

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
AMENITIES AND OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE
HELD AT HARTLEY LIBRARY, ASH ROAD
ON WEDNESDAY 28th MAY 2025
AT 7.00p.m.**

Present:

Cllr David Conroy
Cllr Laurence Glander
Cllr Mally Malham
Cllr Vincent Sewell – (*Chairman*)

In Attendance:

Mrs H Boden – (*Clerk*)
Cllr Brian Ramsay
A representative from the New Ash Green Football Club
A representative from Hartley De Sales Football Club
1 Member of the public

1. Election of Chairman

RESOLVED: That,

Cllr Mrs Anne Oxtoby be elected Chairman of the Amenities and Open Spaces Committee until the Annual meeting of the Council in May 2026.

2. Election of Vice Chairman

RESOLVED: That,

Cllr Vincent Sewell be elected Vice-Chairman of the Amenities and Open Spaces Committee until the Annual meeting of the Council in May 2026.

In the absence of Cllr Oxtoby, Cllr Sewell (Vice-Chairman) chaired the meeting.

3. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Graham, Cllr Oxtoby and the representative from the New Ash Green & Hartley Cricket Club.

4. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Malham declared an interest in minute item 9, (a), (b) and (c), Allotments, as he is an allotment tenant and took no part in voting on the matters.

Councillor Sewell declared an interest in minute item 14, (c), Pavilion Charges, as he is a member of a group that hires the Pavilion and took no part in voting on the matter.

5. Minutes of previous meeting

RESOLVED: That,
the minutes of the meeting of the Amenities and Open Spaces Committee held on 5th February 2025, 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 12th May 2025 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 12th May 2025, be received and noted.

Pursuant to Standing Order 3 (e), the Chairman invited the member of the public present to express an interest if they wished to make representations, answer questions or give evidence in respect of any item of business included in the agenda.

The member of the public expressed an interest under agenda item 14. Allotments.

Cllr Ramsay expressed an interest under agenda item 12. Pavilion (b) Showers.

RESOLVED: That,
pursuant to Standing Order 10 (a) (ix), the order of business be altered so that agenda item 12. Pavilion (a) Water Hygiene & (b), Showers, be brought forward.

7. Pavilion

(a) Water Hygiene

(i) The Committee considered the results of the monthly water temperature checks at the Pavilion, carried out by the cleaners.

The Clerk reported that the temperatures of all outlets were within scope, with the exception of the tap in the disabled toilet.

The Clerk explained that due to the fact that it is a mixer tap, the temperature has to be taken from the pipework before the temperature mixing valve (TMV) and that it was not reaching the required 50 degrees.

Members noted that the Clerk had made arrangements for the Parish Council's water hygiene contractor to inspect the tap and that he had recommended that some remedial work be undertaken.

The Clerk reported that advice had been sought from the Parish Council's water hygiene contractor and that confirmation had been received that although the

temperature was not within scope, the disabled toilet could remain open and in use (including the wash basin).

The Clerk reported that she was currently awaiting a quotation for the remedial work.

RESOLVED: That,

(1) the Clerk's report be noted;

(2) the Clerk, in consultation with the Vice-Chairman of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee, be authorised to accept the quotation once received, provided that it is considered satisfactory and,

(3) the advice received from the Parish Council's water hygiene contractor, be noted.

(ii) Members noted that following the water testing carried out by Brodex in May, Legionella had not been detected and the TACC, Coliforms and Escherichia Coli test results had all been within scope.

RESOLVED: That,

the results of the water testing carried out by Brodex in May, be noted with no further action required.

(b) Showers

Councillor Ramsay commented on the high cost of maintaining the showers at the Pavilion, mainly due to the age of the building and facilities.

The Clerk reported that the cricket club is the only group that requires the showers, but that the club had recently advised that due to the fact that the first XI was promoted last year to a different level within the league, it is now a requirement for changing and showering facilities to be available.

The Clerk reported that the cricket club had suggested the possibility of the club taking ownership of the showers and maintaining/updating them.

The Committee considered that this would not be a viable option.

Councillor Glander commented that the options available were to either stop providing showering facilities, or to review the whole system.

