



DRAFT

MINUTES

Meeting: ENVIRONMENTAL
COMMITTEE

Date: 26th September 2018

Time: 10.45am

Venue: THE DEREK TRINGHAM LOUNGE, NORTH WEALD VILLAGE HALL

PRESENT:

Councillors (6) G Mulliner (Chairman), A Buckley, T Blanks, B Clegg, B Bartram,
Ms M Crosby

Also in Attendance (3)

Susan De Luca, Clerk

Adriana Jones, Principal Financial Officer*

Joanna Tyler, Senior Administrative Officer

*Present for part of the meeting

Members of the Public (0)

E18.17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (2)

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

E18.18 OTHER ABSENCES (0)

E18.19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

NOTED there were no declarations of interest.

E18.20 MINUTES

Members **APPROVED** as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 20th
June 2018.

E18.21 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

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

E18.22 PLAY AREA INSPECTION REPORT

The Principal Financial Officer apologised that a copy of the Play Area Inspection
Report was not included with the agenda and stated that a copy would be sent via
email following the meeting.

The PFO reported that the Annual Inspection had recently been carried out on all
three play areas. The PFO stated that there were a number of recommendations
which Members would need to consider over the next few months:-

School Green Lane Play Area

The PFO reported that one of the recommendations was that consideration be given to
replacing the large swings. The swings are now 25 plus years old, therefore the
integrity of the swings can no longer be ascertained. It was reported that the swings
were looking shabby and that the wet pour needs replacing.

The Clerk reported that she had received a quote for a piece of large play equipment which could be installed either at School Green Lane or Weald Common. The Clerk suggested that, with regard to School Green Lane, either the yellow climber or the spinning disc could be removed to accommodate a new piece of equipment. The PFO suggested that Councillors may wish to visit the play area to view both pieces of equipment.

The PFO reported that the surface is lifting underneath the multi-play unit and did not know how this could be repaired. The Chairman asked if the whole of the surface would need to be replaced. The PFO stated that Councillors needed to bear in mind that this is a Low Risk item at present.

Weald Common

The PFO reported that it had been recommended that consideration be given to replacing both the flat swing seats and the cradle seats within the next three months. The Clerk informed Members that she had received a report that dogs had been allowed into the play area to chew the seats.

Thornwood

The PFO stated that the report had outlined some safety surfacing issues with the Rock and Cross. Members **NOTED** that the Parish Council's contractor had attended the play area to carry out a large amount of work, therefore the Clerk recommended that Members visit the site before making any decisions

The PFO said that, in summary, it is a very good report, advising that the list of items where recommendations have been made can be looked at over the next 3 to 6 months. The Chairman asked if there were enough funds to cover the repairs / replacements. The PFO stated that there is an emergency fund available to be used. The Chairman stated that the works may also need to be looked at being included in the Precept. The Clerk stated that there is some money available from the £50,000 received from Brent House Farm for community benefit. The Clerk advised Members that grant funding would be an item for discussion on the next Parish Council agenda. The Clerk stated that the Parish Council has two play areas that need money spent on them. The PFO stated that the play area at School Green Lane is the shabbiest. Cllr Buckley asked the Clerk if there was a set amount of time that the money had to be spent in. The Clerk answered no, reiterating that it was for community benefit.

E18.23 ASSET CHECKS

Cllr Clegg reported that the checks had been completed for Thornwood and confirmed that he would be passing the paperwork to the Parish Office. He stated that he did not test the defibrillator to check that it was working. The PFO confirmed that he just needed to record that it was there. The Clerk confirmed that the Parish Hall Caretaker carried out regular checks on the defibrillator. The Clerk advised Members that the majority of checks had now been carried out. Cllr Clegg referred to the new bus shelter outside the old Popplewell's site and asked whether it belonged to Essex County Council or the Parish. The Clerk confirmed that it was ECC

Highways responsibility to maintain the bus shelter.

