVED: That,

- (1) advice be sought regarding the most appropriate species of trees to plant;
- (2) quotations be sought for the recommended mature trees to be purchased and planted and,
- (3) the Woodland Trust and the Forestry Commission be approached, to find out whether there are any grants available.

14. Quantified Tree Risk Assessment

(a) At the meeting of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee held on 28th June 2023, the Committee had been requested to consider any update received regarding the Scout Leader's offer to locate and replace the missing ground markers in Hartley Wood, which had been highlighted in the Quantified Tree Risk Assessment reports undertaken in September 2021 and November 2022.

At the meeting, the Clerk reported that no update had been received and she was requested to continue to pursue the matter with the Scout Leader.

The Clerk reported that the Scout Leader had advised that he had assessed the situation and was unable to assist.

Members were reminded that in 2021, a quotation had been sought from the original surveyor, to locate and replace the missing markers and it had been a substantial sum.

Cllr Sewell suggested that the use of a metal detector may assist with locating the missing markers.

RESOLVED: That,

- (1) Cllr Sewell's offer of sourcing a metal detector, be accepted and,

(2) Cllr Sewell and a volunteer group of Councillors endeavour to locate the missing ground markers in Hartley Wood, using the metal detector.

(b) The Quantified Tree Risk Assessment report received in November 2022, advised that the next QTRA be carried out in Winter 2023 or Spring 2024.

The Committee agreed that as the last Risk Assessment had been undertaken during the Winter, the next one should be carried out in the Spring.

At the meeting of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee held on 28th June 2023, it was recommended that when quotations are sought for the next tree risk assessment, the advice given by the current Tree Inspector, to ask tenderers to outline their approach/method to tree risk assessment, be taken and alternative methods be considered.

The Committee agreed that it was satisfied with the current method of inspection (Quantified Tree Risk Assessment) and that the contractor engaged to carry out the assessment has the appropriate training and experience.

The Committee was reminded that a quotation invitation exercise for carrying out a Quantified Tree Risk Assessment by suitably qualified Arboriculturists had been undertaken in October 2020 and that Duramen Consulting had been duly appointed.

Duramen Consulting has carried out a number of inspections and reported to the Council thereon, and has developed an extensive knowledge of the Council's trees over a number of seasons. In view of this the Committee considered that it would be in the best interests of the Council to continue the inspection regime with Duramen Consulting for the foreseeable future, provided the inspection costs did not significantly increase.

RESOLVED: That,

arrangements be made with Duramen Consulting to carry out a Quantified Tree Risk Assessment on the trees located on land owned or managed by the Council, provided that the cost of the inspection and report does not exceed, by more than 10% , the fee charged for the inspection and report carried out in November 2022.

15. Playgrounds

(a) Annual Inspection Report

The Committee considered the Annual Inspection Report, dated 13th July 2023, received from the Council's Playground Inspector.

The Clerk reported that Woodland Avenue recreation ground had been highlighted as a "moderate risk", due to the vandalised wetpour around the roundabout.

Members noted that this had now been repaired.

The Clerk reported that both Chantry Avenue and Longfield Hill recreation grounds had been highlighted as "low risk".

Members noted that one of the benches at Woodland Avenue had been highlighted as being in poor condition and it was agreed that this should be removed as it was considered to be beyond economical repair.

It was noted that the surfacing under the bench comprised of paving slabs and it was agreed that these should remain.

The Clerk reported that one of the football goals had been highlighted as a low risk finding, due to the fact that a number of fixings have worked loose.

Members noted that the Routine Maintenance Contractor had been requested to inspect the goal and to tighten any loose fixings, but he had advised that there were none.

The Clerk reported that it had been recommended that warning signage be provided on the MUGA. This had been highlighted as a “very low risk” finding.

Members noted that a sign had previously been purchased and erected, but that it had been removed twice by vandals and on the second occasion it had been destroyed.

It was agreed that in view of this, the sign should not be replaced.

