

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
AMENITIES AND OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE  
HELD REMOTELY USING “ZOOM”  
ON WEDNESDAY 17<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2021 AT 7.00 P.M.**

**Present:**

Cllr Larry Abraham  
Cllr Sheila Bennett  
Cllr Lesley Driscoll  
Cllr David Graeme – (*Chairman*)  
Cllr Fiona Hughes  
Cllr Anne Oxtoby  
Cllr Vince Sewell

**In Attendance:**

Mrs H Boden – (*Clerk*)  
Matthew Bushe – *New Ash Green & Hartley CC*  
2 Members of the public

**1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies had been received from Cllr Matt Mohr and Cllr Mally Malham.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Oxtoby declared an interest in minute item, 11. Trees (a) Gorse Wood (iii), as the resident concerned, is a neighbour.

**3. Minutes of previous meetings**

RESOLVED: That,

the minutes of the meeting of the Amenities and Open Spaces Committee held on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2020, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**4. Football at Manor Field**

(a) There was no report from Hartley De Sales FC.

(b) The Committee had been requested to consider details of a proposed permanent sign to be erected at the entrance to Manor Field, if available.

The Clerk reported that details of the sign had not yet been received.

(c) At the meeting of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee held on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2020, the Committee considered the fees to be charged to the Hartley De Sales Football Club for the use of the football pitches at Manor Field for the 2020/21 season.

It was agreed that in view of the current situation, the fees should not be increased and it was recommended that the fees charged to Hartley De Sales Football Club for the 2020/21 season, remain at £1,900.00, to be pro rated, should the start of the season be delayed.

Members noted that due to Government restrictions, use of the pitches had been limited.

RESOLVED: That,  
a decision on the pro rated fees to be charged to Hartley De Sales FC for the 2020/1 season, be deferred until the end of the season.

## **5. Cricket at Manor Field**

Matt Bushe reported that the Club was anticipating a full season, commencing on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2021, subject to Government guidelines.

Matt Bushe reported that the pre season rolling and cutting was in the process of being carried out and that Government restrictions permitting, the Club would require the use of the toilet facilities in the Pavilion as per last season

Matt Bushe reported that the storage container had been left unlocked on one occasion and asked the Clerk whether the person/s responsible had been identified.

The Clerk reported that it was not known who had left the container unlocked, but that an email had been sent to all users, asking them to ensure that the container was secured after use.

Matt Bushe reported that he had been unable to unlock the bollard at the entrance to Manor Field, the previous weekend and asked whether the lock had been changed.

The Clerk reported that Mr Munday had experienced difficulty with the lock last week, as it had been frozen, but that the problem should now be resolved.

*Matt Bushe left the meeting at 7.13p.m*

Pursuant to Standing Order 3 (e), the Chairman invited members 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.

Two members of the public expressed an interest under agenda items 11 (a) (iii), Trees, Gorse Wood and agenda item 16, Litter Bins.

RESOLVED: That,  
Pursuant to Standing Order 10 (a) (ix), the order of business be altered so that agenda item 16, Litter Bins, be brought forward.

## **6. Litter Bins**

The Committee considered an email dated 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021, received from a resident, requesting additional litter bins in Porchester Close and Woodland Avenue.

At the Chairman's invitation, the resident was given an opportunity to express their views.

The resident informed Members that she was a local campaigner and had received requests from local residents for additional bins to be installed to dispose of the nitrous oxide canisters that were constantly being discarded in these areas.

The resident reported that there did not appear to be any litter bins in the vicinity in which to dispose of them.

The Committee agreed that this was an issue in many areas and one that both the Police and Community Warden were aware of.

The resident was advised that the District Council was responsible for the installation and emptying of litter bins and it was suggested that they be contacted and asked to provide a list of the existing bins.

RESOLVED: That,

- (1) the Clerk be requested to contact Sevenoaks District Council to ask them to provide a list of the existing bins located in Hartley and once received, it be forwarded to the resident and,
- (2) the Clerk be requested to contact the Lead Youth Worker for West Kent Housing Association and the Community Safety Unit at the District Council, to advise them of the ongoing issue.

