



MINUTES

Meeting: ENVIRONMENTAL
COMMITTEE

Date: 19th October 2020

Time: 1.30pm

Venue: IN LINE WITH CURRENT GOVERNMENT GUIDELINES, THE MEETING WAS
CONDUCTED ELECTRONICALLY VIA VIDEO CONFERENCING

PRESENT:

Councillors (6) G Mulliner (Chairman), A Buckley, Mrs Jackman MBE, Mrs Hawkins,
A Tyler, Mrs Grigg

Also in Attendance (3)

Susan De Luca, Clerk to the Council

Adriana Jones, Principal Financial Officer (Meeting Clerk)

Joanna Tyler, Senior Administrative Officer

Members of the Press (1)

Members of the Public (0)

E20.19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (1)

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr B Clegg

E20.20 OTHER ABSENCES (7)

No apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs Bedford, Blanks, Irvine,
Spearman, Stroud, Ms Wood and Ms Coop-Rodia

E20.21 MINUTES

Members **APPROVED** as a correct record the Minutes of the Meeting held on 13th
July 2020.

E20.22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

NOTED there were no declarations of interest.

E20.23 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC - None present.

E20.24 PLAY AREA ANNUAL INSPECTIONS

Councillors **NOTED** that the Annual Play Area Inspections were conducted on the
7th September 2020. The Annual Inspections view risk of likelihood versus severity,
with there being 5 resultant levels of Risk as follows: Very Low, Low, Moderate,
High and Very High. It was noted that the indication of Risk does not necessarily
mean that remedial works are required. A copy of the Play Area Inspection was
send via email to all Councillors prior to the meeting. Councillors **NOTED** a
summary of the results as follows:-

Weald Common Play Area – OVERALL LOW RISK	
Risk Assessment	Number of occurrences
Very Low	4
Low	12
Moderate	0
High	0
Very High	0

Memorial Playing Fields Play Area – OVERALL MODERATE RISK	
Risk Assessment	Number of occurrences
Very Low	8
Low	17
Moderate	1 (basketball court – not PC)
High	0
Very High	0

Thornwood Play Area – OVERALL LOW RISK	
Risk Assessment	Number of occurrences
Very Low	7
Low	20
Moderate	0
High	0
Very High	0

Councillors **NOTED** that the following items required action:-

- New Covid-19 Signs – cut back ties
- Thornwood Play Area – cut back bolt on cradle swing; remove rust on Rock and Cross; clean algae from Kick Wall and Wetpour.
- Weald Common Play Area – flat swing needs to be replaced; some fixings require tightening.
- Memorial Playing Fields Play Area – possibly repaint yellow gate.

Councillors **AGREED** that the PFO should arrange to get the work completed.

The PFO stated that everything that had been noted was either low or very low risk. It was noted that the moderate risk was for the basketball court which belongs to the Queens Hall. The PFO suggested that Members may wish to consider replacing some of the play equipment at the Memorial Playing Fields Play Area as it is very dated, specifically the flat swings which are over 25 years old. The PFO confirmed that the proposal would be included as an item for consideration at the Precept and Budget Meeting. It was noted that the Clerk would also be looking to see if there is any grant funding available. Cllr Buckley referred to the assessment for the Memorial Playing Fields Play Area and asked why the Parish Council had to accept a moderate risk if it related specifically to the basketball court. The PFO advised that there was an agreement made some years ago to include it under the surrounding area which saved the Queens Hall from having to have a separate Risk Assessment carried out. It was noted that any issues highlighted are passed on to the Queens Hall Management Committee.

E20.25 ANNUAL TREE RISK ASSESSMENT

Councillors **NOTED** that the Annual Tree Risk Assessment had been undertaken on 11th September 2020. The assessment is a Level 1 arboricultural assessment, or hazard tree audit, which is undertaken to identify, by way of visual inspection, those trees which are exhibiting defects likely to cause a hazard within the next 12 months. It was noted that the assessment had been carried out by a chartered arboriculturist and environmentalist for all trees on land owned or managed by the Parish Council. A copy of the full report was emailed to Councillors prior to the meeting.

