



MINUTES

Meeting: ENVIRONMENTAL
COMMITTEE

Date: 21st February 2018

Time: 10.30 am

Venue: NORTH WEALD LIBRARY, HIGH ROAD, NORTH WEALD

PRESENT:

Councillors (6) G Mulliner (Chairman), A Buckley, B Eldridge, Mrs S Jackman MBE,
B Clegg, B Bartram

Also in Attendance (3)

Susan De Luca, Clerk*

Joanna Tyler, Senior Administrative Officer*

Adriana Jones, Principal Financial Officer*

*for part of meeting

Members of the Public (0)

E17.31 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (1)

NOTED apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Mrs Godwin-Brown

E17.32 OTHER ABSENCES (0)

E17.33 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

NOTED there were no declarations of interest.

E17.34 MINUTES

Members **APPROVED** as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 18th October 2017.

E17.35 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

E17.36 PLAY AREAS

The Principal Financial Officer reported that she had been liaising with the Clerk regarding the weekly play area inspections. The Parish Council's contractor carries out the weekly inspections, in addition to routine and operational inspections. There is an agreement in place that the contractor will contact the PFO if anything urgent needs to be carried out. The PFO stated that she had raised a concern on a number of occasions that the reports had not been received. The PFO reminded Members that liability with regard to play area inspections cannot be outsourced and that even if the inspections are carried out independently, the Parish Council still remain liable for any issues. In light of this, the PFO advised that she would be checking the contractor's reports to ensure that there are not any issues. The Clerk stated that she would be raising this matter with the contractor on Friday, 23rd February. The Chairman asked the Clerk if there was an alternative contractor who could be used if it was established that the checks were not being carried out properly. The Clerk stated that she believed that the contractor was carrying out the checks correctly, however, the Parish Council had given him quite a lot of work

recently. The Clerk would be meeting with the contractor to discuss any outstanding work and to remind him that the play area reports are required as it is corporate governance. The Clerk informed Members that the reports needed to be retained by the Parish Council for 40 years. Cllr Buckley asked if it was just a tick box exercise. The PFO stated that the contractor had a form to complete with boxes to tick, however a note of any problems identified at the time of the inspection would also be recorded on the form.

The PFO informed Members that the last annual play area inspection was carried out in October 2017. There were no medium or high risk issues reported, everything was noted as being low risk. The Clerk stated that the annual play area inspection was carried out by ROSPA.

E17.37 ALLOTMENTS

a) Queens Road Allotment Site

Clerk reported that there had been some issues on Queens Road and Wheelers Farm Gardens. The Principal Financial Officer informed Members that an allotment tenant on Queens Road site had contacted her to advise that contractors working on the Queens Road development had dug up an area on the tenant's plot. The PFO stated that the Clerk had previously been advised that there would be no digging on any plots, only on the pathways. The tenant provided pictures of the plot and the PFO contacted EFDC. The Clerk informed Members that on Friday, 16th February, she closed the office half an hour early in order to inspect the Queens Road site with the PFO and was appalled at what had happened. The Clerk likened the pathways to a quagmire. Following the visit, officers at EFDC were emailed accordingly. The Clerk had been unable to contact the site foreman. The EFDC officers visited the site on Monday, 19th February and the Clerk received an email apologising for the state that it had been left in, adding that the site foreman had blamed it on the weather. Cllr Buckley asked if tenants had been notified of the works. The Clerk stated that the contractors had said that they would be putting up a notice board during the works, however the only notice that was found was one on the hoarding behind the contractors hut. Members **NOTED** that the PFO had received notification that contractors would need dig up a plot during the week of 12th March to lay an electric cable.

Wheelers Farm Gardens Allotment Site

The PFO stated that Members of the Allotment Sub Committee may recall a request from the tenant working plot numbers 42 and 43 seeking permission to put a pond on the plots. Members agreed to the request, provided the tenant gave a copy of the relevant public liability insurance certificate to the Parish Office. To date, a copy of the certificate has not been received.

The PFO informed Members that the allotment warden had been advised by the contractors working on the Queens Road development that one of their fences had been taken off site. The warden found the fence on the Wheelers Farm Gardens site on plot numbers 42 and 43. In light of this, Members **AGREED** that the tenant should be contacted and asked to fill in the pond and return the fence to the

contractors forthwith.

