

FOUR MARKS PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Open Space Committee
Held on Wednesday 4th August 2021 commencing at 6.00pm at Four Marks Sports Pavilion**

MEMBERS PRESENT:	Cllr Anne Tomlinson (Chair), Cllrs Neil Bonter, John Davis, Janet Foster and Reg Pullen
IN ATTENDANCE:	Sarah Goudie (EO) Jo Tsigarides (AEO) One member of the public
APOLOGIES:	None

21.61 OS OPEN SESSION/PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The member of the public in attendance had noticed that there had been an application for metal detecting and queried whether or not there is a currently a policy on this as he had not managed to find one on the website. He was told that this was the first application that the Council has received, hence there being no policy to date and that a further discussion would take place in the meeting.

Cllr Davis referred to the recent meeting of the Benians Committee where the issue of dog fouling on the football pitch was raised. In light of the decision to convert the cricket pitch to a general use area, it has been suggested that the football pitch side is a 'dogs on leads' area and the cricket pitch side becomes a 'dogs off of leads' area, in the hope that the dog fouling would be reduced on the football pitch. It was agreed to discuss this fully as an Agenda item on 1st September 2021.

Cllr Davis reported that there had been a considerable amount of mess at the children's play area that morning which seemed to be the result of an evening gathering. It appears that there was possibly a barbeque and the AEO has been asked to create a social media post reminding people that barbeques are not permitted in this area.

The Family Support worker from COGS has contacted the AEO to extend great thanks for granting permission and accommodating their planned events in July. Unfortunately, due to the inclement weather, the Picnic that was due to take place on 11th July 2021 had to be relocated to an indoor venue, but nonetheless they are grateful for the support shown by the Council and specifically this Committee.

With reference to a point raised that the Open Session on 7th July 2021, the AEO has contacted the website host and has been informed that they do not offer a data capture service for the purpose of automatically sending out information such as Agendas but have provided details of other agencies that may offer this service if it is something that the Committee wishes to pursue. Cllr Bonter expressed that he thinks that this is important to demonstrate that the Council is proactive in trying to engage the community. It was decided that a separate group would be formed for the purpose of improving communications. The AEO will organise this and try and obtain data from the website host regarding the amount of people visiting the website.

There were no further items to raise under the Open Session, therefore the meeting commenced at 6.13pm. Standing Orders were applied.

21.62 OS APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

21.63 OS DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

21.64 OS COMMITTEE MINUTES

It was RESOLVED to approve the Minutes of the Open Space Committee Meeting, previously circulated, held on Wednesday 7th July 2021 following proposal by Cllr Foster , seconded by Cllr Pullen , and agreed by all Councillors as a true reflection of the meeting and would be signed by the Chairman at the next meeting in person.

21.65 OS ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

21.65.1 Uplands Lane Overhang Maintenance

The AEO advised the Committee that there is an issue with an overhang on Uplands Lane. As the Committee had not discussed this before, the AEO has sought an indicative cost from a contractor that has been previously used and completed tasks such as these to a high standard. It was RESOLVED to accept the quote as it was deemed reasonable for the amount of work involved and there is confidence in this contractor.

.21.65.2 Metal Detector Application

A local student has been in contact to ask for permission to metal detect on land at Swelling Hill Pond and Lymington Bottom Green. The Council does not currently have a policy regarding the use of metal detectors and it was noted that the individual does not state that they are part of any approved programmes of archaeological or historical research, hold any license through the NCDM or have any insurance in place.

Following a discussion, it was RESOLVED to decline the application and to monitor the number of future requests before drafting a specific policy. Cllr Foster suggested that in the communication with the applicant to advise them of the decision, they are given some advice about publications that may aid them in their research.

21.65.3 Goal Post Relocation/New net installation cost

A price was quoted for new nets for the training goal posts, but there is an additional cost to install these. Alongside this, the EO had a discussion with a resident and she has been advised that there are additional sockets which run horizontally alongside the goal posts. This option would make the goal posts much cheaper and easier to relocate.

