

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL
Environment & Leisure Committee
Minutes of the meeting held on
15th November 2021 at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors: T McMahon Chairman
C Copleston Substitute
E Cooper
Y Farrell
R Morgan
A Slough
S Thorne

Officers: Clare Evans Town Clerk
Tony Luff Head of Grounds Operations
Louise Senior Head of Democratic Services

Public: 3

Apologies: Councillors: D Dixon-Wilkinson

Also present: S Goodchild
J Carroll

11838 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Dixon-Wilkinson (Cllr Copleston substituted)

11839 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

A member of the public asked whether any members of the committee had an interest in item 13, Parkside benches or were a member of Parkside Ward Action Group.

There were no declarations of interest declared.

11840 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

11841 MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 20th September 2021.

Resolved: To confirm the minutes of the Environment & Leisure Committee meeting held on 20th September 2021 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

11842 MINUTES OF WORKING GROUPS

Allotment Working Group 24th August 2021

Allotment Working Group 5th October 2021
(Draft)

In addition, members were referred to draft Minutes of the Allotments Working group held on 5th October. At this meeting it was resolved to recommend to Environment & Leisure Committee the approval of the draft Tenancy Agreement. As this project was moving forwards it was considered prudent to bring this forward to this meeting for formal approval.

An amendment to the officer recommendation was proposed by Cllr Morgan, seconded by Cllr Farrell, to read:
To approve the Allotment Tenancy Agreement, subject to the word 'bush' being removed from point 8j

The officer recommendation read: To approve the Allotment Tenancy Agreement

Members were in favour of the amendment.

Members voted in favour of the amended recommendation.

Resolved:

- 1. To receive the minutes detailed above.**
- 2. To approve the Allotment Tenancy Agreement, subject to the word bush being removed from point 8J.**

11843 TREE SURVEY WORK

Members were advised of required tree work resulting from the findings of the tree survey.

Immediate work included:

- East End Willow Tree was dead and required felling and the other Willows needed pollarding at a total cost of £2730 (including replanting)
- Two Sycamore trees needed felling to ground level at a total cost of £1050 (including replanting)

Other necessary short term work was highlighted to members, however, as this additional work had not been budgeted for, members agreed to request that Town Council release funds from General Reserves to complete this work.

It was highlighted that several trees behind Moore Crescent Pavilion were strangled by ivy, members were advised the Grounds Team would tackle this issue when resources were available.

It was suggested that there could be some cost-free options for replacement trees, however, members stated a reluctance to replace the felled Sycamore trees with further Sycamore trees.

Members were advised that there was further medium term work due to be completed the following year.

An additional recommendation was proposed by: Cllr A Slough, seconded by: Cllr Morgan to read: To request Town Council authorises expenditure up to £17,000 from General Reserves to complete the required short term tree work throughout the town.

Members voted in favour of the additional recommendation.

- Resolved:**
- 1. For health and safety reasons, to authorise the above remedial works and to source suitable replacement trees.**
 - 2. To request Town Council authorises expenditure up to £17,000 from General Reserves to complete the required tree work throughout the town.**

11844 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT

Members received the income and expenditure report, highlighting significant variances, for Environment & Leisure Committee to date.

The cost of water at the Village Green was queried. Members were advised that the Houghton Hall Park Kitchen Garden used water from the pavilion, members were advised an invoice had been sent to Houghton Hall Park for their water usage.

11845 BUDGET 2022/23

For this committee the draft budget had been difficult to prepare notably due to:

- Price increases in materials possibly due to Brexit and Covid
- Uncertainties over gas and electric supply costs, members were advised that the Council's broker has suggested a 30% increase in budget

It was queried some pavilions had standing gas pipes on site and it was suggested that these be capped and removed. Members were advised that the cost to cap and remove the pipes was a significant cost in comparison to the minimal charge for the standing pipe to remain in situ. It was requested that the Town Clerk investigate.

Members discussed the viability of improving the pavilions energy efficiency and options for energy generation such as solar energy, it was suggested that grant funding may be required to enable financial capability for this to move forward.

Members were requested to note that the fees under this committee had yet to be set so some adjustments may be required.

11846 ENVIRONMENT & LEISURE FEES 2021/22

To set the hire charges under the control of Environment & Leisure Committee for 2022/23.

