



DRAFT MINUTES

Meeting: ENVIRONMENTAL &
OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE

Date: 10th October 2024

Time: 9.30am

Venue: PARISH HALL, THORNWOOD COMMON

PRESENT:

Councillors (3) A Buckley (Chairman), Mrs S Hawkins, R Spearman

Also in Attendance (2)

Susan De Luca, Clerk to the Council

Joanna Tyler, Senior Administrative Officer

Members of the Press (0)

Members of the Public (0)

E24.01 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Cllr Mrs Hawkins **PROPOSED** Cllr Buckley as Chairman. The proposal was **SECONDED** by Cllr Spearman.

E24.02 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (3)

Apologies for absence received from Cllrs Tyler, Irvine and Mrs Jackman MBE

E24.03 OTHER ABSENCES (2)

No apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs Born and Clegg who are Members of this committee

E24.04 MINUTES

Members **APPROVED** as a correct record the Minutes of the Meeting held on 18th March 2024.

E24.05 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

E24.06 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC - None present.

E24.07 ALLOTMENTS

a) Introduction of Deposit – New Allotment Tenants

Councillors were asked to **CONSIDER** the introduction of a £50 deposit for all new allotment tenants. It had been suggested that the deposit would be held by the Parish Council for the duration of the tenancy. When a tenant decides to give up their plot, if it has been left in a good, cultivated state, then the deposit would be refunded. However, if the Parish Council must pay to have the plot cleared, the deposit would be used towards the cost of clearance. Cllr Spearman commented that the amount suggested would not cover the cost of clearance. Cllr Mrs Hawkins commented that there would be no point in asking for more than £50.00. The Chairman asked the Clerk if the deposit would also apply to current tenants. The Clerk said that the deposit would be for new tenants only and said that the council would not want to put off new tenants

by asking for more. The Clerk suggested that the Committee may wish to trial the deposit scheme for 12 months. Cllr Mrs Hawkins and Cllr Spearman praised the allotment sites in North Weald. The Clerk said that they have a pro-active warden in North Weald who is retired and spends a lot of time at the allotments. The Clerk suggested that Cllr Mrs Hawkins and Cllr Spearman may wish to consider having a prize at the Parish Council's Civic Awards for the most improved allotment plot, which would be separate from the prizes given out at the Annual Allotment Holders Meeting.

Following further discussion, Councillors **AGREED** to the introduction of a £50 deposit for all new tenants. The Chairman asked if this would be written into the terms and conditions. The Clerk confirmed that it would.

b) Change to Allotment Rental Period

Councillors were asked to **CONSIDER** a suggestion to move the allotment rental period to 1st January to 31st December. It was noted that the current rental period runs from 1st April to 31st March. The Parish Council has to give tenants up to 30th April to pay their rent, however if a tenant has not tended their plot and decides not to renew their tenancy, their plot will be overgrown and covered in weeds before this time. By changing the rental period 1st January to 31st December, it would mean that tenants would have until 31st January to renew and if they decided not to, the council would be able to manage the plot before it is overgrown, which would result in less costs to the council. Following discussion, all Councillors **AGREED**.

c) Boundary Hedge – Hastingwood Allotment (B) – Unused Site

Councillors **NOTED** that the Clerk had received a request from PC Andy Cook who had asked if the Parish Council would consider reducing the height of the boundary hedge. The Clerk confirmed that this matter had since been agreed at the last Parish Council meeting and that works had now been carried out.

d) Hedge between Thornwood Allotments and Thornwood Playing Field

Councillors were advised that there had been an additional item added to the agenda. The Allotment Warden for Thornwood had received a number of queries regarding cutting back the hedge between the Thornwood Allotments and the Thornwood Playing Field. The PFO had also received a comment from the tenants of plots T8 and T10 who had stated that the tree at the rear of their plots (which is within the hedge) is very large and is making their plot very dark. It was noted that the tree had not been raised as a H&S concern within the Tree Risk Report. Councillors were asked to **CONSIDER** cutting back the hedge and also the tree. Following discussion, Councillors **AGREED** to these works being carried out, subject to tenants being made aware that it is their responsibility to remove any items that they have against the hedgerow so that a clear run is provided for the contractor to carry out the work. No items belonging to tenants will be removed or put back in place by the Parish Council's contractor.

e) Tree Planting on Allotment Plots

Councillor Mrs Hawkins mentioned that there appeared to be an increase in trees being planted by tenants. The Clerk stated that tenants were only allowed to plant fruit trees and suggested that tenants could be reminded at the Annual Allotment Holders

Meeting. It was also suggested that it may be useful to point out the difference between fruit trees and fruit bushes. All Councillors **AGREED**.