Councillors **NOTED** that the work priority is categorised into low, medium and high. The results indicated that there are 5 trees requiring remedial work, between low to medium risk. The PFO advised that the remedial work would need to be undertaken within the next 12 months and proposed that she obtain a quote for the works which would be circulated for Members to decide how they wished to proceed. The Chairman expressed concern that in previous reports there had been incidents of a tree reported as requiring work, however, the tree would not be listed the following year. The PFO referred to the report and stated that she was aware of two trees listed as having a medium risk which required work to be carried out. She advised that the trees in question are on the Thornwood Nature Reserve and Thornwood Allotments (the PFO indicated to where the trees are located by showing a map on screen). One specific tree is overhanging one of the allotment plots and needs to be removed. The PFO explained that the other trees on the Nature Reserve are under Countrycare's maintenance and details of these would be passed on to them to look at. The Chairman referred to the dead trees that had been mentioned and asked if they needed to be removed. The PFO confirmed that if the report has indicated that the trees are dead, they would need to be removed. It was noted that all the trees listed would need to have work carried out within the next year. The PFO stated that she was unable to say how much this would cost which is why she had proposed that she obtain a quote. Cllr Mrs Grigg requested the PFO to obtain two quotes from different companies in order for Members to compare. The Chairman advised that he would email (to the PFO) the contact details of a Tree Surgeon who had recently undertaken work for North Weald Village Hall.

E20.26 ALLOTMENTS

Councillors **NOTED** the following items which were reported at the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday, 5th October 2020:-

a) General Report

Councillors **NOTED** that the majority of Allotments are now rented out. A waiting list has been set up.

b) De Allotmentisation of Hastingwood B

Councillors **NOTED** that work continues with this project. A report was attached to the Agenda.

c) Community Allotment Garden at Thornwood on Charlie's Garden

Councillors **NOTED** that work to the garden had started, with a substantial amount of clearance works. Some funding had been received via a donation from the now defunct Thornwood Residents Association. The Clerk confirmed that the donation amounted to just over £1600, which would benefit the project immensely. The person who had donated the funds, a former officer of the Residents Association, met with Cllr Mrs Hawkins and Elaine Davis and discussed the surplus funds. Between them, they had agreed that these funds should be specifically spent on this project as it would benefit all the residents in Thornwood. The Clerk confirmed that a Thank You letter would be sent to the person who provided the money.

d) Community Allotment Garden Wheelers Farm Gardens

Councillors **NOTED** that EFDC Community Worker Victoria Robertson had advised That she hoped to begin the Community Allotment Garden for socially isolated residents who live in North Weald. The garden will be a great place to work together and develop a lovely educational space that can be enjoyed by the current people on our allotments and for a few more to join in. All would gain an increased working knowledge of plants, how they develop and different ways to grow them, using innovative ways including organic and modern. Every step of the way EFDC Community Workers would work with our Allotment Wardens to make sure the Council and the existing allotment holders are all happy. There would be no more than 6 people on the Community Plot at any one time. Councillors **NOTED** that the Clerk had approached County Cllr Anthony Jackson to see if grant funding could be obtained from the Locality Fund for this innovative project.

e) Works to Header Wall at Wheelers Farm Gardens Allotments

Councillors **NOTED** that due to the creation of new homes on the Queens Road site adjacent to Wheelers Farm Gardens, strengthening works are required to the header wall located between the new development and the allotments. The Office Staff are liaising with EFDC, the allotment wardens and tenants regarding this matter. It was noted that staff have been advised that the works will be completed using hand tools with no disruption (other than noise) to the allotment tenants. Works are expected to begin mid October.

The PFO updated Members with regard to the Community Allotment Garden at Wheelers Farm Gardens and advised that the Clerk had been told by ECC Cllr Jackson that it looked as though the grant application (for £1,000) may be successful.

E20.27 CEMETERY

Councillors **NOTED** the following which was reported at the Parish Council Meeting on Monday, 5th October 2020:-
Councillors **NOTED** that the contractor has completed the maintenance of the benches. It was noted that the works to replant the central gardens in the Gardens of Remembrance should start in October.

The Clerk advised that on a recent visit to the cemetery, it had been noted that not all of the work had been completed. The Chairman confirmed that he would visit the cemetery in the next week.

E20.28 GARDEN BY THE PARADE OF SHOPS, NORTH WEALD

Councillors **NOTED** that the on-going maintenance of the garden by the parade of shops in North Weald was discussed by the Chairman of the Parish Council in his report given at the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday, 5th October 2020. It was noted that the Chairman, in conjunction with the Clerk, had agreed to spend £70.00 on initial work to cut back overgrown shrubs and tidy the area. Approximately £50.00 per month is to be spent on maintaining the area. Councillors were reminded that the Council had attracted five or six local businesses who sponsor the garden on an annual basis. The sponsorship monies help to meet the maintenance cost and the cost of any new plants. It was noted that the Parish Council's Cemetery Groundsman would be undertaking the work.

