



MINUTES

Meeting: ENVIRONMENTAL
COMMITTEE

Date: 6 December 2013

Time: 10.30 am

Venue: THORNWOOD COMMON VILLAGE HALL, WEALD HALL LANE, THORNWOOD

PRESENT:

Councillors (7) G Mulliner (Chairman), C Hawkins, B Eldridge, B Bartram, B Clegg,
A Buckley, Mrs A Grigg

Also in Attendance (2)

Susan De Luca, Clerk to the Council
Joanna Tyler, Administrative Officer

Members of the Public (0)

E13.34 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (2)

NOTED apologies received from Cllrs G McCormack, R Spearman

E13.35 OTHER ABSENCES (0)

E13.36 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

NOTED there were no declarations of interest.

E13.37 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2013 were *CONFIRMED* and signed as a true record.

The Chairman congratulated Cllrs Mrs Godwin-Brown, Ms Adams and Sammy on the success of the Christmas event held on the Village Green on Wednesday, 4 December 2013.

E13.38 PLAY AREA INSPECTION REPORT

Members *NOTED* that the quarterly play area inspections were carried out by ARD on 19 November 2013. The Finance and Administrative Officer had tabled an update for Members of this Committee to consider:-

Weald Common Play Area – Members *NOTED* the comments made by the inspector and agreed to discuss this under item number 6.

School Green Lane Play Area – Members *NOTED* that there were no issues reported.

Thornwood Play Area – Members *NOTED* that the Finance and Administrative Officer had sourced a product for the removal of algae growth which would be safe to use on children's play areas.

With regard to Winter works, Members *AGREED* the following:-

School Green Lane Play Area – Rub down and repaint both sets of swings and

small climbing frame (the Clerk advised that the Finance and Administrative Officer was in the process of obtaining quotes for these works to be carried out).

Thornwood Play Area – Clear algae growth from the play area surfaces.

Relocation of Bassett Millennium Board (previously located at Thornwood Common) – Cllr Hawkins stated that possible relocation near to the Corporation of London sign was still in the process of being investigated.

Weald Common – The installation of 2 x goal posts.

E13.39 WEALD COMMON PLAY AREA

a. North Weald Mums Group – Fundraising

Following on from the Finance and General Purposes Committee, held on 18 November 2013, it was suggested that a Sub-Committee should now be formed to liaise with the North Weald Mums Group. The Sub-Committee would need to establish the following:-

- Design of play equipment proposed to be installed (this will need to be in keeping with the original agreement for the placing of a play area on Weald Common).
- Funding of the maintenance of any new equipment.
- Funding of insurance for any new equipment
- Funding of the quarterly/yearly inspections in respect of any new equipment.

The Chairman asked the Clerk what the original design was. The Clerk stated that the Mums Group had obtained two designs for traditional play equipment, the group were of the opinion that children do not play on the wooden play equipment, however, the Clerk stated that Cllr Collins had rightly commented, at a previous meeting, that the play area needs to be in keeping with the surrounding area and that the existing design is what residents had originally wanted. The Clerk stated that the Committee needs to look at who is going to fund the maintenance of the new equipment and the costs involved. The Committee needs to look at the type of surfacing that will be put down, placing any new equipment on to the existing grass would not be sufficient and the cost of safety surfacing is almost as much as the play equipment itself. The Clerk stated that she had assisted the group as much as she could and there was now a requirement for Members of this Committee to assist them. The land that the existing play area is located on is owned by the Parish Council, however, if the Mums Group were to set themselves up as a charity then they could take responsibility for the play area. However, the Clerk expressed concern about what would happen to the play area if the Mums Group did not continue to raise money to be used for ongoing costs. The Chairman of this Committee stated that he would be concerned if the Mums Group were left in total control. The Clerk stated that the Sub Committee would need to have a strong influence. The Clerk suggested that two or three Councillors could form the Sub Committee, together with a member of staff and two or three members of the Mums Group.

