

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE **OPEN SPACES & AMENITIES** COMMITTEE HELD IN THE **COUNCIL CHAMBER** AT DITTON COMMUNITY CENTRE ON **MONDAY 17th MARCH 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 L FITCHETT (ADMIN ASSISTANT)

434. **OPENING OF MEETING**

The meeting was opened by the Chair at 7.48pm.

435. **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. 575.

436. **DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interests.

437. **FINANCE**

(a) **Financial analysis – Month 11.**

READ and **NOTED.** Cllr Mulcuck asked for clarification re a costing. This was the cost of the repairs for Mess room heaters and toilets. It was explained that staff costs were significantly reduced this year and transferred to cover costs. Finance committee to put provision for year end.

(b) **Funds from sale of surplus equipment [page 169, item 402(b)] Water Bowser**

It was **NOTED** that this should be rolled forward under 1080 into next year's budget, in order to ring fence for this purpose.

(c) **Church Grounds Contract fee review**

READ and **NOTED.** Proposal for a 5% increase was agreed in line with other increases.

(d) **Playground surface repair quote.**

It was **NOTED** that the play surface tarmac is separating from the central play area concrete edging and a quote was presented to recut this tarmac and relay. In addition it was **NOTED** that the central Pear tree in the play area is causing root damage and lifting the tarmac surface. Discussions took place regarding appropriate actions from keeping the tree for shade and resurfacing with a risk roots will cause same damage later on to cutting back the tree roots and flattening surface, this was discussed as a

potential risk to both the health of the tree and stability. Ideas were discussed regarding other methods of providing shade i.e. a shelter or an umbrella from the brewery or moving the benches and a question was asked how far the root damage had travelled from the tree. An idea was put forward to have a cherry picker remove the tree and place elsewhere to save the tree as others did not want the tree felled. It was also agreed that as there were not the current funds this should go to the finance committee as an H&S issue and get a written advice regarding the tree and in the meantime cone off the cracked surface area until resolved.

(e) Kent Men of Trees subscription

RESOLVED to restart membership

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

(a) Machinery Report (update if available) [Page 170 item 403 (a)]

A draft version was shared but **NOTED** it is currently still in progress

(b) Trees

(i) Update on tree works, Hedging and other [Page 170 item 403(b)(i)]

Cllr Adlington asked if any feedback re previous work in conservation area had been received. It was **NOTED** that two residents had asked if work was completed as there was still some tidying up needed at the time of contact and this had been addressed as due to unforeseen circumstances the final waste removal had been delayed. It was further noted that this issue had been **RESOLVED**.

(ii) Memorial trees, NRRG Species and Village Green [Page 170,Item 403(b)(ii)(iii)]

It was explained that despite efforts to reach the original family for the memorial trees, efforts had been unsuccessful. It was suggested to research a quote for Swedish Whitebeam as the replacement species, as this is not susceptible to fire blight. It was confirmed that the Hornbeam Fastigiata tree was acceptable to the family seeking to plant a memorial tree on the village green.

RESOLVED To make this arrangements when planting season allows.

(iii) Quarry notice board replacement [Page 171, item 406 (b)]

The admin assistant reported that a new all year display had been added to the noticeboard which had improved the visual of the board for the moment. It was agreed to look again in the autumn if this deteriorates further.

(iv) Fenced off Pond Area request [Page 171 item 406 (b)]

It was **NOTED** that DPC are not the owners of the pond area as this belongs to the South Aylesford Retail Park Company and It was agreed that no further action can be taken.

439. **TREES & PLANTING**(a) Tree Survey complete

Chair confirmed that the Bare Leaf survey is completed. The NRRG list is being updated and this will incorporate any missing trees into it.

(b) Twinning 30th anniversary flowerbed update

Further to Cllr Kennedy's enquiry Gallagher's have agreed to donate a stone and deliver to the community centre in due course.

440. **ALLOTMENTS**a) Waiting list - current applicants

It was **NOTED** that there had been some recent movement regarding plot holders new plots will be offered to the current applicants from the list. A discussion took place regarding surrounding area's plot availability, including the estate belonging to Franklin Kidd Drive as this may have some now unused allotments for those out of parish that may look for plots.

RESOLVED to open up the waiting list, should it be cleared in the future and to contact Aylesford PC to understand their allotment situation.

b) Inspection update

It was **NOTED** that a recent inspection was carried out on 7/3/25. 2 plot holders have been contacted as there was little evidence of activity since last inspection. **RESOLVED** to carry out an inspection sooner to allow more time for others to show activity now the weather is getting warmer.

441. **QUARRY**(a) Correspondence received regarding tree cutting and ruts

It was **NOTED** that all contact from residents has been addressed. Most of the enquiries related to tidying up after work has been carried out, this had been delayed due to weather (ground surface conditions) and unforeseen circumstances relating to the truck. Essential work has been carried out in the quarry to meet H&S and LNR requirements, i.e. path clearances and Bee Cliff clearance which has been unpopular with some residents.

442. **DRAFT STRATEGIES FOR RECREATION GROUNDS AND WAR MEMORIAL**War Memorial update

It was **NOTED** that Burslem Stone Masons have visited the War Memorial and advised that it is structurally sound. The Jesus on the cross is not suitable in their opinion to be re-carved and the column appears stable. They have advised that any discussions regarding restoration or replacement would require the guidance of Historic England.

It was suggested to look at RBLI for possible upkeep. It was agreed to continue investigating further.

443. **CORRESPONDENCE**

Larkfield 10K event - request for consideration

It was **RESOLVED** to discuss this in its entirety at the next full council meeting as more time is needed.

444. **CLOSURE**

The meeting closed at 8.43pm.

Chairman
7th April 2025