RESOLVED: That,

Pursuant to Standing Order 10 (a) (ix), the order of business be altered so that agenda item 11.(a) (iii), Trees, Gorse Wood, be brought forward.

## **7. Trees**

### Gorse Wood

The Committee had been requested to consider an email dated 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021, received from a resident, requesting that consideration be given to designating the whole of Gorse Wood as Ancient Woodland.

At the Chairman's invitation, the resident was given an opportunity to express their views.

The resident expressed concern over the number of trees that had been removed in the area surrounding their property within the last year.

The resident reported that upon reviewing Sevenoaks District Council's interactive map, it had been noted that the area of woodland at the rear of their neighbour's property, up to Woodland Avenue recreation ground, was designated as Ancient Woodland, but that the small section to the rear of their property had not been so designated.

The Chairman reassured the resident that it was the Parish Council's aim to retain as many trees as possible and that trees were only removed on health and safety grounds i.e. if they were dangerous or dead.

Cllr Sewell explained that the anomaly with part of the woodland being designated as Ancient Woodland and part not, could be as a result of boundary changes.

RESOLVED: That,

- (1) the Clerk be requested to contact the Tree Officer at Sevenoaks District Council, to seek clarification as to the part designation of the wood as Ancient Woodland;
- (2) the Clerk be requested to make enquiries with the Tree Officer as to the benefits and process of designating woodland as Ancient Woodland, to be considered by the Committee at its next meeting.

## 8. 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 11<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

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 11<sup>th</sup> February 2021, be received and noted.

## 9. Allotments

(a) The Clerk reported that due to the difficulty with obtaining supplies, coupled with the recent bad weather, Mr Munday had not yet had an opportunity to remove the four broken close boarded fence panels and replace them with a 4 ft chestnut paling fence.

The Clerk reported that she had spoken with Mr Munday and he had confirmed that he would carry out the work at the beginning of March.

RESOLVED: That,  
the Clerk's report be noted.

(b) The Clerk reported that the provision of a skip to enable allotment tenants to dispose of unwanted rubbish, would be co-ordinated with Mr Munday carrying out the fence work, as he would need it to dispose of the existing fencing.

RESOLVED: That,  
the Clerk's report be noted.

(c) The Clerk reported that at the meeting of the Finance Committee held on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020, it had been agreed to accept a quotation from NPC Tree Surgery, to remove the Cherry trees located on allotment plots 34,35 and 36, which are currently un-rentable due to the trees.

The Clerk reported that due to the recent bad weather, the work had not yet commenced, but that it was due to be carried out at the beginning of March.

Members noted that the work would have to be carried out before or after the skip was put in place/removed, as the contractor had advised that with the skip in situ, it would be difficult to get the necessary machinery on to the site.

RESOLVED: That,  
the Clerk's report be noted.

(d) The Committee considered a request from a plot holder, for the Parish Council to trim some of the trees adjacent to their allotment to allow more light on to the plot.

The trees in question are located outside of the allotment boundary fence, but Kent Highway Services have advised that they are "boundary trees" and as such, are not their responsibility.

Members noted that a similar request from the plot holder had been considered by the Committee in July 2019.

At the time, arrangements had been made for a Tree Surgeon to inspect the trees and he had advised that crowning the trees would not reduce the shading issue on the plot.

In view of this and the fact that the trees are not located on Parish Council owned land, no further action was taken.

Members agreed that in view of the previous advice received from the Tree Surgeon and the location of the trees, there was no reason to change the Committee's previous decision.

It was suggested that the plot holder could be offered one of the new plots that would be created by the removal of the Cherry trees, once the work had been completed, due to its less shaded location.

RESOLVED: That,

- (1) the Clerk be requested to contact the allotment plot holder to advise them that no further action would be taken by the Council to reduce the trees and,
- (2) the Clerk be authorised to offer the allotment plot holder one of the new plots created by the removal of the Cherry trees, in exchange for their existing plot.