The AEO has received a cost for installing the new nets but unfortunately, the contractor who has been contacted has quoted one price for relocating the goal posts, installing the new nets and also steadying a piece of adult gym equipment which was a separate request rather than offering a breakdown of costs. The AEO has requested a more detailed breakdown and will email the Committee for approval.

21.65.4 Fire Engine Resurfacing Quotes

Three companies have been approached to provide quotes for the resurfacing of the area around the fire engine. Unfortunately, only two costs were available for the meeting and the Committee has asked that the third is obtained before a decision is made. Cllr Davis noted that the RoSPA inspection took place following a period of heavy rain and so the surface at the time appeared much worse and it was concluded that this task is not urgent and so there is not an issue in delaying this decision until the next meeting.

It was asked that the AEO also ensures that Quote one includes the disposal of the existing matting and also whether other colours are available.

The AEO did approach all three companies to ask about a discount for repeat business over a term of three years etc but due to fluctuations in the cost of materials due to Covid and Brexit, none of the three companies were prepared to commit to fixed prices for long term projects or discounts. It was noted that company one is changing their terms of business to honour quotes for seven days rather than usual thirty due to market conditions.

21.65.5 Gardener Applications

Subsequent to the Open Spaces meeting on 7th July 2021, the AEO was contacted by two further candidates for the gardening role and all three applicants had an informal meeting at Oak Green parade with a combination of Councillors and support staff.

Applicants one and two have also submitted further design ideas to support their applications. Cllr Foster and the EO attended all of the meetings and so shared their opinions with the Committee. Candidates two and three impressed with their design ideas and enthusiasm for the job. It was decided that applicant two would be more suitable for a design project such as the one that is being considered the cemetery as this appeared to be their strength.

Applicant three is to be awarded the ongoing six hour gardening maintenance contractor work with an initial project to weed and clear the Oak Green flower beds which they estimated would take them one day. Following this, they will be asked to submit a plan and cost for proposed plants for this area. They will then be asked to implement and help with wildflower areas and general work within the Parish. It was also noted that they may also be able to help with grass cutting and footpath maintenance if necessary.

21.66 OS ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

21.66.1 Summary and review of the RoSPA inspection

As requested at the previous meeting, the AEO has been in contact with Alton Town Council to find out what their best practise is for their heavily used play areas. They have a grounds team who complete a weekly check and perform minor maintenance tasks, along with a monthly written report following an inspection from a professional inspector. They then have an annual report again compiled by an external agency and submit this to their insurers. They have advised that the cost of the monthly report for all of their play areas is approximately £200 and have given details of the company that undertake this for them.

The Committee concluded that the regular checks that are completed by Cllrs Foster and Davis are adequate for the size of the children's play area and that this system has been successful in identifying problems so that they are dealt with. The Committee thanks the Councillors involved for their commitment to the inspections.

Following a discussion at the last OS meeting regarding the size of the shakes in the timber equipment, Cllr Foster has raised an enquiry about what action should be taken if a shake does exceed 8mm and will advise the Committee when she receives a response.

21.66.2 Full Parish Tree Inspection

Whilst reviewing the Parish Tree Management Policy, it was noted that there had not been a full tree inspection since 2018.

The AEO has contacted three arboricultural inspectors to obtain quotes for a full inspection but has been informed by the person who completed the 2020 interim inspection that this was very full and detailed and would not vary from a full tree inspection. He has offered to complete a further inspection at a reduced rate with the inclusion of Kingswood Copse if the Council wishes. The AEO was asked to clarify that he would do a full tree inspection or whether this just includes the trees that are of concern.

It was suggested that based on a review of the 2020 report in comparison to the 2018 report, the Committee will be able to conclude what action to take and will be able to determine how in depth the 2020 report was. The AEO will make further investigations and also pursue the other two estimates for comparison purposes.