Members agreed that specialist advice should be sought, to be considered at the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That,

the Clerk be requested to seek specialist advice, for a review of the shower system at the Pavilion, to be considered at the next meeting.

Cllr Ramsay left the meeting at 7.20p.m.

8. Football at Manor Field

(a) The representative from Hartley De Sales Football Club confirmed that the club was currently training at Manor Field on Monday evenings 4.30p.m. – 7.30p.m. (3 or 4 teams), Friday evenings 4.30p.m. – 7.40p.m. (3 or 4 teams) and Saturday mornings 9a.m. – 10a.m.

The Clerk reported that there had been a number of complaints from regular hirers of the pavilion, regarding parking, inasmuch as there was frequently no parking available near to the pavilion entrance during training times.

The Committee asked the representative from Hartley De Sales Football Club to ensure that spectators are asked to park away from the pavilion entrance to allow hirers easier access.

The representative from Hartley De Sales Football Club reported that managers were having difficulty opening the bollard and that he had requested new keys.

The Clerk reported that the cost of 2 no keys would be £30 inc. VAT.

The representative from Hartley De Sales Football Club agreed to the cost and requested that 2 keys be ordered.

The Committee asked that the portable goals currently located on the northern edge of Manor Field, be moved to an alternative location the western edge of the field.

RESOLVED: That,

(1) the report from the representative of Hartley De Sales Football Club's report be noted;

(2) the Clerk be requested to make arrangements for 2 no bollard keys to be ordered at a cost of £30 inc VAT and that the total cost be met by Hartley De Sales Football Club and,

(3) Hartley De Sales be requested to make arrangements for the portable goals currently being stored on the northern boundary of Manor Field, to be moved to the western boundary of the field.

The representative from New Ash Green Football Club confirmed that the club would require 1 no 9 v 9 pitch and 1 no 11 v 11 pitch for the 2025/26 season.

The representative confirmed that in order to reduce the annual fee charged by the Council, the club would be prepared to set out their own pitches and mark them out throughout the season.

The Committee agreed to keep this in mind when the fees were considered later in the year.

The representative from New Ash Green Football Club asked whether it would be possible for the club to use Manor Field for training throughout the summer months.

Members agreed that they had no objection to the club using the field for training, provided that the training days did not clash with Hartley De Sales use of the field.

The representative agreed that they would liaise with Hartley De Sales.

The representative asked whether it would be possible for the ladies team to also train at Manor Field and Members confirmed that they would have no objection to this.

RESOLVED: That,

(1) the report from the representative of New Ash Green Football Club be noted and,

(2) the request for the New Ash Green Football Club to use Manor Field for training, be granted, provided that the training days don't clash with those of Hartley De Sales.

The representative from Hartley De Sales Football Club left the meeting at 7.37p.m.

The representative from the New Ash Green Football Club left the meeting at 7.40p.m. RESOLVED: That,

pursuant to Standing Order 10 (a) (ix), the order of business be altered so that agenda item 14. Allotments, be brought forward.

9. Allotments

(a) The Committee had been requested to consider the notes of the meeting held with the allotment holders on 14th May 2025.

At the Chairman's invitation, the member of the public was permitted to speak.

At the meeting with the allotment holders, the issue of an oversized fruit cage on plot 3 had been raised and it was agreed that the matter be referred to the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee.

The allotment tenant commented on the fact that they had reduced the size of the fruit cage, as previously requested by the Committee, but that it still exceeded the permitted size.

The allotment tenant asked whether it would be possible to retain the fruit cage on the plot.

The Committee noted that the Allotment Tenancy Agreement states the permitted dimensions of poly tunnels and mobile covered tunnels, but that larger structures may be permitted with the written consent of the Council.

Members agreed that as the original size of the fruit cage had been reduced and that it was only marginally oversized, that the tenant should be permitted to retain the fruit cage with its current dimensions on the plot.

RECOMMENDED: That,

in accordance with the conditions contained within the Allotment Tenancy Agreement, permission be granted for the tenant of plot 3 to retain the fruit cage currently in situ and that the existing dimensions be approved by the Council.

The Chairman reported that a number of action points had come out of the meeting and the Clerk confirmed that these were in hand.

RESOLVED: That,

the notes of the meeting held with the allotment holders on 14th May 2025, be received and noted.

