

DITTON PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE **OPEN SPACES & AMENITIES** COMMITTEE HELD IN THE **COUNCIL CHAMBER** AT DITTON COMMUNITY CENTRE ON **MONDAY 17th FEBRUARY 2025**

PRESENT: CLLRS A WATERS (CHAIR), J COX (VICE-CHAIR), N NEWMAN, MRS L COX, MRS A THROSSELL, A R MULCUCK, MRS K NASH, MRS M NEWMAN
MRS N GREENAWAY (CLERK OF THE COUNCIL)
MRS L FITCHETT (ADMIN ASSISTANT)

399. **OPENING OF MEETING**

The meeting was opened by the Chair at 7.35pm.

400. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs Dearden. The previously notified reasons for absence were **ACCEPTED** and **APPROVED** and recorded in the absence book Ref. 572.

401. **DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Cllr Waters declared an interest in item 408, correspondence, as he lives in the same road.

402. **FINANCE**

(a) **Financial analysis – Month 10.**

READ and **NOTED**.

(b) **Sale of surplus equipment (Page 153, item 364(b)).**

It was **NOTED** that an offer of £300.00 (inc VAT) had been made by a local cricket club and this had been accepted and sale completed.

RESOLVED to approve the funds raised from the sale of surplus equipment be used towards the purchase of new grounds equipment required. (It was **NOTED** that the Grounds Supervisor requested a water bowser be purchased if sufficient funds available).

(c) **Infant School – Grounds Contract fee review**

It was **NOTED** that the previous 2 year's increases had been in the region of 10%. A 5% increase to cover staff cost increases was agreed to be more appropriate for this year 2025.

RESOLVED to apply a 5% increase to the infant school maintenance fee from 1st April 2025.

403. **ITEMS BROUGHT FORWARD FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

(a) Machinery report update

It was **NOTED** that the machinery report had not been updated as yet. It was further **NOTED** that this was not urgent as the Grounds Supervisor had given a report of any items of new equipment that were required prior to the budget setting last year.

(b) Trees

(i) Update on tree works inc Ransom strip and hedging (Page 154, item 365(b)(i))

It was **NOTED** that that the Ransom strip is now complete and trees for hedging are due for arrival in the week commencing 03 March 2025. Cllr Waters raised a question regarding tree works near the Vicarage and the lime tree on the village green at the corner of Brampton Field as this is bushy at the bottom and he believes this was on the current plan. The Admin Assistant is to request update from Grounds Supervisor re planned work for these trees. It was further **NOTED** that two tree's on Kiln Barn Rec bordering Pear Tree have not been pollarded as per the earlier schedule. **RESOLVED** to get an additional quote to go to full council to decide whether to proceed.

(ii) Follow up for suggestions for alternative species to replace memorial trees at NRRG and contact with families (Page 118, item 292(b))

It was **NOTED** that attempts to contact the family have been unsuccessful and therefore that the council proceed to replace those trees that have been affected.

(iii) Request for memorial tree on Village Green (Page 118, item 292(c))

It was **NOTED** that having further researched a Yew tree with experts it was confirmed to not be a suitable species for the location. The family have requested a 'Fastigata' (conical shape) tree, ideas shown were a Hornbeam 'Fastigata' or Flagpole Cherry Blossom. It was agreed that this will be put to the family for approval.

404. **TREES & PLANTING**

(a) Twinning 30th anniversary flowerbed

It was **NOTED** that a meeting had taken place with the chair of the Twinning Committee on 13/02/25. A summary of this meeting was shared and it was **NOTED** that it was decided to plant up a different flower bed to the one previously suggested on the verge outside of the main Community Centre entrance to commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the Twinning with Rang du Flier with Cornflowers in Blue/White/Red. The proposal to have a memorial stone in the flower bed was also **NOTED** and that Gallagher's had been approached by Cllr Kennedy to provide the stone. It was further **NOTED** that the twinning committee will contribute half of the planting costs and provide the plaque for the stone.

RESOLVED that work to clear the bed by the grounds team will begin immediately

405. **ALLOTMENTS** [general update]

It was **NOTED** that all four previously vacant plots had recently been re-let. It was noted that another name had been added to the waiting list and that there are a further

possible vacancies in the coming weeks/months. All apart from the two mentioned with exceptional circumstances have now paid the allotment fees in full.

RESOLVED to schedule the next allotment inspection for Friday 07/03/25.

406. **QUARRY**

(a) Request received from Councillor Mulcuck to discuss fenced off pond area.

It was **NOTED** at a previous meeting the Committee had decided it was not worth pursuing this project due to concerns raised regarding deep water and who would be responsible for the area. It was also **NOTED** that the local schools do not request to visit the conservation area or the quarry currently, so it is unlikely any would want to visit this area.

RESOLVED to ascertain who owns the land as DPC do not, before continuing further.

(b) Correspondence received regarding ruts

It was **NOTED** that another email has been received regarding tyre tracks and ruts in the quarry. Cllr Waters had inspected the ruts and photos were shared and considered to be not more than 15mm and therefore did not justify an emergency repair.

RESOLVED necessary repairs and maintenance in the quarry would be undertaken when ground conditions permit.

It was also **NOTED** that a reply had been received from Medway Valley Partnership and that they have confirmed that the Monkey Puzzle should be relocated.

RESOLVED that no other suitable location could be identified and as the resident had noticed that it was being 'eaten', it should be returned to them.

(c) Quarry Noticeboard

It was **NOTED** that the current notice board had been tidied up with a larger display. Estimated quotes for a replacement were given of between £190-£300. It was asked if it were possible to get a quote and then a grant for a 'Rustic Recycled Plastic' board rather than a regular aluminium one that the quote represents.

RESOLVED to continue researching.

407. **DRAFT STRATEGIES FOR RECREATION GROUNDS AND WAR MEMORIAL**

(a) War Memorial Update

The Chairman shared photographs of the war memorial original drawings from his visit to RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) Library and V&A Museum in London where he was able to view and photograph the original drawings of the War Memorial's architect - Gilbert Scott, who he also shared had designed both Battersea Power Station and Liverpool Cathedral. He also presented evidence that the original structure was surrounded by a chain and gatepost fence and close ups of the halo, hands feet and toes. It was agreed that the OSA Chairman should write a piece for the Gazette. He also agreed applying for a grant as whilst it has already been advised that a grant cannot be requested for cleaning and maintenance it can for repair or replacement of carving. It was noted that council is still waiting for a further quote from another supplier.

RESOLVED to keep this on the agenda going forward for progress but not urgent.

(b) Update on other areas

It was **NOTED** that New Road recreation ground vegetation clearance has been completed. The Chairman commented that the hedge had been severely cut back. Cllr Newman acknowledged the hard work the team had put into clearing this area and it was now very tidy and will grow back and be better managed going forward. The Chairman also reported that the tree catalogue is nearing completion and is being updated from the first draft document.

408. **CORRESPONDENCE**

A letter had been received from a resident in Cedar Close requesting steps at the rear of the property on the Recreation Ground. It was **NOTED** that the council had previously reviewed such permissions between 2010-2012. A timeline of events at that time was shared and discussed. Previously a solicitor had been consulted and residents had then been provided with a 'Memorandum of Agreement' to state that no further steps could be built.

RESOLVED to reply to the resident with copies of the Memorandum of Agreement and advise that the Council's opinion had not changed and therefore it could not agree to this request.

409. **CLOSURE**

The meeting closed at 8.35pm.

Chairman
3rd March 2025