



**DRAFT MINUTES**

**Meeting:** ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE      **Date:** 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022      **Time:** 11.00am

**Venue:** PARISH HALL, THORNWOOD

**PRESENT:**

**Councillors (4)** A Buckley, Mrs S Hawkins, Mrs A Grigg, B Clegg

**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)**

**E21.41 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (6)**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mulliner, Bedford, Irvine, Tyler, Mrs P Etherington, Spearman

**E21.42 OTHER ABSENCES (0)**

**E21.43 MINUTES**

Members **APPROVED** as a correct record the Minutes of the Meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021.

**E21.44 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**NOTED** there were no declarations of interest.

**E21.45 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

None present.

**E21.46 REVIEW OF ALLOTMENT FEES**

Members were asked to consider if there was a need to increase the allotment fees for 2023/2024. Members were reminded that the Parish Council is required to give 12 months' notice of any increase in fees. It was noted that for the new financial year (2022/2023) there had been no increase.

Members noted the following extract from the Minutes of the Environmental Meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021 (Minute Ref. E21.10):

**b) Upkeep of Allotment Sites**

*Members were reminded that the upkeep of the allotments is ever increasing. The Rental received from tenants does not cover the yearly running costs. It was noted that following a visit to the Wheelers Farm Gardens site on Saturday, 26<sup>th</sup> June, the Clerk had received several requests for works to be considered, which included:*

- Running new pipework to rectify the low water pressure*
- Regular cutting of the grass in the communal areas*

*The Clerk referred to her report attached to the Supplementary Agenda and suggested that Members may wish to consider whether the rents should be increased to cover the extra*

*costs. The PFO advised that any increase in fees would not be until 2023 as 12 months notification had to be given to tenants. The Clerk said that she is looking at all avenues with regard to the availability of any grant funding. Following lengthy discussion, Cllr Clegg PROPOSED that the Clerk and PFO undertake a financial investigation, the findings are then presented at a meeting in September, any increase can then be agreed and implemented by a date determined by the Clerk and PFO. All Members AGREED.*

The Clerk advised that the Principal Financial Officer had suggested a recommendation that there should be an increase of £2 per plot for 2023/2024 to attempt to try and reduce the gap between income and expenditure. Members noted that the water meters are now being read on a monthly basis, with the readings being sent off to Castle Water. This had not been happening due to Covid-19 and only estimated bills had been received during this time, so the PC would now read the meters and submit readings themselves. The Clerk confirmed that, together with the PFO, they are continuing to look at issues with low water pressure, the communal areas, regular grass cutting etc. Cllr Mrs Hawkins referred to the grass cutting and said that although the grass in the Community Garden at Thornwood was now in need of a first cut, it may not need cutting so much in the Summer months and commented that she would look for a volunteer if it did. It was noted that the Clerk is keeping a list of all requests received from the Allotment Wardens.

The Clerk advised that all of the allotment sites are up to capacity, with only one or two vacant plots available. It was noted that there are now 6 people working on the Communal Garden Plot at Wheelers Farm Gardens. Cllr Mrs Hawkins said that the Thornwood Community Garden will be ready to sew this year and she would be sending out a notification to advise people. The Community Plot at WFG had been a great success in the last year and was working well and was very encouraging. It was noted that the Mums and Tots Group had been keen to be involved with the project, however the group had decided to finish during Lockdown and would not be reforming. Cllr Mrs Hawkins commented that she was also looking at the possibility of serving teas from the community garden on Sunday afternoons. The Clerk confirmed that an update on overall costs for the allotments would be given at the September Meeting.

Following discussion, Cllr Clegg **PROPOSED** that Members agree to an increase of £2 per plot across the board, as per the PFO's recommendation. All Members **AGREED** unanimously. Therefore, the allotment rental fees for 2023/2024 will be:

- Under 50sqm = Extra Small £26.00
- Between 51sqm & 100sqm = Small £28.00
- Between 101sqm & 150sqm = Average £29.00
- Between 151sqm & 200sqm = Large £33.00
- Over 201sqm = Extra Large £35.00

#### **E21.47 REVIEW OF CEMETERY FEES**

Members were asked to consider a possible increase in cemetery fees for 2022/23. Members were reminded that for 2021/22 the cost to purchase a plot in either the Hedges Section or Meadowbrook Section had been increased by £25.00. The interment fee for both sections had also been increased by £25.00. Councillors noted the following Minute Reference E21.36 taken from the Environmental

Meeting Minutes dated 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021:

*d) Price Increase for 2022*

*Councillors NOTED that the Clerk had received notification of price increases from the supplier of plaques, boulders and spikes for 2022. Members AGREED that the increases should be taken into account when reviewing the Cemetery Fees for 2022.*

*Councillors NOTED that the Clerk had been notified that the cost for Grave Digging was also to be increased. Members AGREED that any increase should be taken into account when reviewing the Cemetery Fees for 2022.*

Councillors **NOTED** that the Clerk had received confirmation that the costs for Grave Digging is to be increased with effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 as follows:

- Full Burial £400 (increase of £40.00)
- Cremated Remains £130.00 (increase of £10.00)

Paperwork detailing suggested increases in Cemetery Fees was tabled at the meeting. Councillors discussed the matter at length and noted that the suggested fees had taken into account an increase in costs from the Grave Digger, the manufacturer/supplier of plaques and boulders and the Cemetery Grounds Maintenance Contractor. The Clerk apologised for not having the percentage increase for Members, and having how this was detailed in the fees, but thanked Cllr Clegg for his assistance. All Members **AGREED** unanimously that the fees should be increased, as per the Clerk's recommendation, with effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022.

The Chairman gave a brief update on the Weald Common Tree Project. Members noted that a meeting had been arranged for early April to discuss the proposed planting project with ECC's officer for Forestry and Woodlands.

The Clerk advised Members that she had received a telephone call from Cllr Bedford prior to the meeting, regarding a proposal from Epping Forest District Council for Hastingwood B Allotment Site. Following discussion, the Clerk was advised to obtain further information from the District Council as the proposal was initiated from them. Once the information had been received, it was suggested that the matter could then be placed on the Full Council Agenda as an item for discussion in May.

Meeting closed: 11.40am

Signed .....

Date .....