(b) The Committee considered a request from the tenant of plot 4, to erect a fruit cage on their plot, measuring 2.5m x 2.5m x 2m high, made of 2 x 2 timber, including a black fruit net.

RECOMMENDED: That,

in accordance with the conditions contained within the Allotment Tenancy Agreement, permission be granted for the tenant of plot 4 to erect a fruit cage on their plot, measuring 2.5m x 2.5m x 2m high, made of 2 x 2 timber including a black fruit net.

(c) The Committee considered the allotment charges for the period 1st October 2026 to 30th September 2027.

RECOMMENDED: That,

the allotment charges for the period 1st October 2026 to 30th September 2027, be increased by 5%.

10. Cricket at Manor Field

(a) The Clerk reported that the Cricket Club had sent an email regarding the fees for the 2025 season.

The club emailed to say that given the continuing issues with the water services, it would be disappointed if there is any increase in fees.

The Committee agreed that although the showers have not been available this season, the club still has use of the rest of the Pavilion, including the changing rooms.

Members noted that the Cricket Club had also suggested that the club could take ownership of the showers and maintain/update them.

The Committee was reminded that earlier in the meeting, it had been agreed that the whole shower system should be reviewed and in view of this, Members agreed to consider the Cricket Club's proposal following the review.

RESOLVED: That,

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

(2) consideration of the Cricket Club's proposal to take ownership of the showers and maintain/update them, be deferred until after the review of the shower system has taken place.

(b) The Committee considered the fees to be charged for the use of the ground and the Pavilion during the 2025 season, starting on 26th April 2025 and finishing on 6th September 2025.

Members noted that last year, it had been agreed that the fees to be charged be increased by 5%, to £1,392, for the use of the ground and the Pavilion for the 2024 season.

The Committee was reminded that the Cricket Club had asked whether, in view of the ongoing issues with the water services, the fees could remain the same as for the 2024 season.

Members agreed that although there had been issues with the showers, the Club still had the use of the field and Pavilion, including the changing rooms.

It was suggested that the fees for 2025 be increased by 5%, but as a gesture of good will, a 5% discount be applied, making the total fee payable for the 2025 season, £1,392.00.

RECOMMENDED: That,

(1) the fees to be charged to the New Ash Green and Hartley Cricket Club be increased by 5%, to £1,461.60 for the use of the ground and the Pavilion for the 2025 season and,

(2) a goodwill discount of 5% be applied to the fees for the 2025 season, reducing the total fee payable to £1,392.00.

11. Cricket at Longfield Hill

There was no report from Meopham Cricket Club.

12. 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 21st May 2025.

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 21st May 2025, be received and noted.

13. Trees

(a) The Committee considered emails dated 4th March 2025 and 6th April 2025, received from 2 residents of Caxton Close, requesting that trees located in Gorse Wood, overhanging the rear gardens of the properties, be cut back.

The Clerk reported that she had made arrangements for tree surgeons to inspect the trees at both properties and that in relation to the email dated 6th April 2025, the tree surgeon had advised that there are two fairly small Ash trees growing from the woodland which are overhanging the fence by a reasonable amount. The trees are not fine specimens and are growing at a bit of an angle.

The Clerk reported that the tree surgeon had not mentioned there being a health and safety issue and suggested that she contact them to obtain confirmation of this.

RESOLVED: That,

(1) the Clerk's report be noted;

(2) the Clerk be requested to contact the tree surgeon to ask whether the two Ash trees pose a health and safety risk and if so, the quotation received for their removal, be accepted and,

(3) should the tree surgeon confirm that there is no health and safety risk, the resident be advised that the Parish Council has no objection to them making arrangements for the overhanging branches to be cut

back to the boundary at their own cost.

The Clerk reported that with regard to the email dated 4th March 2025, she had made arrangements for a tree surgeon to inspect the trees and that they had advised that there were no health and safety issues.

RESOLVED: That,

the resident be advised that the Parish Council has no objection to them making arrangements for the overhanging branches to be cut back to the boundary at their own cost.

(b) The Committee considered an email dated 30th March 2025, received from a resident, asking whether the Council has a planting schedule.