The Chairman referred to the monthly cost and asked if it would be reviewed. The PFO advised that it had only been agreed for 1 year and said that there is money in the earmarked reserve to cover the maintenance costs. The PFO advised Members that a suggestion had been put forward by Cllr Ms Coop-Rodia, which was to seek volunteers to undertake the future maintenance of the garden as a community project. The PFO suggested that Members may wish to bear this in mind over the next 12 months.

E20.29 WOODLAND TRUST EASTERN CLAYLANDS LANDOWNER TREE PACKS 2020/21

Councillors **NOTED** that the Clerk had applied for two packs of trees from the Woodland Trust (approximately 100 trees) which would be picked up in February 2021. The PFO said that Members would need to start thinking about where the trees could be planted and to consider that in conjunction with the next item on the agenda regarding the Essex Forest Initiative. The Clerk confirmed that the trees were a mixture of indigenous species and would be supplied as saplings. The packs will include posts and covers. The Chairman mentioned the saplings that were planted on Weald Common a few years ago which were subsequently damaged. The Clerk said that the Weald Common saplings were intended to be a Memory Wood, however they were vandalised and she was now wary of planting any trees. The Chairman said that a lot of thought would need to be given to the best places to plant the saplings so that they are not damaged. The Clerk said that volunteers would be needed to check the saplings once they had been planted.

Members discussed various sites around the Parish which may potentially benefit from additional tree planting. Cllr Buckley said that his preference would be for trees to be planted on the land opposite the Debt of Honour to provide a screen to cover the brick building. He also mentioned the site of the old play area at Weald Common. The Chairman suggested areas on Weald Common which do not appear to be popular. The PFO reminded Members of the proposal mentioned in EFDC's Green Strategy which was for part of Weald Common to be changed and altered as a small forest. The PFO said that there are a number of things that would need to be considered before that could happen, for example establishing ownership of the land and what can and cannot be done with it. The Clerk referred to the land at Weald Common owned by the Parish Council and confirmed that it is owned in perpetuity and that the perpetuity is for 80 years.

Councillors **AGREED** that the PFO would circulate details of the Parish Council's land ownership for Members to consider if it would be reasonable to plant trees on a particular site.

E20.30 ESSEX FOREST INITIATIVE

This item was discussed in conjunction with the previous agenda item.

E20.31 PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY ADJACENT TO CEMETERY

Councillors **NOTED** that the Clerk continues to receive complaints regarding bikes accessing the golf course via the public right of way adjacent to the cemetery. The new gateway is now in place, however as the gate is not locked, access to the site

by the bikers cannot be stopped. Members **NOTED** that residents are continuing to report incidents to the Police and agreed that this is the correct course of action to take.

E20.32 CHRISTMAS TREE – VILLAGE GREEN

Councillors discussed the arrangements for Christmas and **AGREED** the following:-

- Christmas Tree to be purchased for the Village Green (as in previous years).
- Extra outdoor Christmas Lights to be provided for the Parish Hall at Thornwood.
- A contribution of £40.00 to be made to Hastingwood Village Hall, to be used towards the purchase of a Christmas Tree.

The PFO informed Members that Cllr Bedford had put forward a proposal to encourage residents of North Weald Village to decorate the outside of their properties with Christmas Lights this year. Cllr Bedford had suggested that this may help to cheer people up and bring some light to a dark situation. Members **NOTED** that Cllr Bedford had said that he would make the arrangements to advertise the proposal, which would include a leaflet drop to promote it. Cllr Bedford had asked if Members would be willing to offer a £20.00 voucher for the best dressed window or house.

Following discussion, Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE, suggested that residents could register to confirm that they are happy to have their house photographed to be judged. It was suggested that the Parish Council's Press Officer could be involved with this, as similar events have taken place in Ongar and Epping in the past. The Clerk suggested that the proposal be trialled in North Weald for this year and, if successful, the whole Parish could be included in 2021. Councillors **AGREED** that they would be happy to support the proposal.

Meeting closed: 2pm

Signed

Date