RESOLVED: That,

the Routine Maintenance Contractor be requested to undertake the required minor works, as highlighted in the inspection report, detailed below:

Woodland Avenue

- Remove weed/vegetation growth on, between or around the edges of the surfacing
- There is broken glass present on site – remove and maintain the area
- Picnic table – remove all rough or sharp edges
- Bench – remove, but retain the paving slabs underneath
- Inclusive Springie – tighten all loose fixings
- MUGA Football Goal – secure all loose fixings

Chantry Avenue

- Sign – cable ties have been used on the item and there are sharp, projecting ends. Remove if not required, or replace with a more appropriate alternative fixing method if used as a fixing
- Gates – kissing gate – There are projecting bolt threads present – remove excess thread length and deburr or provide cap
- Safety surfacing – there is weed/vegetation growth, on, between or around the edges of the surfacing – remove weed/vegetation growth
- Multi play junior – a number of fixings have worked loose – Secure all loose fixings

Longfield Hill

- Bench – there are projecting bolt thread (s) present – Remove excess thread length and deburr or provide cap
- Adventure trail – a number of fixings have worked loose – Secure all loose fixings

It was noted that there were a number of other “very low risk” or “low risk” items contained in the report and it was agreed that the reports should be submitted to local playground repairers in order that quotations could be sought for these items.

RESOLVED: That,

the Annual Inspection Report, dated 13th July 2023, received from the Council’s Playground Inspector, be submitted to local playground repairers, to seek quotations for the “very low risk” and “low risk” items contained within the report, for consideration at the next meeting.

(b) Surface Cleaning

The Committee considered quotations for the cleaning of the safety surfacing at the Council’s 3 playgrounds, as highlighted in the recent inspection report.

Members noted that the recommendation was that the surface be cleaned and treated appropriately.

The Clerk was requested to make enquiries as to whether the quotation included treatment of the surfacing.

RECOMMENDED: That,

(1) a quotation for the sum of £1,450.00 + VAT, for the cleaning of the safety surfacing at the Council’s 3 playgrounds, be accepted, provided that it includes the appropriate treatment of the surfacing and,

(2) the total cost of the works be met from CIL monies A and B.

(c) Damage to Safety Surfacing – Woodland Avenue

In January 2023, a banding repair was carried out to the safety surfacing around the roundabout at Woodland Avenue.

This area was recently vandalised and the safety surfacing removed.

As this was a health and safety issue, (subsequently highlighted in the Annual Playground Inspection Report as a moderate risk), the Clerk sought two quotations for its repair and the Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee, accepted a quotation for the sum of £646.80 + VAT.

The Committee had been requested to confirm the Clerk’s actions of accepting the quotation for the sum of £646.80 + VAT and arranging for the repair work to be carried out.

RESOLVED: That,

the Clerk’s actions of accepting the quotation for the sum of £646.80 + VAT and arranging for the repair work to be carried out, be confirmed.

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

RECOMMENDED: That,
the total cost of the repair work be met from CIL monies A and B.

(d) Waste Removal

The Committee had been requested to confirm the Clerks actions of making arrangements for the 3 piles of arboricultural waste, left behind following the recent unauthorised encampment, to be removed from Woodland Avenue recreation ground at a cost of £150.00 + VAT.

RESOLVED: That,
the Clerks actions of making arrangements for the 3 piles of arboricultural waste, left behind following the recent unauthorised encampment, to be removed from Woodland Avenue recreation ground at a cost of £150.00 + VAT, be confirmed.

(e) Vandalism – Woodland Avenue

The Clerk reported that the Spinner unit at Woodland Avenue recreation ground had recently been set alight by vandals and the cap at the top of the unit had been destroyed, exposing sharp metal underneath.

Members noted that as this was a health and safety issue, arrangements had been made for the spinner pole to be removed, leaving the base in the ground, as it had not been possible to remove it.

The Clerk reported that following consultation with the Chairman, the Chairman of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee and the remaining Members of the Council, as a temporary measure, the base had been taped up with hazard tape, to make it visible to users of the playground.