E24.08 CEMETERY

a) Cemetery Visit – 31st July

Councillors **NOTED** that the Clerk meets with the Grounds Maintenance Contractor for the cemetery at least once a year to inspect the cemetery and to discuss any maintenance issues. A copy of the meeting notes from the most recent visit was attached to the agenda for information.

The Chairman referred to the visit to the cemetery the previous day, which had been arranged for Councillors and asked if there were any plans for the unused area to the rear of the cemetery. The Clerk commented that there is no need to do anything at the current time. If a decision was made to use the area in the future, the specimen trees would remain, but the overgrown vegetation would need to be cleared. The Chairman commented that there was adequate seating in the main cemetery and no need for people to be encouraged to walk around the unused area, which has uneven grass pathways. The Clerk confirmed that access is not encouraged.

b) Garden of Remembrance

Councillors were asked to refer to one of the items mentioned in the Cemetery Visit note which was a discussion regarding the best solution for distinguishing the boundary of the Garden of Remembrance from the Cremated Remains sections. It was noted that currently the two sections appear to blend, and it is difficult for visitors to know where each section begins and ends. The Clerk had recently received a complaint to this affect. The Grounds Maintenance Contractor had recommended and sourced a metal Corr Edge border (rather than a permanent stone edging) which could easily be removed in the future if necessary. It was noted that the cost for installation would be £1600 (this figure includes the supply of all materials and labour for two contractors). The Clerk said that the area needs to be clearly defined again, now that it is covered in grass and suggested that she could perhaps source some small signs saying Garden of Remembrance for each section. The Chairman asked if the Clerk if she could also find out what colours the metal edging was available in. All Councillors **AGREED** to the purchase and installation of the metal border and also to new signage.

c) Memorial Audit

Councillors **NOTED** that a Memorial Audit had recently been completed, with the Register of Burials and individual files updated accordingly.

d) Cemetery Map

Councillors were advised that the original cemetery map had not been updated professionally since the original plans drawn for the plotting out of the cemetery. The Clerk confirmed that an up-to-date plan was necessary to comply with the legal requirements of managing a cemetery. Councillors **NOTED** that the Clerk had contacted Pear Technology (the company that originally created the electronic version

of the cemetery map) and is awaiting further details about the cost of updating the map.

E24.09 TREES

a) Tree Risk Assessment

Following on from the Tree Risk Assessment carried out earlier this year, it was highlighted that works to trees at Thornwood and Wheelers Farm Gardens Allotment sites were recommended to be completed within 12 months. Councillors **NOTED** that the PFO had obtained and accepted quotes for the works to be carried out on the 7th and 8th November. Copies of the quotes had been attached to the agenda for information.

b) Wheelers Farm Gardens Allotment Site

Councillors were asked to **CONSIDER** work to cut back and clear vegetation on Parish Council owned land at Wheelers Farm Gardens Allotment site, along the stretch of land that backs on to the rear gardens of Cyril Hawkins Close. It was noted that the PFO had obtained a quote to reduce the cluster of trees to below the height of the boundary fence. The Clerk described the area and, following discussion, Councillors **AGREED** to these works being carried out.