E18.24 ALLOTMENTS

a) **Hastingwood Allotment Site**

Members **NOTED** that the Clerk had received an enquiry from an allotment holder asking whether or not it would be possible for a potential tenant to site a pigeon loft and race pigeons from an allotment plot. Attached to the agenda were details of the RSPCAs recommendations with regard to keeping pigeon lofts and racing pigeons, together with a copy of the current Allotment Tenancy Agreement, Rules, Regulations and Codes of Practice (March 2018). The Chairman advised that he had spoken to tenants at the Hastingwood site and they had stated that they would not want a pigeon loft there, therefore, he asked that the Clerk respond to the enquiry and say no.

The PFO stated that there is a Dovecote situated in the Thornwood Allotment site. The Clerk advised that keeping doves was very different to keeping pigeons, adding that the dovecote is located in an open garden area, not on an actual allotment plot.

b) **Official Opening of Orchard at Queens Road and Dedication of Benches**

Members discussed the official opening of the Orchard at Queens Road allotment site and the dedication of the benches. The Chairman suggested that the Clerk and the PFO liaise to arrange a suitable date on a Sunday morning in October. All Members **AGREED**.

The Chairman expressed concern that there could be a problem getting on to the site via the Queens Road entrance. The Clerk stated that those attending could be accompanied via the Wheelers Farm Gardens entrance.

c) **Thornwood Allotment Site**

i) Members **NOTED** that the Allotment Warden had reported that the stop cock behind the Parish Hall does not turn off fully. Members **AGREED** that arrangements should be made for the Parish Council's contractor to take a look at it.

ii) Attached to the agenda was a photograph depicting a dead tree overhanging the Thornwood Allotment site. The Clerk advised that the photograph was taken by the Allotment Warden, not Cllr Ms Crosby, as advised in the agenda. The Clerk confirmed that the query had been raised by Cllr Ms Crosby.

The Chairman stated that he had visited the site and the tree is not on Parish Council land. The Clerk confirmed that it is on the opposite side of the ditch. The Chairman asked the question do the Parish Council assume responsibility? The Chairman stated that he would recommend that the Clerk writes to the owner, expressing concern that the tree may be dangerous and fall onto the allotment site. Cllr Ms Crosby informed Members that the tree adjacent to the one depicted (on the right hand side) also now appeared to be dead. Cllr Ms

Crosby stated that her suggestion would be to contact a tree expert and ask them to visit the site to look at the trees to assess if they are suffering from some form of disease. Cllr Ms Crosby expressed concern that if the trees were diseased it could spread to others, bearing in mind how close the site is to the forest. The Chairman expressed concern that the Parish Council would be spending money unnecessarily when the trees are not situated on Parish Council land.

Cllr Bartram stated that he did not think that a tree surgeon would cut down a tree without the owner's permission. Cllr Clegg suggested that the owner of the house in Brookfield be contacted. The Chairman stated that the concern was that the owner of the land may not be the resident.

Cllr Ms Crosby stated that she believed the matter needed to be treated with a lot of care. Cllr Ms Crosby informed Members that residents had made various comments to her with regard to what they believed had caused the trees to die. Cllr Ms Crosby stated that she believed the Parish Council needed to determine what had happened to the trees. Cllr Bartram stated that, by law, you can cut back anything that is overhanging your land, but you must give the cuttings back to the owner. The Clerk agreed that this statement was correct. Cllr Ms Crosby informed Members that she had been told by residents that there had been another three trees growing along the ditch, but these had died and had been taken down, however, she was unable to categorically say if this was the case as she had not seen the trees herself. Cllr Ms Crosby advised that the residents had informed her that they had asked allotment holders not to cut back any of the trees as the residents did not wish to look out on to the shed roofs. Cllr Ms Crosby reiterated that she believed the Parish Council needed to determine what had caused the trees to die. The Chairman expressed concern as to what the cost would be to do this. The Clerk stated that if the trees in question are on land which is on the side of Brookfield and the residents are the riparian owners, the Parish Council would be in a difficult situation as we can not write to the allotment holders and tell them, because it is not anything to do with them and the Parish Council are unable to prove that the allotment holders have done anything wrong. Cllr Ms Crosby asked what if the residents could prove that the allotment holders had cut the trees. The Clerk stated that if the residents are able to prove this, they would need to take the issue up with the allotment holder. Cllr Ms Crosby stated that the allotment holders hold an agreement with the Parish Council. The Clerk stated that the allotment holders hold an agreement with the Parish Council for an allotment, not for the land on the opposite side (of the ditch). Cllr Ms Crosby asked if the allotment holders should have been cutting the trees back. The Clerk stated that we do not know if the allotment holders have been cutting the trees back. The Clerk asked what evidence do we have? Cllr Ms Crosby stated that we have the evidence of the trees that were previously there. The Clerk reiterated that we do not have evidence. Cllr Ms Crosby stated that the residents may have evidence. The Clerk stated that if this is the case, the residents would need to write to the Parish Council, together with photos of the trees in situ and the residents categorically stating that those allotment holders had cut the trees down then that is fine. However, the Parish Council has no evidence and we cannot do anything if we do not have evidence as it would not be within the Parish

