



MINUTES

Meeting: ENVIRONMENTAL
COMMITTEE

Date: 22nd February 2021

Time: 7.00pm

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

PRESENT:

Councillors (11) G Mulliner (Chairman), A Buckley, Mrs Jackman MBE, Mrs Hawkins,
A Tyler, Mrs Grigg, B Clegg, T Blanks, R Spearman, Ms Coop-Rodia,
M Stroud

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)

The Clerk confirmed which Councillors were Members of the Environmental Committee and therefore able to vote on decisions. Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE queried as to when the name for the Committee had been changed from Environment to Environmental.

E20.33 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (2)

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs P Etherington and A Irvine*

**Received too late to be reported at the meeting*

E20.34 OTHER ABSENCES (0)

E20.35 MINUTES

Members **APPROVED** as a correct record the Minutes of the Meeting held on 19th
October 2020.

E20.36 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Ms Coop-Rodia declared a non pecuniary interest with regard to any item
concerning the allotments.

E20.37 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC - None present.

E20.38 PLAY AREAS

The Principal Financial Officer gave a verbal report regarding Play Areas.

Councillors **NOTED** that there had been an issue with the weekly play area checks
not being received, however, this was now resolved. The Parish Council's contractor
continues to inspect the play areas once a week and indicates on the reports whether
or not a COVID spray has been undertaken (this is dependant on the weather). It was
noted that all three play areas remain open at the current time. With regard to the
play area in Thornwood, there are some works that are being carried out which
includes replacement of the basketball backing, a new table and bench. The PFO is

currently trying to source new discs for the cradle swing, which is proving to be challenging. It was noted that there are a couple of items which still require action from the Annual Play Area Inspection Report.

E20.39 ALLOTMENTS

a) Correspondence from local resident

Councillors **NOTED** the contents of a letter received from a local resident regarding Wheelers Farm Gardens Allotment Site. The Chairman advised that he had discussed the matter with the Clerk and suggested that a response be sent to acknowledge receipt and confirm that the comments have been noted. All Members **AGREED**.

b) Review of Allotment Fees

Councillors were asked to **CONSIDER** if there was a need to increase the allotment fees for 2022/23. Members were reminded that the Parish Council is required to give 12 months notice of any increase. It was noted that for the new financial year (2021/2022) there was no increase as, due to the Coronavirus outbreak, all committee meetings were cancelled. Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE said that, due to present circumstances, she would **PROPOSE** that the fees remain. Cllr Mrs Hawkins **SECONDED** the proposal. The Chairman asked Members to raise their hands if they were in favour. All **AGREED** unanimously. Therefore the fees for 2022/2023 will be:

- Under 50sqm = Extra Small £24.00
- Between 51sqm & 100sqm = Small £26.00
- Between 101sqm & 150sqm = Average £27.00
- Between 151sqm & 200sqm = Large £31.00
- Over 201sqm = Extra Large £33.00

c) Annual Allotment Holders Meeting

Members **NOTED** that the Annual Allotment Meeting has had to be postponed until such time as Government guidance allows face to face meetings. The Clerk said that the meeting may be able to be held in September. Cllr Ms Coop-Rodia advised that allotment tenants were keen to have a meeting sooner rather than later and suggested that it could be held via ZOOM. The Clerk stated that around 50 to 60 people attend the meeting and many of those may not be able to access ZOOM and she would not want anyone to feel excluded. The Clerk said that if the meeting is scheduled for September, there would be some positive news to share and mentioned the Community Allotment project at Wheelers Farm Garden site and the Community Garden at Thornwood. Cllr Mrs Grigg **PROPOSED** that the meeting should be postponed until September. All Members **AGREED**.

d) Allotment Warden – Hastingwood A

Members were reminded that the Allotment Sub-Committee currently carry out the role of Allotment Warden at Hastingwood A. The PFO said that Members may recall that there had been a couple of allotment tenants who were interested in becoming a warden, however, no further interest has been shown in wishing to undertake the role. The Chairman said that he believed it had worked quite well for the past few years and asked if all Members would be in favour of continuing. Cllr Mrs Grigg said that she would second the proposal. All Members raised their

hands and **AGREED** that the Allotment Sub-Committee would retain this role for the forthcoming year.

e) Amendments to Allotment Tenancy Agreement – Rules, Regulations and Codes of Practice

Members **NOTED** that it had been necessary to update the Allotment Tenancy Agreement – Rules, Regulations and Codes of Practice. The document now incorporates the Tenancy Agreement, rather than having two separate documents. A number of changes had been made to the Rules and Regulations, in particular the sections regarding Beekeeping and Bonfires. The Chairman asked if an amendment could be made to No. 6 ‘Dogs’ and said would it be possible for a tenant’s dog to be allowed off the leash if the tenant’s allotment garden is enclosed by a secure fence. Cllr Ms Coop Rodia said that she would agree to the suggestion. All Members **AGREED**, the PFO confirmed that she would amend the wording accordingly.