Councillor Mrs Grigg expressed concern as to whether or not the Mums Group would relinquish the new play equipment to the Parish Council once it had been

installed. Cllr Clegg stated that he was concerned that, although the Mums Group would be putting in an amount of money, it would not be as substantial as what the Parish Council would be committing and that the group needs to be aware that any new play equipment would be majorly funded and looked after by the Parish Council. Cllr Eldridge agreed and stated that it should be suggested that the Mums Group would need to continue with fundraising to cover future costs, for example, maintenance. Cllr Clegg stated that the Sub Committee would need to look at a funding procedure. The Clerk stated that the life of play equipment is 25 years and funds are needed to maintain it over that time. Cllr Buckley asked if the Clerk had details of costs relating to play areas over a year? The Clerk stated that £7,832 was spent on all three play areas during the past year. This figure did not include grass cutting, however, it did include repairs to safety surfacing. Cllr Clegg stated that the Mums Group needed to be made aware of this figure, as we are looking at a cost of £4,000 per year in maintenance costs for play areas alone. Cllr Mrs Grigg stated that this will be a difficult balancing act to put across, as we would not wish to discourage the group.

The Clerk stated that the Mums Group have obtained around £18,000 at the moment and that they need to be aware that the Parish Council have not agreed any further monies because of maintenance issues, however, the group have got an extra £5,000 from the CIF because of the Clerk speaking on their behalf. Cllr Hawkins suggested that the group should be looking at match funding. The Clerk stated that the group wishes to apply for £11,000 from the Big Lottery Fund and they will require assistance with their application. Councillors Mulliner, Eldridge and Buckley **AGREED** to sit on the Sub Committee, together with a member of the Parish Office staff. It is understood that Cllr McCormack will continue to act as a liaison between both committees. The Clerk will arrange for a terms of reference to be drafted.

b. Possible Removal of Gate and Fence

The Clerk stated that this had been placed on the agenda following a comment made by a Clerk from Brentwood who had been advised by ROSPA that it is no longer necessary to have fences and gates surrounding play areas. The Clerk stated that Members may decide whether or not they would wish to remove the gate and fence. The Chairman stated that there was already a problem with the surface being eroded in the gateway and that gaps in the picket fence could cause head entrapment. Cllr Mrs Grigg expressed concern regarding dogs accessing the play area, however, the Chairman stated that he had not seen any dog faeces there. The Clerk advised Members that the Annual Play Area Inspection is due to be carried out in January 2014 and that it would be prudent to see what is advised in that report. All Members **AGREED**.

E13.40 CEMETERY – DAMAGE TO GRAVESTONE

The Clerk informed Members that she had been contacted by the owner of plot number 83, regarding a damaged headstone. The Clerk arranged for Gary Woods to inspect the headstone as the owner thought that the damage had been caused

by the mower. Gary Woods advised the Clerk that he thought the owners of the plot should contact the memorial masons who installed the headstone as it appeared to be natural shrinkage in the photograph. As at the time of the meeting, the Clerk had not received any further correspondence from the plot owner. The Clerk stated that the Committee may need to look at asking plot owners to purchase their own insurance to cover memorials, as they are not covered under the Parish Council's insurance policy. Members **NOTED** that the Clerk would give a further update once she has a response.

E13.41 UPDATE ON ASSETS/WINTER WORK

This item had previously been discussed under the Play Area Inspection Report.

E13.42 GOAL POSTS

This item had previously been discussed under Weald Common Play Area.

E13.43 ALLOTMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

The Clerk mentioned the trees at Wheelers Farm Gardens and the damage that had been caused to a metal wheelbarrow, a wooden chair and the plastic membrane used to discourage weeds. The trees are located on the boundary of the farmer's field adjacent to the allotment. The Clerk stated that she had sought advice from Geoff Barber who is from the National Association of Allotment Gardens, who had advised that the trees would be the responsibility of the farmer and that the tenant should claim for any damages from the farmer, not the Parish Council. Members **AGREED** that arrangements would be made for any trees overhanging the boundary to be cut and cleared away, if possible this will be arranged for Wednesday, 11 December 2013.

E.13.44 BULB PLANTING

Cllr Hawkins advised Members that it was too late to undertake bulb planting this year. There are 1600 bulbs being stored at Happy Grow, they will be put in trays of topsoil in order that they can be used next year. Members **AGREED** that they will look at planting the bulbs early in 2014.

Meeting closed: 11.20 am

Signed
Date