Queens Road Allotment Site

(i) The PFO informed Members that she had been advised that the house at the far end backing on to the site had taken down their fencing. The allotment warden had advised that the owners had said they would be reinstating fence.

(ii) As advised at the Parish Council Meeting, the orchard has now been planted.

Lawn Mower – Hastingwood B Site

Members *NOTED* that the lawn mower is currently stored in the allotment warden's shed. Members requested that the PFO contact tenants on Hastingwood A site to ask if anyone would be willing to store it.

Overgrown Plots

The PFO informed Members that she had seen a comment, via social media, from a new allotment plot owner who had been advised that if the plot was overgrown, to put something on the plot and it would be cleared by the Parish Council. The Clerk stated that plots would only be cleared by the Parish Council's contractor if the new plot owner had a disability or if the plot was very overgrown.

b) Annual Allotment Holders Meeting

Members *NOTED* that the Annual Allotment Holders Meeting is to be held on Sunday, 18th March 2018 at the Parish Hall, Weald Hall Lane, Thornwood, 9.30am for 10am start. The date had been confirmed by the Chairman of this Committee.

The Principal Financial Officer asked Members if they had any nominations for the allotment awards, advising that recipients would be announced at the annual meeting. Following discussion, Members of the Allotment Sub Committee, nominated a plot holder from Hastingwood A site.

The Clerk reminded Members that a plaque naming "Charlie's Garden" on Thornwood Common site, would be unveiled at the annual meeting.

c) Increase in Allotment Fees

The Principal Financial Officer informed Members that for the past five years the allotment fees had been increased by around £1.00 each year. The PFO had looked at comparable sites in the district and stated that Members may not necessarily need to increase for 2019/20 as the allotment sites are in profit. Cllr Buckley asked if there were many spare plots, the PFO advised that there were now only a couple. Cllr Bartram asked if there were any leaks in the water supply on any of the sites. The PFO confirmed that no leaks had been reported and that the pipes had been lagged. Following discussion, the Chairman *PROPOSED* that there be no increase in fees for 2019/20, all Members *AGREED*.

b) Allotment Warden – Hastingwood A

Members **AGREED** that the Allotment Sub-Committee would continue to carry out the role of allotment warden for Hastingwood A site for the forthcoming year.

e) **Thornwood Village Open Garden Event – Sunday, 24th June 2018**

Members **NOTED** that the Parish Office had received a request from the Thornwood Common Allotment Warden seeking permission to open the allotment site to visitors to the open garden event to be held in Thornwood on Sunday, 24th June 2018. The Parish Council had given permission for visitors to the event to have use of the Parish Hall car park on that day. Following discussion, Members **AGREED** to support the request, however, asked that the Principal Financial Officer advise the warden that as the allotments are not a licensed premises, the sale or offer of any alcohol for a fee would not be permitted.

f) **Queens Road Allotments – Flooding**

Members **NOTED** that the sum of £290.00 had been received from Thames Water as compensation for the works required following the flooding at Queens Road Allotments.

E17.38 CEMETERY

a) **Increase in Cemetery Fees**

Members discussed, in detail whether to increase the cemetery fees. Copies of neighbouring towns cemetery fees had been attached to the agenda, together with the current cemetery fees sheet. The Clerk informed Members that there were nine plots left in the Hedges Section and therefore they may wish to consider offering these plots at a reduced rate in order for this section to be closed. Cllr Buckley suggested that the Clerk could use discretion with regard to the cost of plots in the Hedges Section. Both Councillors Bartram and Mrs Jackman MBE suggested that rather than offering a reduced rate, consideration should be given to increasing the plot price for Meadow Brook. The Clerk reminded Members that rules regarding adornments on plots in Meadow Brook section were being strictly enforced, advising that plot owners are asked to sign a declaration confirming that they are fully aware that they are only allowed to place a memorial stone and two vases on the plot. The Clerk advised that she had recently instructed the Parish Council's contractor to remove floral tributes from one of the plots.

Councillor Clegg stated that whilst he believed it should be left to the Clerk to accommodate prospective purchasers, he did not agree with the suggestion that one section is more desirable than the other. Cllr Clegg asked the Clerk how she would explain the difference in costs for the two sections. The Clerk stated that she would advise purchasers that the reason for the difference is because Meadow Brook is a new section and that it has cost a lot of money to set up. Cllr Clegg stated that he would be happy with that explanation.