The Chairman referred to Schedule 2, Terms specific to Queens Road tenants and asked if the parking spaces were within the allotment site. The Clerk stated that it was her understanding that there were 4 parking spaces located in Cyril Hawkins Court which would be shared with visitors. Cllr Ms Coop-Rodia stated that she had not seen any spaces clearly marked for visitors and asked where they were. The PFO said that she could check the plans to identify where they are located. Cllr Mrs Hawkins advised that there were two parking spaces outside every house and on entering the development, on the left-hand side, there are a row of 4 spaces marked out. Cllr Ms Coop-Rodia asked if it would be possible to contact the developers and ask if the spaces could be marked out for visitors and allotment tenants. Following further discussion, the PFO said that it was her understanding that the parking spaces on the new development were to be shared by visitors and allotment tenants and suggested that it may be worthwhile writing to the Queens Road allotment tenants regarding this. The Clerk said that she would contact EFDC regarding this matter. The Chairman asked if all Members were in favour of accepting the amendments to the Rules and Regulations. All Members raised their hands and **AGREED**.

e) Community Allotment Gardens – Wheelers Farm Gardens and Thornwood

Members **NOTED** that work to prepare both gardens in readiness for the Spring was now underway. Both Cllr Ms Coop-Rodia and Cllr Mrs Hawkins confirmed that all works are on target to be completed by 31st March 2021 in compliance with the conditions of the grant funding received towards these projects.

f) Car Park Surfacing – Wheelers Farm Gardens Allotment Site

Members recalled the discussion which took place at the Precept Meeting regarding the car park surface at Wheelers Farm Gardens Allotment site. It was noted that the Parish Council’s contractor had been asked to assess the car park and advise if heavy duty rubber grass matting would be suitable. The contractor had also been asked to suggest an alternative and was aware that both gravel and woodchip had been ruled out as unsuitable for this location. The Clerk advised that she had received two quotes for type 1 media as Cllr Coop-Rodia had expressed concern

that the 'eggshell' matting would not be sufficient. The cost for type 1 media would be around £6,000 / £7,000. Quotes are still awaited for the rubber grass (eggshell) matting. The Clerk said that considering only 3 or 4 cars can park in the car park, she believed that £7,000 is a lot of money to spend out for the type 1 media. It was noted that one person had refused to quote due to access problems. Cllr Ms Coop-Rodia said that she was concerned that if 'eggshell' is put down, it would be a short-term solution as the issue would potentially have to be addressed again in a couple of year's time. Cllr Ms Coop-Rodia said that she was aware, from discussions with the Parish Council's contractor, that both the Queens Hall and Hastingwood allotment site had the 'eggshell' matting and that it had more or less disappeared due to mud laying on top of it. Cllr Ms Coop-Rodia suggested that it may be worth, in the future, considering extending the car park spaces onto one of the allotment plots. Cllr Buckley referred to North Weald Village Hall and asked the Chairman if he knew how long ago the 'eggshell' matting had been laid in the car park, as it appeared to be very durable. The Chairman confirmed that it had been there a number of years.

Following further discussion, Members noted that the Clerk had also asked for a quote for tarmac, however, planning approval would be required if Council decided to use it. Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE asked if the matter could be included on the agenda for the next meeting for further discussion. Cllr Mrs Grigg suggested that the quotes be obtained and then the issue put to Full Council for a decision. All Members **AGREED**.

g) Perimeter – Queens Road Allotment Site / New Housing Development

Councillors noted the contents of an email received from District Councillor Holly Whitbread. The Clerk reported that EFDC were not going to replace the entrance gate to the allotment site or make repairs to the perimeter fence, however they are going to put in a ramp. Cllr Mrs Hawkins confirmed that the ramp was completed. The Clerk advised that where the fencing had been damaged, EFDC had arranged for planting along the perimeter. Cllr Ms Coop-Rodia reported that as the trees have been planted so near to the surface they will dry out and die. The Clerk advised that the Council had recently taken delivery of 200 whips and suggested that she could arrange for the Parish Council's contractor to plant some along the perimeter fence on the allotment side.