c) Request from Queens Hall Charity

Councillors **NOTED** that a request had been received from the Queens Hall Charity asking for assistance with the cost of pollarding / cutting down of a Goat Willow tree growing on the boundary of the Memorial Playing Field and overhanging a neighbouring property. For information, a letter from the resident affected was attached to the agenda. The Clerk advised that, since the time of distributing the agenda, works to the tree had been completed (before and after photos were shown to Councillors). The Clerk confirmed that the Parish Council had previously supported requests for assistance with this fast-growing tree, the last time being in July 2021, with £600 being given. On this occasion, the Queens Hall Charity had been quoted £900 (plus vat) for the removal of the tree. Following discussion, Councillors asked the Clerk to write to the Queens Hall Charity to confirm that the Committee had **AGREED**, retrospectively, to pay a contribution of £900, and to also state that this would be the final payment made towards this tree.

d) Woodland Trust – Community Tree Application

Councillors **NOTED** that this Council had been successful in its application for 105 saplings from the Woodland Trust. The saplings are to be planted in the play area field at Weald Common, to add to the trees in Eldridge Coppice. Delivery is expected to take place in early March 2025. It was noted that the species chosen included hawthorn, crab apple and dog rose, all of which will enhance the biodiversity in this location. The Chairman asked the Clerk if she knew when the Parish Council's contractor would be clearing the overgrown vegetation and the trees that had failed to take from Eldridge Coppice. The Clerk confirmed that she would contact the contractor to get a recommendation as to whether it would be best to clear the area now for planting or in March. The Chairman said that a meeting would need to be arranged with the contractor to discuss exactly where the saplings should be planted.

E24.10 Sensory Garden, Weald Common

Councillors *NOTED* that the plants and shrubs planted in the containers in the Sensory Garden had failed, the was despite a maintenance programme put in place for regular watering. The Clerk advised that there was still some money available to re-plant and suggested that she could contact Matthews Nursery in Roydon and ask them to quote for removing and replacing the soil and replanting with plants suitable for the location. The Chairman said that he had also spoken with the garden contractor, and that it was his understanding that the contractor was making enquiries as to what would be suitable. The Clerk said that she would contact the garden contractor to advise that she would be making enquiries as well. The Clerk said that she had received an evaluation form from Epping Forest District Council for completion regarding the project and needed to advise them of what had been agreed regarding on-going maintenance.

E24.11 Report from Chairman

a) Garden by the Parade of Shops

The Chairman reported that he had asked the garden contractor to plant some winter flowering plants in the garden. All sponsorship money had been received and there is £150 available. The Chairman said that the garden contractor had experienced problems with watering the plants during the Summer months and consequently the garden was looking quite sparse. Councillor Spearman recommended planting primulas for winter flowering.

The Chairman reported that repairs had still not been carried out by the owner of the wall. The Chairman said that he had recently had a meeting with District Cllr Bromwich regarding the state of the car park.

b) Planter by Flagpole

The Chairman confirmed that the Christmas Tree had been removed.

E24.12 Christmas

a) Purchase of a New Christmas Tree for the Village Green

The Clerk advised that she had been looking into purchasing a replacement living Christmas Tree for the Village Green. The Clerk said that she had made enquiries to a nursery and the cost for a Nordic Fir would be in the region of £300. Regarding on-going maintenance, the nursery had recommended that the tree is watered at least twice a week for the first year. The Parish Council's contractor is prepared to do this. The Chairman suggested that the Clerk contact Wheelers Farm Gardens to ask permission to use their outside tap. Cllr Spearman said that his recommendation would be to look at purchasing a Nordic Fir with green needles, rather than blue which would require more care. All Councillors *AGREED* to the Clerk to source and purchase an appropriate tree.

b) Christmas Lights

Councillors *CONFIRMED* that there were no changes to the usual arrangements:

- Lights on the Christmas Tree on the Village Green
- Garden at the parade of shops – 2 trees (Clerk to arrange with Parish Council contractor).
- Lights on the outside wall of the Parish Hall

Councillors also **AGREED** to the usual contribution to Hastingwood Village Hall's Christmas Lights.

E24.13 Other Matters

The Clerk mentioned that she is meeting with District Cllr Ray Balcombe regarding rubbish near to the cemetery and to speak about having a litter picker throughout Thornwood and the lack of a litter picker through North Weald.

Cllr Mrs Hawkins mentioned that she would be replacing the plants outside the Parish Hall, as approved at the last Parish Council Meeting.

Meeting closed: 11am

Signed

Date