The Chairman asked Members if they would be happy with increasing the price of the plots in Meadow Brook only. Following lengthy discussion Members **AGREED** to a 10% increase in the plot purchase price for Meadow Brook. All other cemetery fees are to remain the same for 2018/19. The Chairman asked

Members if they agreed that discretion be left with the Clerk. Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE stated that she did not agree with the suggestion that the Clerk could use discretion in offering plots in the Hedges Section at a reduced rate. Cllr Clegg stated that he agreed with Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE. The Clerk reminded Members that she had the discretion to accept payments for the purchase of plots over a period of two years. Cllr Clegg asked the Clerk if, taking into account cemetery outgoings and incomings, were the cemetery accounts in credit, the Clerk confirmed that they were.

b) The Hedges Section

As discussed under 'Increase in Cemetery Fees' there would be no change to the purchase price of plots in The Hedges section.

c) Meadow Brook Section

Members **NOTED** that a small section of the new hedgerow had been removed to allow pedestrian / wheelchair access into Meadow Brook section, the reason for which is to prevent access across the graves.

The Chairman reported that, together with the Clerk and Cllr Buckley, he had visited the cemetery to ascertain which section would be the best to remove. Whilst there, it was also agreed that a sign would be purchased stating 'No Vehicular Access Beyond This Point' to ensure that undertakers did not drive their vehicles up to the furthest entrance into Meadow Brook Section. The Chairman explained that a hearse had been driven up to the entrance and the pall bearers had experienced difficulty in manoeuvring the coffin from the vehicle. Cllr Buckley stated that there is also no turning circle at the end of that section of pathway. The Clerk informed Members that the grave digger and the Parish Council's contractors had been advised that they would still be permitted to access that area.

d) Garden of Remembrance – Grant of Right

Members **NOTED** that letters regarding renewals of Grants of Right for a further seven years had been sent. Grantees had been given the option to renew the Grants of Right or, if not, notice that arrangements would be made to remove the memorial plaques in due course. Members **NOTED** that the Clerk had received five responses requesting renewal, at a cost of £126.00 each for the next seven years. Eight responses had been received advising that the grantees did not wish to renew the Grants of Right. The Clerk reported that she had received two complaints, both of which were from grantees expressing concern that the memorial plaques would be removed as the previous Clerk had led them to believe that they would be in situ forever.

The Clerk suggested that Members may wish to consider placing the memorial plaques which are to be removed in the Memorial Garden, as a gesture of goodwill. Members **AGREED** with this suggestion.

E17.39 UPDATES ON OTHER MATTERS

a) Quote to Remove Tree

The Clerk stated that Members may recall visiting the cemetery to look at the Willow tree which is resting on the boundary hedge of the car park, overhanging from the adjacent public footpath. The Clerk reported that she had received a quote from Epping Tree Company for £650.00 to take the tree down to around 5 or 6 foot. Members **AGREED** that the work should be carried out as soon as possible.

b) Higham View Steps

Members **NOTED** that Countrycare had completed the works to the steps leading from Higham View to Weald Common. Cllr Bartram reported that he had been told that the bottom step had a slope on it, but he had not been to view it. The Clerk informed Members that she had not received any complaints, only compliments.

A copy of the notes from the meeting with Countrycare, held in November 2017, were circulated for Members perusal.

c) Watermans Way

The Clerk mentioned that she had been investigating who was the owner of the strip of land that runs alongside Watermans Way and the railway line. The issue first surfaced last year when EFDC approached the Parish Council regarding complaints of rubbish being thrown on to the area. The Chairman stated that the piece of land that he had reported as being strewn with rubbish was different to the area marked on the Clerk's map. The Clerk asked the PFO to check with Land Registry as to who owned the land. The PFO reported that the land was registered to a company which is part of Peer Group. Members asked that the rubbish be reported to Peer Group.

d) Cllr Buckley reported that the railings by the garden in front of the parade of shops are due to be installed around the 12th March. Cllr Buckley also reported that the contractor is ready to commence work on the damaged brick wall at the entrance to the car park as soon as the weather improves.

Meeting closed: 11.30am

Signed

Date