Cllr Ms Coop-Rodia asked what would be happening with regard to the fencing at the rear of the development. The Clerk stated that EFDC have said that they will not be doing anything to the fence as it is no different to what was there previously. The Clerk suggested that pyracantha could be planted on the allotment side of the fence and confirmed that there was enough money available in the Handyman fund to do this. Cllr Ms Coop-Rodia confirmed that she would contact the Parish Council's contractor regarding this.

h) New Gate / Adjacent Fence – access to Queens Road Allotments

Councillors **NOTED** that the Clerk is awaiting a quote for installation of a new gate. The Chairman referred to the perimeter fencing and the additional planting required and advised that he would visit the site the following day.

E20.40 CEMETERY

a) Cemetery Fees

Councillors were asked to consider a possible increase in cemetery fees for 2021/22. It was noted that the only increase to fees for the previous year was for the price of the memorial plaques. Following discussion, Members **AGREED** the following:

- The purchase of a plot in either the Hedges Section or Meadowbrook Section of the Lawn Cemetery to be increased by £25.00
- Interment in either the Hedges Section or Meadowbrook Section of the Lawn Cemetery to be increased by £25.00

The Clerk reported that she had received notification that the cost of a memorial plaque had been increased. Following discussion, Members **AGREED** to increase the cost of a plaque to £150.00 which would take into account the additional increase notified by the supplier.

b) Annual Audit – Topple Test and Memorial Survey

As reported by the Clerk at the Parish Council Meeting held on 1 February 2021, Members **NOTED** that the Annual Audit had been carried out at the Cemetery, which included the Annual Topple Test and a survey of the Memorials. Three Memorials were found to require work and the Clerk has written to the plot owners accordingly. The Clerk confirmed that she had received notification that action is to be taken on one of the memorials.

c) Benches

Members **NOTED** that 4 benches had recently been purchased are now held in stock for future use.

d) Parking

Members **NOTED** that it had been brought to the Clerk's attention that a number of regular visitors to the Cemetery have been experiencing problems with being unable to park in the layby outside the Cemetery Gates. The Clerk has been asked if it would be possible to issue keys to plot owners to enable them to park inside the Cemetery grounds. Members were asked to consider the potential security implications (ie., omitting to lock the gate on leaving) and also the possible impact on parking spaces for those attending funeral services. Cllr Buckley reported that he recently had a meeting with NEPP and concerns regarding the issue of parking were raised. Cllr Buckley said that he was assured that the layby does not form part of the Clearway. Cllr Buckley explained that the Clearway runs from the Cemetery and stops just before Art Nursery and on the opposite side of the road it starts at Chase Farm and stops just before the roundabout at Merlin Way. Cllr Buckley suggested that visitors could park in the car park opposite St Andrew's Church if the layby is full. He confirmed that regular meetings with EFDC are still taking place with concerns and suggestions being raised. Cllr Buckley expressed concern at the request to issue keys and said that this could cause more problems. Cllr Tyler said that he agreed with Cllr Buckley and said that he believed the Cemetery required more security not less and reminded Members that a statue had been stolen from the Cemetery not so long ago. Cllr Tyler expressed concern that it would be difficult to monitor the issue of keys and that there would potentially be other users parking in the car park.

Cllr Tyler said that the Cemetery is supposed to be a place of peace and tranquility and he would not want to see it turned into the next big car park for North Weald.

Cllr Blanks reported that he had not seen any signs or road markings to indicate that Vicarage Lane West was a free car area. He said that he had spoken with the owner of Art Nursery who had expressed concerns with regard to parking. Cllr Blanks asked what would happen when events such as Remembrance Sunday took place at the Church. Cllr Buckley advised that NEPP only manage the parking wardens. He said that a request has been made to EFDC for additional signage on Merlin Way and that he was aware that the Clearway signs have disappeared. He reiterated that a number of concerns had been raised with EFDC, which included those by Art Nursery. Cllr Buckley stated that he would be asking for an onsite meeting with EFDC and Highways. Cllr Buckley also advised that a request for restrictions on Church Lane has been made, in addition to reinstating the CCTV at the Cemetery. Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE said that she had been made aware that some of the HGV drivers may not be able to read the HMRC signage and asked if a request for pictorial signs could be made. The Clerk confirmed that she would make a note of this.

The Chairman asked Members if they were in agreement not to issue keys to the Cemetery Gates. All Members **AGREED**.