Members noted that resident had pointed out the lack of gorse in Gorse Way and the lack of Cherry trees at the Cherry Trees shops.

The Committee noted that these areas are not areas owned and maintained by the Parish Council.

RESOLVED: That,

the Clerk be requested to contact the resident to advise that the Parish Council is not able to implement a planting scheme in areas which it does not own and to suggest that they contact Kent Highway Services to ask if they have such a scheme.

14. Pavilion

(c) 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 5th June 2024, it was agreed that the hourly charge for the hire of the Pavilion be increased by £1 per hour.

The current hire charges are as follows:

- An hourly charge of £12 for the weekday hire of the Pavilion, discounted to £10 for regular hirers
- An hourly charge of £14 for the hire of the Pavilion at the weekend. This excludes regular hirers whose hourly charge is £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 be increased by £1 per hour, from £12 per hour to £13 per hour during the week and from £14 per hour to £15 per hour at the weekend (to exclude regular hirers whose hourly charge will increase from £10 per hour to £11 per hour, both during the week and at the weekend), effective from 1st July 2025;

(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.

(d) Boilers

The Clerk reported that during the recent major service of the boilers at the Pavilion, it was noted that there was a faulty expansion vessel in the combi boiler in the kitchen.

The Committee had been requested to confirm the Clerk's actions in arranging for the expansion vessel to be replaced at a cost of £283.00 + VAT.

RESOLVED: That,

the Clerk's actions in arranging for the expansion vessel to be replaced at a cost of £283.00 + VAT. be confirmed.

15. Playgrounds

(a) Operational Inspection Report

The Committee considered the Operational Inspection Report dated 25th April 2025, received from the Parish Council's Playground Inspectors.

Members noted that Chantry Avenue recreation ground and Longfield Hill recreation ground had been classified as a low risk 10 and that Woodland Avenue recreation ground had been classified as a medium risk 15.

The Committee considered the list of items highlighted as requiring attention, noting that all items had been classified as either "low" or "medium" risk.

The report advised that low risk items may continue in use. Action may be required, but that monitoring should be undertaken. The necessary action will be indicated on the report where appropriate.

The Committee agreed that as the next inspection would take place within 3 months' time, this would be sufficient monitoring and that any action noted in the report would also be monitored at the next inspection.

The Clerk reminded members that the Council's Routine Maintenance Contractor inspected the Council's playgrounds on a weekly basis and members noted that he had recently completed a playground inspection training course.

Medium risk items may continue in use. Action required as indicated on the report, will be necessary within 3-6 months, as finance allows.

The Committee agreed that no action should be taken at the current time with regard to the low risk items detailed in the Inspection Report dated 26th April 2025.

Members considered the following medium risk items detailed in the Inspection Report:

Woodland Avenue

- Unfenced kick wall (metal) – a patch of safety surface is either worn or damaged – cut out worn/damaged safety surface, prepare base and lay new artificial grass
- Picnic table (recycled plastic) – the item is loose in the ground – re-secure item in the ground
- Basket Swing – cut out worn safety surface, prepare base and lay new safety surface.

The Clerk reported that all of the above medium risk items had been repaired/rectified.

RESOLVED: That,

(1) the Clerk's report be noted;

(2) the Clerk's actions, in consultation with the Chairman of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee in making arrangements for all of the medium risk items to be repaired/rectified, at a total cost of £822.45 + VAT, be confirmed and approved and,

(3) no further action be taken with regard to the list of items classified as a "low" risk at Chantry Avenue recreation ground, Longfield Hill recreation ground and Woodland Avenue recreation ground.

At the meeting of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee held on 5th February 2025, it was recommended that a quotation be accepted for the sum of £206.30 + VAT, to cut out the worn/damaged safety surface, prepare base and lay new artificial grass at the unfenced kick wall at Woodland Avenue recreation ground and that the total cost of the work be met from CIL funds.

Subsequently, the safety surface was damaged further and the repair cost increased to £327.80 + VAT.

RECOMMENDED: That,

the revised cost of £327.80 + VAT, to cut out the worn/damaged safety surface, prepare base and lay new artificial grass at the unfenced kick wall at Woodland venue recreation ground, be met from CIL funds.

