



MINUTES

Meeting: ENVIRONMENTAL
COMMITTEE

Date: 17th June 2015

Time: 10.30 am

Venue: NORTH WEALD LIBRARY, HIGH ROAD, NORTH WEALD

PRESENT:

Councillors (7) G Mulliner (Chairman), C Hawkins, B Eldridge, B Bartram, A Buckley,
T Blanks, R Spearman*

Also in Attendance (2)

Susan De Luca, Clerk to the Council

Adriana Jones, Principal Finance and Administrative Officer

*For part of meeting

Members of the Public (1) - Doreen Lodge, NW Preservation Society

E15.01 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Cllr Eldridge **PROPOSED**, and Cllr Hawkins **SECONDED** Cllr Mulliner as Chairman for the Environmental Committee for 2015/2016. There being no other nominations, Cllr Mulliner was duly elected.

E15.02 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

Cllr Hawkins **PROPOSED**, and Cllr Buckley **SECONDED** Cllr Eldridge as Vice-Chairman for this Committee. There being no other nominations, Cllr Eldridge was duly elected.

E15.03 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (1)

NOTED Apologies received from Cllr Mrs Godwin-brown

E15.04 OTHER ABSENCES (0)

E15.05 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

NOTED Cllr Spearman declared a Discloseable Pecuniary interest in agenda item 10 by virtue of supplying the bulbs to the Parish Council in previous years.

E15.06 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18th March 2015 were **CONFIRMED** and signed as a true record.

E15.07 CUTTING OF OPEN AREAS IN THE PARISH

The Clerk stated that this item was placed on the agenda following a recent query from Doreen Lodge, the Parish Council's Footpath representative. There were two issues, one of which was being dealt with by way of a Highways enquiry, the other concerns the open land in the Parish. Doreen was present, and the Chairman invited her to address the Committee. Doreen stated that the Weald Common area is effectively split into two areas - the public areas owned by the Parish Council and the nature reserve owned by EFDC. During her recent walks in the area, she noticed that

the nature reserve area looked beautiful with many naturally occurring wild flowers growing, however the remainder of Weald Common had been cut, destroying many of the natural wild flowers growing in the area. Doreen stated that she had spoken to the Clerk, who had explained that many of the farmers in the area have to work to their own timetables due to harvest, and she understood this, however the guidance is that such wild flowers / areas should not be cut until late July / early August. The Clerk explained that, last year, there was a delay in cutting the grass and the farmer who cuts it on the Parish Council's behalf was contacted. As such, it may be that the farmer had cut it early this year to ensure it was cut.

Doreen also mentioned there was an area near Tempest Mead / Dukes Close that has also been completely cut down destroying the local wild flowers, however she had been unable to ascertain who owns the land and as such who cuts it. Doreen suggested that it may be good for a list to be created of all the open areas in the Parish and who is responsible / who cuts them. This way, each of them could perhaps be contacted in May each year and asked to be respectful of the wild flowers when they cut the grass, or to agree when areas should be cut. The Clerk stated that District Council completed an Open Spaces Audit of North Weald Bassett some time ago, and that may be a good starting point, however she could not agree the accuracy of the details contained within the report. Doreen confirmed she would be happy to see what she could do in terms of creating this list if the Committee were happy for her to do so. The Committee **AGREED**. It was also **AGREED** that the Clerk would contact the Farmer who cuts Weald Common asking if it would be possible that the area is cut between end of July and beginning of August. Cllr Hawkins stated that the ground has to be solid enough for the farmer to get their tractor onto the land, which may be a factor in when the grass is cut.

E15.08 GREEN OUTSIDE PARADE OF SHOPS, NORTH WEALD

The Clerk stated that both she and Cllr Buckley had been liaising with ECC Cllr Jackson, and Mathew Valentine from ECC Highways. She reminded members that this issue has been going on for nearly two years, starting with ECC, then pushed to the Local Highways Panel, who have now stated that this is not within their remit and it needs to go back to ECC Highways (as the project does not directly affect parking of traffic calming). The Clerk confirmed that Cllr Jackson had agreed he would step in to try and assist and help find a solution, and will be contacting ECC Highways on our behalf. If the Clerk has not heard from Cllr Jackson by the end of next week, she will contact him and ask him to meet with herself and Cllr Buckley.

Cllr Buckley stated that BT has confirmed that the phone box needs to remain, however the Parish Councils grounds maintenance contractor could be asked to ensure this is kept clear and tidy. In terms of the other various poles in the location, they too will have to remain. The Clerk stated that the rubbish bin (ECC owned and managed) would need to be included in a schedule of emptying, and the bench would need to be maintained.

E15.09 PLAY AREAS

The PFO reported that Thornwood Grounds Maintenance complete thorough weekly inspections, which are emailed to the office. The PFO then reviews these to ascertain

if any immediate action is needed. The Annual Inspection of the play area took place on 8th June 2015. The PFO has visited all the play areas to review the items identified in the weekly / annual play area inspections, and has given a copy of her recommendations to the Clerk. The Clerk has authorised certain regular maintenance works to be completed to ensure the continued safe use of these pieces of equipment. There were a number of items that required a decision to be taken by the Environmental Committee, as follows:

Thornwood Play Area - Play Shell / Play Fort

At the latest weekly inspection, Thornwood Grounds Maintenance noticed that the securing pieces are cracked, with sharp metal. The Annual Inspection did not identify any remedial action to be taken place on this item. The PFO visited the play area, and reviewed the piece of equipment, taking photo's which were tabled for members perusal. Whilst the PFO did test and use the piece of equipment during her visit and it seemed structurally sound, she was unable to categorically say that the item was sound as it seemed from the pictures that there may have been some movement. The PFO had contacted the supplier of the equipment (who were now out of business, but taken over by another company) and they had supplied a quote of £395 + VAT to complete an operational inspection and maintenance of the equipment. This cost included a full inspection and 4 hours of preventative maintenance / minor repairs. Councillors **AGREED** that this inspection was needed and authorised the works.