Members discussed the attributes of the Moore Crescent Pavilion and the Village Green Pavilion and some felt that the fees did not reflect the differences in the pavilions. The seasonal restrictions of the Moore Crescent Pavilion were highlighted to members, thus albeit a more desirable pavilion, it was less flexible in its hirability.

Members agreed that the pavilions needed more marketing, the option of increasing fees to cover marketing costs were discussed.

An amendment to the recommendation was proposed by: Cllr Copleston, seconded by, Cllr Farrell, to read:
To approve the Environment & Leisure Schedule of Fees for 2022/23 excluding the pavilion charges.

The original officer recommendation read: To approve the Environment & Leisure Schedule of Fees for 2022/23

Members were in favour of the amendment.

Members voted in favour of the amended recommendation.

Resolved: To approve the Environment & Leisure Schedule of Fees for 2022/23 excluding the pavilion charges.

11847 UPDATED POLICY CONSULTATION BRIEFING - ENVIRONMENTAL PERMITTING REGULATIONS

Members received a policy consultation briefing from NALC, on the current DEFRA Environmental Permitting Regulations consultation.

The briefing stated, the DEFRA consultation affected all burial authorities, and existing cemeteries/burial grounds. It also stated that if implemented, the proposals under consultation could reduce remaining burial capacity by up to 50%.

The stated purpose of the proposals was to improve the way groundwater activities, and some related surface water discharge activities, were regulated.

The closing date of the DEFRA consultation was 22nd December, while NALC had also asked for responses by 5pm on 27th November, to help inform it's response.

Advice was sought from the Council's cemetery consultants who advised that they were working with Defra on this guidance. It was also highlighted that everything that was published in this document was already in place under the EA Statutory guidance, as such concerns were expressed over the value of the article.

Members were advised that the 12-month survey which was underway, would have to be undertaken with any piece of prospective land.

11848 TITHE FARM ALL WEATHER UPDATE

Members were provided with a report to update members on the Tithe Farm Recreation Ground Sports Project.

Members shared their positive experiences of visiting Cranfield. Members agreed to invite the FA to come and present to councillors.

11849 THE QUEEN'S GREEN CANOPY

The Queen's Green Canopy (QGC) was a unique tree planting initiative created to mark Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee in 2022 which invited people from across the United Kingdom to "**Plant a Tree for the Jubilee**".

This had also been promoted by the National Association of Civic Officers (NACO).

Various grant sources were available including CBC and the Woodland Trust. It was thought that these were likely to be saplings rather than more mature trees.

Suggested locations included:

- Village Green in one of the raised beds (in the draft budget there was a funding request for a refurbishment of these)
- Adjacent to the Town Sign (in the draft budget there was a funding request for a refurbishment of this planting bed)
- Houghton Hall Park
- In the area of the willow trees on East End (a second existing tree may be removed as per a separate agenda item)
- In Moore Crescent (2 existing trees may be removed as per a separate agenda item)

Members discussed various pockets of land for tree planting, it was suggested that a public engagement strategy was undertaken.

Members agreed to defer this item to the next meeting and survey residents in the meantime.

11850 PUBLIC SEATING ON PARKSIDE RECREATION GROUND

Members were reminded that at the Town Council meeting on 4th October it was advised that a communication had been received from a member of the public on behalf of Parkside Ward Action Group, requesting additional seating to be installed on Parkside Recreation area. The Action Group offered the Town Council a financial contribution of £200.

Subsequent to the Town Council meeting that group were advised that the Environment and Leisure Committee would be looking into the provision of seating and would look at funding additional seating in the budget for 2022/23.

Members were invited to consider making budget provision in the draft budget for 2022/23 or to request approval from Town Council to use General Reserves to fund additional seating in 2021/22.

Given the size of the recreation ground and the fact that outside of the play areas themselves there was only 1 public bench available, it was suggested that 2 benches were purchased. A steel framed bench with back and side arms made from recycled materials was in the region of £500 each plus delivery, total approximately £1300.

Members discussed the need for the additional seating on Parkside Recreation ground and whether two new seats would be enough for such a large area of land.

Members agreed for two benches to be purchased now, and two further benches to be purchased in 2022 with dementia friendly colours considered.

Resolved: To request approval from Town Council to purchase 2 new benches for Parkside Recreation ground using general reserves up to a value of £1300.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.00pm

Dated this 14th day of February 2022

Chairman