## **10. Gorse Wood**

### Fencing

(a) At the meeting of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee held on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2020, Members noted that the quotation received from Meopham Fencing, to remove the existing fencing and to install approximately 20m of 1.2m high twin wire mesh ppc green and 1 mobility gate at the entrance to Gorse Wood, leading from the car park at the rear of Caxton Close, had been accepted,

It was noted that the Clerk had approached West Kent Housing Association (WKHA), to ask whether they would be in a position to contribute towards the cost, but that a response had not been received in time for the meeting.

The Clerk reported that confirmation had now been received from West Kent Housing, that they will contribute £272.00 towards the cost.

RESOLVED: That,

- (1) the Clerk's report be noted and,
- (2) the Clerk be requested to send a letter of thanks to West Kent Housing Association, for their contribution.

(b) At the meeting of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee held on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2020, the Clerk reported that she had contacted the Planning Department at Sevenoaks District Council, to confirm that planning permission for the works was not required. A response had not been received in time for the meeting.

The Committee noted a letter dated 9<sup>th</sup> December 2020, received from the Development Manager at the District Council, confirming that, as the fencing would not exceed 2m in height and would not be adjacent to a public highway, it is unlikely that planning permission would be required.

Members noted that should formal confirmation of this be required, an application for a lawful development certificate would need to be submitted.

RECOMMENDED: That,  
the letter dated 9<sup>th</sup> December 2020, received from the Development Manager at the District Council be noted, with no further action to be taken.

(c) Work on the installation of the new fencing and gate commenced on 26<sup>th</sup> January. The contractor arrived on site the following day, to discover that the gate had been stolen and the remaining gate hoop had been damaged.

The Clerk made arrangements with the contractor, for the gate hoop to be removed and for the installation of the fence to be postponed, to allow the Council to make a decision as to whether it wishes for the works to be completed.

At the meeting of the Parish Council held on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2021, it was agreed that arrangements be made for the works to resume once the new mobile CCTV camera has been installed.

It was also agreed that should the cost of replacing the stolen gate be more than £250, (being the insurance policy excess), consideration should be given to submitting a claim through the Parish Councils insurance policy.

The Clerk reported that the contractor has advised that the cost of the replacement gate section will be £220.00 + VAT inc delivery. Therefore it will not be possible to submit a claim to the Parish Council's insurers.

RESOLVED: That,  
the Clerk's report be noted.

The Clerk reported that the total cost of the works, including the additional labour and replacement gate section would increase by £600, to £2,780 + VAT.

RECOMMENDED, That,  
the total cost of the additional labour and replacement gate section, be met from the CIL A receipts received.

### Flytipping

The Clerk reported that there is a substantial amount of fly tipping at the entrance to Gorse Wood, in the car park at the rear of Caxton Close, as well as further in to the woods.

The Clerk reported that she had contacted West Kent Housing Association (WKHA), the owners of the car park, to ask that arrangements be made for the fly tipping to be cleared.

The Clerk had also asked whether, at the same time, the contractor could clear the fly tipping on Parish Council owned land in the woods, at the expense of the Council.

Members noted that WKHA had responded that the Parish Council would need to approach the contractor direct to obtain a quotation

The Clerk reported that the contractor had requested that photographs of the extent of the fly tipping be sent, to them, to enable them to provide a quotation.

The Committee was reminded that Sevenoaks District Council had cleared the last occurrence of fly tipping.

RECOMMENDED: That,

- (1) quotations be sought from WKHA's contractor and Sevenoaks District Council to clear the fly tipping in Gorse Wood,
- (2) the Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee, be authorised to accept the most suitable quotation and,
- (3) the total cost of the works be met from the Parish Council's general reserves.

## 11. Pavilion

(a) The Committee had been requested to consider any action that may be required due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

RESOLVED: That,

no further action is required at the current time.