(b) The Committee considered a quotation for the painting of the newly repaired fence at Longfield Hill recreation ground.

RESOLVED: That,

the quotation received from Graham's Gardens for the sum of £136.40, to paint the newly repaired fence at Longfield Hill recreation ground with Cuprinol black paint, be accepted.

16. Manor Field

The Committee considered arrangements for the use of the car park, should there be an issue with the bollard.

The Clerk reported that an additional inspection item had been added to the routine maintenance contract as follows:

"Inspect the retractable bollard at the entrance to Manor Feld to ensure that it is operating correctly and that the flap sits flush to the ground when the bollard is lowered. Inform the Council immediately if any damage is present or if the flap does not close flush with the ground".

After some discussion, Members agreed that in view of the age of the bollard, a quotation should be obtained for the existing bollard to be replaced with an alternative model.

In the meantime, should an issue arise, the Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee, be authorised to make a decision as to whether the car park should be closed to the public.

RESOLVED: That,

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

(2) in the event of an issue being reported with the bollard, the Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee, be authorised to make a decision as to whether the car park should be closed to the public.

17. Routine Maintenance Contract

The Clerk reported that despite placing advertisements on the Parish Council's noticeboards, website and newsletter, only one quotation had been received.

The Committee considered the quotation received for the Routine Maintenance Contract 2025/26.

RECOMMENDED: That,

the Routine Maintenance Contract for 2025/26, be awarded to Mr G Pike of Graham's Gardens.

18. Risk Assessments

The Committee considered the Council's current risk assessments, relating to the Parish Council's amenities & open spaces, as reviewed by the Clerk and Mr L Vesey, Health & Safety Advisor, NEBOSH/IOSHH on 18th February 2019.

The Clerk reported that the inspection of the retractable bollard at Manor Field had been added to the risk assessment relating to the Manor Field Car Park.

Members considered that the risk assessments as reviewed by the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee at its meeting held on 5th June 2024 and subsequently approved by the Council, including the above addition in relation to the bollard at Manor Field Car park were satisfactory.

RECOMMENDED: That, the risk assessments relating to the Parish Council's amenities and open spaces, as reviewed by the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee on 5th June 2024, including the addition relating to the retractable bollard at Manor Field car park, be confirmed and approved,

19. Hartley Wood

The Committee considered an email dated 3rd April 2025, regarding the use of motorcycles, scooters and off road bikes in Hartley Wood and suggesting that the Parish Council seek permission from Network Rail, to position CCTV cameras and erect the necessary signage on their land. RECOMMENDED: That, the Clerk be requested to contact Network Rail, to seek permission to position CCTV cameras and erect the necessary signage on their land.

20. Nitrate Vulnerable Zones

The Committee considered a notice dated 12th May 2025, received from DEFRA, as it appears that the Parish Council owns or occupies one or more 'relevant holding(s)'

that, as of 12th February 2025, falls wholly or partly within an area the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has designated as a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) for 2025-2028.

Members noted that a 'relevant holding' is defined under Regulation 5(5) of the Nitrate Pollution Prevention Regulations 2015 ('the Regulations') as any land and associated buildings which are used for growing crops in soil or rearing livestock for agricultural purposes, located within a designated NVZ.

The Committee agreed that it was unclear from the gov.uk website, which areas of the Council's land the notice applies to, but that it appears to refer to parts of Hartley Wood, and land in the north of the parish, including the allotment site at Woodland Avenue, Rectory Meadow, Gorse Wood and Longfield Hill.

Members considered that the designation was unlikely to have any impact on the work undertaken by Hartley Parish Council, as its practices do not involve the use of nitrates. In addition, Members questioned why these areas had been designated as 'relevant holdings' as the land is not used for the purposes specified.

The Clerk reported that she had contacted DEFRA to obtain clarification, but that a response was still awaited.

RECOMMENDED: That,

(1) the notice dated 12th May 2025, received from DEFRA, be noted and no further action taken at the current time and,

(2) the matter be reviewed once a response to the Clerk's enquiry has been received from DEFRA.

21. Date of next meeting

To be arranged.

The meeting closed at 9.07p.m.

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

Chairman of the Amenities and Open Spaces Committee