School Green Lane

Cllrs **AGREED** that both sets of antiwrap bars to the flat swings should be replaced, and noted that a quote for £123.50 plus VAT per swing had been received to complete these works. In addition Councillors **AGREED** to the repair of the yellow gate and slam plate at a cost of £31.50 plus VAT. Councillors noted that the tools to complete these repairs are not tools that can be purchased, and need to be sourced directly from the supplier (which the PFO had tried to do without success).

Cllrs **NOTED** that an area of the wetpour underneath the multiplay unit can be lifted and that the PFO had asked the grounds maintenance contractor to back fill this area if possible.

Weald Common Old Play Area

Councillors noted that there is one upright log at the end of the agility trail which has split almost to the middle. The PFO had tested the piece of equipment, and it showed no movement at all and seemed structurally sound, however the PFO had advised the Clerk that repair works / replacement needs to take place. The Clerk had requested this was completed immediately. A quote had been received for the supply and fitting of a new upright at a cost of £381.19 plus VAT. Cllr Hawkins stated that a local supplier would be able to manufacturer three steel rings which could be fixed around the upright, thereby ensuring the item remained sound, and that he would be happy to contact them for a quote. All Councillors **AGREED** with this. Cllr Mulliner stated that he recalled a discussion in which it was suggested that this play area would not be replaced if items failed. The PFO stated that Councillors should consider this as an option, however this entire section of agility trail would need to be removed if remedial works to the upright were not completed.

The PFO stated that many of the wooden logs are showing signs of rot at the bottom, probably caused because of the wet ground and the strimming of the grass causing cuts to form in the logs. The PFO had tested all the logs during her visit, and all were structurally sound, however it was **AGREED** that the grounds maintenance contractor should be asked to pay specific attention to them during his weekly visits and report back any findings.

Cllr Hawkins asked for an update on the creation of a path to the two play areas at Weald Common, to which the PFO stated she had chased the contractor the day prior, and he had stated he hoped to start works the following week. It was noted that the PFO had agreed to meet the contractor on site prior to works commencing.

Cllr Buckley asked what was happening in terms of filling the grass areas at the new Weald Common Play area with Wetpour. The PFO stated that the grass has now grown through in these areas, and there perhaps wasn't a need to fill it with wetpour. Cllr Mulliner stated that you could access all pieces of equipment without touching the grass. It was **AGREED** that this would be put on hold until the winter season arrived, and assess how the play area fared over the winter months.

E15.10 ALOTMENTS

Cllr Mulliner reported that the Allotment Sub-Committee continue to meet weekly to address any concerns. During the last meeting, 5 allotments were identified as being in total disuse. Some of these tenants had not paid their rental for 2015/2016 and as such it had been agreed to terminate their tenancy in accordance with their tenancy agreement. The remaining two would be sent a letter giving reminding them of clause 5.3 which states that *'The Tenant shall have at least 1/4 of the Allotment Garden under cultivation of crops after 3 months and at least 3/4 of the Allotment Garden under cultivation of crops or in use after 12 months and thereafter. The remaining areas should be well cared for, and free from weeds.'*

The PFO confirmed that contact details of the Parish Office and the latest rules and regulations had been erected on the notice board at Hastingwood A allotments as requested.

The Clerk stated that new Chicken group on the Wheelers Farm Gardens allotment was going extremely well.

E15.11 BULB PLANTING

As per the agenda, members were asked to agree:

- A date for the bulb planting - it was **AGREED** this should take place during September/October
- Which groups to invite - Cllrs noted that the office had been informed that the Scouts would not be taking part in the bulb planting this year. The Chairman stated that neither would St Andrews Primary School. This only leaves the two play groups in the village. After discussion, it was **AGREED** that a notice should be

placed in the Village Life magazine asking if anybody would be interested in taking part.

- A Rota - whilst a rota wasn't agreed, members did agree that all members of this committee would be involved in bulb planting.
- A location - Cllr Mulliner suggested outside the Cemetery, however this area is not particularly busy. Cllr Hawkins suggested he would look at the film of the Parish taken by Cllr Bedford some years ago and suggest three locations at which to plant the bulbs.

Cllrs **AGREED** a maximum £200 budget for the purchase of daffodils.

E15.12 NORTH WEALD AIRFIELD COMMUNITY DAY 12TH JULY 2015 - VILLAGE MARQUEE

Members noted that this was an idea originally discussed by Derek Tringham and Arthur Moreton, and was for one large marquee to be used at the community day in which all the North Weald Bassett Parish groups could be situated. In principal, Cllrs felt this was a good idea. Cllr Hawkins stated that to date he had been unable to locate a large marquee, and time was getting short. The Clerk stated that she had received an email from the Airfield Manager asking her to confirm what size gazebo the Parish Council would be having, and that she would need to go back to him within a few days. After much discussion, it was **AGREED** that the Clerk would contact the North Weald Mums to ascertain who they borrowed the large marquee from, and if they would be willing to lend it to the Parish Council. If this was forthcoming, the Clerk would establish from the Airfield Manager which local groups had been booked to attend the event, with a view to possibly accommodating them in the large marquee. Should this not be possible, the Parish Council would use their own small marquee. It was **AGREED** this year's theme should be the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Clerk informed Members that she had been informed by Paul Southgate of EFDC that an application would soon be submitted for CCTV at Weald Common.

Meeting closed: 11.10 am

Signed
Date