Council's remit.

The Chairman suggested that the Parish Council write to the residents regarding the trees. The Clerk stated that she did not believe this was what Cllr Ms Crosby wanted. Cllr Ms Crosby expressed concern that if the Parish Council wrote to the residents regarding the trees, when they had raised the matter with her, the residents would retaliate and be upset. Cllr Ms Crosby stated that she wanted to know what the best way would be of dealing with the matter to get the best result. Cllr Ms Crosby stated that she believed that what the Clerk had said made sense and that if the residents could prove that there were trees there and if they are willing to stand up and say that allotment holders had cut them back, adding that a way out of the situation would be to assess whether the trees are diseased. The Chairman asked the Clerk who could be contacted with regard to this. The Clerk stated that the Parish Council would need to pay for a tree expert to look at the trees in question. The Clerk asked Cllr Clegg if he thought the contractor he used would look at them. Cllr Clegg stated that he believed the contractor would cut the trees down, however he would ask him if he could do a report. Cllr Clegg asked if it had been clearly established where the trees were growing. The Chairman confirmed that it had. Discussion ensued regarding the boundary line and it was agreed that the Clerk would investigate this further with Land Registry. Cllr Clegg agreed that he would contact the tree surgeon. Cllr Ms Crosby asked if the tree surgeon could be asked to quote as to how much it would cost to remove the two trees. The Clerk stated that first of all we would need to establish if the tree is definitely dead, in light of the fact that the residents do not wish to look out on to the sheds.

d) Update from the Allotment Sub Committee

The Chairman confirmed that the sub committee continue to visit Hastingwood Allotment site on a monthly basis. The Chairman asked what do the Parish Council do with regard to maintain the unused allotment plots? The PFO stated that the Allotment Wardens have a grounds maintenance budget which can be used for the upkeep of the unmaintained plots. However, if the Allotment Wardens are minded to manage the unused plots themselves, they are able to spend the budget as they wish. The Chairman stated that there were a couple of plots at Hastingwood which required looking at. The Clerk informed Members that there is currently a waiting list for plots at Thornwood.

The Clerk informed Members that she would be making an application to the Local Services Fund for £15,000. The £15,000 is spread over three years and would need to be match funded by the Parish Council. If successful, the Parish Council could employ somebody to assist with grounds maintenance, car parking at the Parish Hall and North Weald Village Hall, allotment maintenance, etc. The Clerk stated that we would be looking for someone to create a presence in the whole of the parish. Discussion ensued regarding the question of employment. Cllr Clegg stated that he thought it was a great idea, however, asked what would happen to the person after the three years. The Clerk stated that it would be a three year contract, therefore the Parish Council would not need to continue with the contract after that period. Cllr

Clegg stated that he wondered in law if, after the three years, the Parish Council would be duty bound to keep the person on. Cllr Ms Crosby asked how long would the person be working for, ie., full time or part time. The Clerk stated that it would not be full time as there is not enough money. Cllr Ms Crosby stated that this would need to be checked out with regard to employment legislation. The Clerk confirmed that this would be checked out with EALC. Cllr Ms Crosby stated that normally after a year, even on a contract basis, if it is a continual job that is being undertaken, the person would have applied rights as if they were permanent. The Clerk stated that EALC would advise the Parish Council on the employment rights under Vine Employment. Cllr Ms Crosby stated that the Clerk may need to terminate one contract before starting another, rather than it being continual. This was noted.