E20.41 TREE PLANTING – SITE OF OLD PLAY AREA, WEALD COMMON

Members **NOTED** that the Parish Council's contractor had collected 200 whips which had been applied for from the Woodland Trust. Cllr Buckley reported that the whips are ready for planting and suggested that 90 be planted on the site of the old play area, with additional whips planted in the area to the left of the football pitch. In addition, Cllr Buckley suggested that whips could be planted to disguise the brick building on the opposite side of the road to the Debt of Honour. Cllr Mrs Grigg supported the suggestion and said that it would be a good use of trees and great for the landscape. The Clerk suggested that the area at Weald Common could be marked with a plaque which would identify that the trees have been planted by the Parish Council. Cllr Tyler suggested that area could be named in memory of Cllr Brian Eldridge. All Members **AGREED**. The Chairman suggested that it should be publicised to inform people of what the Council is doing. It was agreed that the wording on the plaque should read:

“Planted by North Weald Bassett Parish Council, Eldridge Coppice”

E20.42 FLOODING – WEALD COMMON

a) Site Meeting

Members **NOTED** that the Clerk and the Chairman of the Parish Council had recently met with Trevor Baker, EFDC's Principal Engineer for Environmental Protection & Drainage, at Weald Common to discuss possible solutions to alleviate the problems experienced with the land flooding. Cllr Buckley explained that the water is running down from the top of the football pitch, is collecting under the safety surfacing of the new play area, runs down to the site of the old play area and then runs through to a small ditch in front of a row of trees which leads onto the land owned by the Village Hall. Cllr Buckley that the issue is making the play area totally unusable. He said that Trevor Baker had suggested that if a French Drain is

made across the field, it may help to stop the water from collecting under the play area and divert it across to the ditch near to the entrance of Tempest Mead. It was noted that Trevor had agreed to speak with Pearl (who had provided a quote for the to undertake drainage works in this area, as discussed at the Precept Meeting) to ascertain if the suggestion would be feasible, how long it would take and the costs involved. Cllr Tyler expressed concern that the Council could be spending a lot of money, he said that the area is a Flood Plain and that it should be taken into account that it had been a particularly wet Winter. He expressed concern as to where the water would drain away to and reminded Members of the flooding that had occurred in the village in the past. Cllr Tyler said that he believed the play area should be closed during the Winter months.

The Chairman asked the Clerk if there would be a possibility of applying for grant funding. The Clerk said that Trevor Baker had said that there could be some money available from EFDC. The Clerk has asked Cllr Chris Whitbread who said that there could be some funds available for projects, however, applications would have to be made after April. The Clerk mentioned that Trevor had said that he would also speak to the Environment Agency. Cllr Mrs Grigg advised that she had received a response from EFDC with regard to the land by the Bowls Club and said that some remedial work is to be carried out.

The Clerk suggested that the Council waits for the response from Trevor Baker, as it will not be a short-term solution. The Clerk said that she believed the best scenario would be to close the play area from the end of October until March every year. The Clerk said that the wet pour is acting like a sponge, the PFO said that she had seen underneath the wet pour during one of the inspections and expressed concern that, as a parent, you would not want your child to be using the play area at the current time. Cllr Buckley reiterated what Trevor Baker had said, that by putting in a French Drain it would help to alleviate the problem, it would not get rid of the water completely, but divert it hopefully away from the play area. The Clerk advised that Trevor had also said that if the Council does its homework properly and shows that it is taking care of the environment, looking after street furniture, trees, etc., and includes that information with any grant funding applications it should help in the decision making. Cllr Mrs Grigg asked if a common sense approach could be made with regard to the closure of the play area, taking into account the weather conditions at the time. She suggested that the Chairman, the Chairman of this Committee and the Clerk make the decision that the play area is not closed if the weather is dry. The Clerk referred back to Cllr Tyler's comments and said that he was right in what he had said with regard to the weather conditions in 2020, and reported that Trevor Baker had also said the same.

b) Weald Common Play Area

It was noted that this matter had been discussed in conjunction with the previous item.

E20.43 REFLECTION GARDEN, NORTH WEALD

Councillors *NOTED* that the Clerk is still looking for a viable project for the painted stones. It was noted that no other Rainbow Stones had been received and that the

Clerk was still awaiting a response from the Youth Council. The Blue Reflection Bench will be installed during March by the flagpole. Cllr Mrs Hawkins mentioned that the blue bench had recently been installed by the play area in Thornwood.

E20.44 STREET FURNITURE

Councillors *NOTED* maintenance is to be carried out on all Parish Council owned notice boards, bus shelters and seats / benches as soon as the weather is dry enough. Monies from the Handyman Fund are to be used to finance this work.

Meeting closed: 8.17pm

Signed

Date