21.67 OS AREA UPDATE AND REPORTS

21.67.1 Area Update

Cllr Bonter advised that he had contacted a contractor that is scheduled to complete some electrical work to see if they would revisit their quote for the tennis court flood lights as the Committee had been surprised at the cost. He was told that they would be prepared to do this but has had no further contact with them since and it was agreed that the AEO would contact them as they are also supposed to be agreeing a date for separate instruction.

Cllr Pullen queried when the various items would be installed at the A31/Telegraph Lane junction as he felt that this project was taking a considerable amount of time. He was advised that following the last OS Committee meeting, the AEO has been in contact with the successful contractor and is awaiting a date from them to install the items. They were sent a message prior to the meeting to try and obtain a fixed date. Cllr Foster asked the AEO to ensure that the contractor checks for electrical cables prior to completing any work.

The EO reported that she had been advised a works order had been produced for the speed limit repeater signs on Blackberry Lane. Implementation should take place sometime this Autumn. She also asked that phase two of the village gateway sign project be included on next month's Agenda.

The EO advised that she had been sent a new link to report the missing 30mph sign on Hawthorn Lane and that she would complete this task.

21.67.2 Footpath Strategy

The AEO advised that footpath maintenance has been an issue recently. The priority cut which was scheduled to take place on 4th July 2021 from EHDC has been delayed and in response to several resident complaints about various footpaths, it has, at times, been difficult to keep them accessible.

Cllr Davis questioned why the Parish Council is continuing to take responsibility for the maintenance of the footpaths when it is the statutory duty of the landowners to keep the footpaths clear. It was noted that historically, the Parish Council has maintained the footpaths and that it had become an established and expected practise. It is believed that residents have come to expect this as part of their precept contribution.

The AEO noted that Alton Ramblers have helped with the clearance of footpaths eight and eighteen and that they were under the impression initially that someone from the Parish Council would be assisting them in identifying footpaths that needed cutting and potentially helping with some tasks. This has not happened to date, but the Committee would like to build on the relationship with the Ramblers and include their views when considering which footpaths to include in the 2022 priority cut return.

It was decided that between the current OS contractors and the gardeners that are going to be appointed along with some additional help with Alton Ramblers, there are ample resources to deal with the footpath maintenance.

21.67.3 Queen's Platinum Jubilee Working Party

The AEO advised that there is an initial meeting of this working party planned for the 8th September 2021 and that various organisations within the village have been contacted to attend.

21.67.4 Environmental Issues

21.67.4.1 Water refill point

Previously, the Committee had expressed concerns over the health and safety of the water refill points, specifically around the bottles that people might use and cross contamination. This was based on some expert opinion that was given to Cllr Foster. The company that has the agreement to provide the water refill point have been contacted and provided some assurances that the Committee were satisfied with. It was RESOLVED to go ahead with this project.

21.67.4.2 Proposal to review Climate Emergency Action Plan

It was suggested that as Environmental issues are now a standing item on the OS Agenda, that it would be a good opportunity to review the Climate Emergency Action Plan and it was agreed that this should be an Agenda item on 1st September 2021. There will be consideration in this discussion about the proposed new community building and strategies for implementing the desired objectives of the Committee with or without the building and the potential it has to embrace environmental initiatives.

21.67.5 Wildflower Strategy

Contact with various organisations including Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, local residents and The Four Marks Horticultural Society have led to the conclusion that there does need to be some preparation of the ground (scarifying) in order for wildflowers to thrive. As wildflower areas and the practise of scarifying may divide resident opinion, it was agreed to revisit the areas that were initially proposed to become the wildflower areas and use less prominent areas. The EO suggested a strip along the back of the recreation ground (South side) and also some areas on Lymington Bottom Green. It was agreed that once the new gardening team are recruited, a plan would be put in place in conjunction with them. It was also noted that some additional daffodil bulbs will need to be planted on Lymington Bottom Green.

21.67.6 10k Update

Currently, fifteen people have registered for the 10k and one for the 5k. Flyers have been given out at the Alresford 10k and also have been inserted into goody bags at the recent Hattingley Half which was a popular event. The AEO will continue to promote this and the school are producing their own poster for the Children's races.

21.68 The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.20pm.