Cllr Ms Crosby mentioned the subject of bonfires and expressed concern about hedgehogs nesting in them. The Chairman advised that the allotment holders normally light the bonfires as soon as they are ready. Cllr Ms Crosby asked if they could be asked to double check before lighting them. Cllr Bartram stated that he believed the issue had never been a problem.

E18.25 CEMETERY

- a) The Clerk reported that the cemetery had not been very busy over the last few months. The Parish Council's contractor had ordered the retractable post to prevent vehicles from using the pathway alongside Meadowbrook Section.

The Clerk had received a quote for clearing the unused part of the cemetery. The cost quoted is £10,000. The work involves clearing shrubs and small trees, whilst retaining mature ones. The area of land is not easily accessible for the large machinery required to clear it. Members **NOTED** that the Clerk would be looking to obtain more quotes.

The Clerk reported that a number of the rose bushes in the Garden of Remembrance may need to be replaced as they are not growing very well due to the soil conditions. Following discussion, it was agreed that the Chairman of this Committee would visit the plots.

- b) Attached to the agenda was a photograph taken by the Chairman of this Committee which depicted excessive ornaments on plots in the Cremated Remains section of the Cemetery. The Clerk advised Members that a notice had been put in the notice board reminding owners. The Chairman asked if a letter could be written to the plot holders. The Clerk stated that we cannot write to all plot holders. The Clerk expressed concern that people would be upset. She stated that she did not feel right, as the Proper Officer of the Council, writing in her name, however, if the Chairman of the Council and the Chairman of the Environmental Committee wish to sign a letter, the Clerk would write the letter. The Clerk warned the Committee that if letters were sent regarding this matter, there could be a lot of bad publicity. Cllr Clegg asked how this problem was resolved before. The Clerk advised that the problem was not resolved, despite putting a notice on the notice board.

The Chairman reminded Members that owners of plots in the new Meadowbrook Section were asked to sign an agreement on purchasing the plot which states that there are to be no ornaments, other than one vase of flowers. The Clerk reminded Members that if they were to take ornaments away from plots, those ornaments would have to be stored securely by the Parish Council, they cannot be thrown away. Following lengthy discussion, Members **AGREED** that no action would be taken at the current time.

E18.26 CHRISTMAS LIGHTS VILLAGE GREEN, NORTH WEALD

Members **AGREED** that the Christmas Tree lights would be switched on to coincide with the Parish Hall's Christmas Lights, which will be switched on on Sunday, 9th December.

E18.27 UPDATES ON OTHER MATTERS

- a) The Clerk reported that the phone box had been removed from the parade of shops in North Weald. The Chairman of the Council is looking to site a wooden container box in its place, similar to the one on the Village Green. The Clerk confirmed that there were enough funds to cover the cost from the monies received to fund the garden project.
- b) Councillor Buckley asked Members if there were any areas in the Parish that they thought would benefit from bulb planting this year. The following suggestions were put forward:-
 - Corner of Rowley Mead, Thornwood
 - Around Cyril's memorial bench
 - Grass bank at the junction of Duck Lane
- c) Councillor Buckley mentioned the steps leading from the Weald Common Road, just past the new gate, up to the flood plain, and asked whether Epping Forest Countryside could possibly put gravel at the top of the steps where it is very muddy.
- d) Councillor Bartram asked if there was an update on the salt bin for St Andrews School. The Clerk confirmed that it was all in hand.

Meeting closed: 11.55am

Signed

Date