The Clerk reported that a quotation had been sought, giving three options:

- 1) to remove the spinner and make good the safety surfacing with black wetpour;
- 2) to replace the spinner top with a new Playdale spinner top;
- 3) to replace the spinner top CAP only, provided that the unit can be cleaned and re-used.

The Clerk reported that there were insufficient funds remaining in the playground maintenance budget for the required work to be carried out.

RECOMMENDED: That,
(1) the quotation for the sum of £345.00 + VAT, to remove the spinner and make good the safety surfacing with black wetpour, be accepted and,
(2) the total cost of the repair work be met from CIL monies A and B.

16. Dog Exercise Field

The Committee considered an email dated 19th July 2023, regarding the provision of an enclosed dog field in the parish.

RESOLVED: That,

the request for the provision of an area of land within the parish, to set up an enclosed dog exercise field, be declined.

17. Billings Hill Shaw – Turtle Doves

The Chairman reported that following notification received from a resident, of the presence of Turtle Doves at Billings Hill Shaw, he had recently met with a representative from the RSPB to assess how the Parish Council could assist with maintaining this presence.

The Committee considered an advisory report received from the RSPB.

RESOLVED: That,

(1) the report be noted;

(2) arrangements be made for the line of scrub where the birds are located, to be allowed to expand and connect and fill the open spaces between the cherry trees in the south corner of the site and,

(3) a letter be sent to the two adjacent land owners, notifying them of the presence of Turtle Doves and asking whether they would mind being contacted by the RSPB regarding the possibility of helping with encouraging the Turtle Doves by scattering seeds on the ground to help with foraging during the breeding season.

18. Groundsman/Estate Manager

At the meeting of the Parish Council held on 10th July 2023, it was resolved that the Clerk be requested to contact neighbouring parishes to enquire about the possibility of sharing a Groundsman/Estate Manager.

The Clerk reported that of the parish councils that she had contacted, none of them employed anyone in a similar role to that required by Hartley Parish Council.

RESOLVED: That,

the matter be referred to the Personnel Committee for further discussion and consideration.

19. Allotments

(a) The Committee considered the allotment charges for the period 1st October 2024 to 30th September 2025.

Members noted that currently, the highest rent is £45.50 per year and the lowest rent £13.98.

The Clerk reported that there were currently no vacant allotments.

RECOMMENDED: That,

the allotment charges for the period 1st October 2024 to 30th September 2025, be increased by 10%.

(b) The Committee had been requested to consider whether the Council wishes to continue its membership of the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Ltd, at a cost of £66.00 per annum.

RECOMMENDED: That,

the Council continues its membership of the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Ltd, at a cost of £66.00 per annum.

(c) The Committee had been requested to consider arranging a meeting with the allotment tenants.

RESOLVED: That,

the Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee be requested to arrange a meeting with Members of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee and the allotment tenants at some time in November.

20. Site Visits

Before the meeting, the Clerk and members of the Committee had carried out a site inspection at Chantry Avenue recreation ground, Longfield Hill recreation ground and Billings Hill Shaw.

RESOLVED: That,

the Parish Council's Routine Maintenance Contractor be requested to cut back the overgrown vegetation adjacent to the fencing surrounding the playground equipment at Chantry Avenue and Longfield Hill.

21. Grass Cutting Contracts 2024-26

The Committee reviewed the grass cutting specification and schedule for the Council's open spaces and recreation grounds due for renewal on 1st April 2024.

It was agreed that the cutting period should be extended to the end of November.

The Committee examined the list of Contractors invited to submit quotations in respect of the 2022 - 24 contracts and noted that a number of them had either declined to quote previously, or that the company had folded.

RESOLVED: That,

(1) the specification for grass cutting of the Council's open spaces and recreation grounds due for renewal on 1st April 2024, be approved and,

(2) quotations be invited for the grass cutting specification and schedule for 2022 – 2024 from the list of Contractors considered by the Committee.

22. Date of next meeting

To be arranged.

The meeting closed at 9.00 p.m.

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

Chairman of the Amenities and Open Spaces Committee