(b) Members noted that an invoice had been received from Castle Water relating to the use of the water at the Pavilion for the period 1<sup>st</sup> August 2020 – 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021, amounting to £537.77.

The amount paid for the water supply at the Pavilion in 2018/19 was £189.94 and in 2019/20 it was £78.39.

It is Castle Water's policy to charge for 2 months in arrears and 4 months in advance.

The Clerk contacted Castle Water to ask that the bill be revised, using a confirmed meter reading and was advised that the Council would need to read the meter and submit a confirmed reading in place of the estimated reading used on the bill. Details and photographs of the location of the meter were provided, but despite 7 different people searching for the meter, it has not been possible to locate it.

The Clerk was advised that the meter was only read twice a year and that a fee of £35 would be payable if the Council required an engineer to read the meter.

The Clerk reported that she had contacted the Castle Water Complaints Team and had received a response stating that the Parish Council's concerns have now been passed onto Castle Water's Complaints Team to investigate.

In the meantime, they have requested a visit from their team to confirm the meter location details and provide a new meter read. The account has been rebilled as it does appear that the system has overestimated the usage billed.

Following the re-bill, an amount of £372.55 has been credited to the Council's bank account.

RESOLVED: That,

the Clerk's report be noted.

## 12. Manor Field

(a) Car Park Resurfacing

At the meeting of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee held on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2020, the Committee noted that due to reasons beyond his control, the Architect appointed to prepare the plans for the proposed resurfacing of the car park at Manor Field, had not yet been able to complete the work.

It was agreed that alternative quotations be sought.

The Clerk reported that she was still awaiting one of the quotations which was due to be received after 22<sup>nd</sup> February.

Cllr Sewell suggested another contractor that could be approached for a quotation and it was agreed that the Clerk should be requested to contact them

RESOLVED: That,

(1) the Clerk be requested to seek a quotation from the additional contractor suggested and,

(2) the matter be deferred until the next meeting.

Councillor Oxtoby reported that the area in the corner, at the rear of the car park, adjacent to the path leading to the Manor Field Burial Ground had become very waterlogged

It was agreed that arrangements be made for the supply and delivery of a bag of type 1 road stone, to be spread in that area.

RESOLVED: That,

the Clerk be requested to make arrangements for a bag of type 1 road stone to be delivered to Manor Field, to be spread where required.

#### (b) Hire Request

At the meeting of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee held on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2020, the Committee considered a request received from the Rude Mechanical Theatre, for the use of Manor Field and the Pavilion, on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> May 2021, for an outdoor theatre production.

It was agreed that the hire be approved, subject to any Government COVID-19 restrictions that may be in force at the time and that the Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee be authorised to agree the fee to be charged to the Theatre Company, once the final arrangements have been discussed, to be in the region of £150 - £200.

An email was subsequently received from the Theatre Company, requesting that the fee be reduced to a maximum of £100.

This request was considered at the meeting of the Parish Council held on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021 and it was agreed that fee charged to the Theatre Company would be set at £100.

In an email dated 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021, the Theatre Company advised that due to the current pandemic, it is likely that the date would have to be changed.

The Committee had been requested to consider any further updates.

The Clerk reported that no further updates had been received.

### 13. Trees

#### (a) Gorse Wood

(i) At the meeting of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee held on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2020, the Committee noted that concern had been expressed by the resident of a property located adjacent to Gorse Wood, regarding overhanging branches from Gorse Wood, into their property.

The Committee noted that the Clerk had made arrangements for a tree surgeon to visit the site to inspect the trees.

Members noted that the Tree Surgeon had recommended the removal of an Ash tree suffering from Ash Dieback and the cutting back of dead wood from an Oak tree overhanging the resident's drive.

The Committee considered two quotations for the above work.

RESOLVED: That,

the quotation received from NPC Tree Surgery, for the sum of £550.00 + VAT, to dismantle the Ash tree to ground level and to remove dead wood from the Oak tree, remove all waste and tidy site, be accepted.

(ii) Following concerns expressed by the resident of a property located adjacent to Gorse Wood regarding an Ash Tree that appeared to be displaying signs of Ash Die Back Disease, the Clerk made arrangements for a tree surgeon to visit the site.

The Committee considered the Tree Surgeon's report suggesting that a major limb growing over the property boundary, could be cut back to the fence line to mitigate the risk of damage to the property should failure arise.

Members agreed that as the tree does not pose a health and safety risk, no further action should be taken by the Council.

The Committee agreed that it would have no objection to the property owner making arrangements for any overhanging branches to be cut back to the boundary at their own expense.

The Committee was reminded that the Quantified Tree Risk Assessment was due to be undertaken and as such, any trees requiring attention would be highlighted in the report.

RESOLVED: That,

(1) the Tree Surgeon's report be noted and,

(2) the Clerk be requested to contact the resident to advise that the Council would have no objection to them making arrangements for any overhanging branches to be cut back to the boundary at their own expense, but that no further action would be taken by the Council at the present time.

#### (b) Quantified Tree Risk Assessment

The Clerk reported that the Quantified Tree Risk Assessment is due to be carried out imminently.

RESOLVED: That,

the Clerk's report be noted.

#### **14. Routine Maintenance Contract**

At the meeting of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee held on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2020, the Committee considered a report on the appointment of a contractor to undertake duties set out in the Routine Maintenance Contract for the period 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022.

It was agreed that a notice should be included in the Parish Council's newsletter, inviting anyone interested in providing a quotation for the contract to contact the Council.

The Clerk reported that a notice had also been placed on the Parish Council's noticeboards, but that there had only been one expression of interest.

The Committee examined the list of Contractors to be invited to submit quotations.

RESOLVED: That,

quotations be invited for the Routine Maintenance Contract for the period 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021 – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022, from the list of Contractors considered by the Committee.

#### **15. Cherry Trees Shops**

The Clerk reported that there was no update on the works to repair the paving and re-instate the bollards outside the shops at Cherry Trees.

RESOLVED: That,

the Clerk be requested to pursue the matter with the Landlords and Gareth Johnson MP.

#### **16. Playgrounds**

(a) The Committee considered a letter received from Play England, regarding opening children's playgrounds during the current lockdown.

RESOLVED: That,

the letter received from Play England, regarding opening children's playgrounds during the current lockdown, be noted.

(b) The Committee considered COVID-19 Government Guidance for managing playgrounds and outdoor gyms, updated 28<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

RESOLVED: That,

the COVID-19 Government Guidance for managing playgrounds and outdoor gyms, updated 28<sup>th</sup> January 2021, be noted.

#### **17. Metal Detecting**

The Committee considered a request from a resident to permit them to use a metal detector in the woods owned by the Parish Council and on Rectory Meadow.

RESOLVED: That,

the request from a resident to permit them to use a metal detector in the woods owned by the Parish Council and on Rectory Meadow, be declined.

### **18. Mobile CCTV Camera**

The Clerk reported that at the meeting of the Parish Council held on 8<sup>th</sup> February, the purchase of a mobile CCTV camera had been approved.

The Committee had been requested to consider a draft policy statement and CCTV Policy.

The Clerk reported that in view of concerns expressed by several Councillors regarding the suitability of the camera due to the lack of street lighting in the parish, the order had not yet been placed.

Members noted that the Clerk had made enquiries regarding a solar powered option, but that no response had been received to date.

- RESOLVED: That,
- (1) the Clerk' s report be noted and,
  - (2) consideration of the draft policy statement and CCTV Policy be deferred until the next meeting.

The Clerk reported that Cllr Perry Cole was currently researching alternative cameras that may be more suited to the Council's requirements.

- RECOMMENDED: That,
- in view of concerns regarding the suitability of the camera due to the lack of street lighting in the parish, the matter be referred back to the full Council, for futher consideration at its next meeting.

### **19. Date of next meeting**

To be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 8.30p.m.

Signed:..... Date:.....  
Chairman of the Amenities and Open Spaces Committee

