



DRAFT MINUTES

Meeting: ENVIRONMENTAL
COMMITTEE

Date: 13th July 2020

Time: 7.00pm

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

PRESENT:

Councillors (9) G Mulliner (Chairman), A Buckley, Mrs Grigg, Mrs Jackman MBE,
Mrs Hawkins, T Blanks, R Spearman, A Tyler, Ms Wood

Also in Attendance (3)

Susan De Luca, Clerk to the Council
Adriana Jones, Principal Financial Officer
Joanna Tyler, Senior Administrative Officer

Members of the Public (0)

E20.01 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

The Clerk stated that Members were asked to **NOTE** that no Elections should take place if someone currently holds office, however Members could agree that the current Chairman remains in place until 6th May 2021, under the Coronavirus Bill. Members **NOTED** that they could still choose to show their support and take an 'informal' vote for the Minutes during these unprecedented times. All Members **AGREED** that Cllr Mulliner should remain in the Office of Chairman of the Environmental Committee for the current Municipal Year.

E20.02 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

Members **NOTED** that no Elections should take place if someone currently holds office, however Members could agree that the current Vice Chairman remains in place until 6th May 2021, under the Coronavirus Bill. Members **NOTED** that they could still choose to show their support and take an 'informal' vote for the Minutes during these unprecedented times. All Members **AGREED** that Cllr Buckley should remain in the Office of Vice Chairman of the Environmental Committee for the current Municipal Year.

E20.03 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (4)

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs N Bedford, B Clegg, M Stroud and A Irvine

E20.04 OTHER ABSENCES (0)

None.

E20.05 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

NOTED there were no declarations of interest.

E20.06 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None present.

E20.07 MINUTES

Members **APPROVED** as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 25th September 2019.

Members **NOTED** the decisions and actions taken using delegated power at the Meeting held on Wednesday, 11 March 2020.

E20.08 ASSET CHECKS

Members **NOTED** that, as reported at the Parish Council Meeting held on 6th July, a full survey of the Parish Council Assets had been carried out by the Principal Financial Officer. The PFO confirmed that details of any resultant actions from the survey had been circulated (via email) prior to the meeting to all Councillors. Members **NOTED** that a full copy of the survey detailing every asset, together with any resultant actions, had been given to the Chairman of the Parish Council, the Clerk and Senior Administrative Officer.

Councillor Blanks asked if the Assets would be included on the new electronic management system. The PFO advised that the Assets would not be included, as the staff felt that the current system used was better than the new software that was offered. The PFO showed on screen the current Asset Check sheets. Cllr Blanks suggested that the items listed be numbered individually to assist with identification. The PFO confirmed that this would be easy for her to do. Cllr Buckley stated that each item is clearly listed with the exact location of each Asset noted.

E20.09 ALLOTMENTS

a) General Report

Members **NOTED** the contents of the report attached to the Agenda, which gave a brief summary of any actions taken from March to the end of June.

Members **NOTED** that with regard to the North Weald allotment sites, notification had been received from EFDC that the contractors who are building the houses in Queens Road will need to access the site in order to assure the land drainage experts at EFDC that the water run off is satisfactory. The PFO advised that the contractors will need to access Wheelers Farm Gardens allotment site and review a head wall (which is a wall behind some foliage) and also they will need to clear one of the ditches. Members **NOTED** that the PFO had met with the contractors on site in order that they could explain what the work entailed. The contractors will not need to access any particular allotment site, they can do all of the works by hand, which will commence in two week's time. The PFO advised that details discussed at the site meeting had been confirmed in writing and the Clerk had advised the person in charge of the works that the Parish Council will not accept any disruption to the Allotment Tenants without prior approval. Members **NOTED** that the PFO had written to all of the tenants regarding this matter. The Clerk confirmed that she had made it quite clear that the site belongs to the Parish Council and the contractors would have no right to access the site without prior approval. The Clerk advised that it had been confirmed how long the contractors would be on site for and that they would only access the site if absolutely necessary, up until November. The PFO advised that

if the land drainage expert from EFDC, upon inspection of the works, decides that they are not acceptable, there may be a need for the contractors to bring machinery on to site.

The PFO reported an issue with an overgrown allotment plot at Thornwood. The tenants have not grown anything on the plot for the past three years. The PFO showed a recent photograph of the plot and advised that it had been strimmed three weeks ago. Members **NOTED** that it was understood that the tenants were key workers. Following discussion, Members **AGREED** that a sympathetic letter should be sent to the tenants, explaining that there is someone waiting to take over the plot should they no longer wish to work it.

The PFO reported that there is an issue with a wasp nest and a hornets nest, both on the Wheelers Farm Gardens allotment site. Following discussion, Members **AGREED** that the Clerk would contact the pest control contractor used at the Parish Hall for further advice.

The PFO reported that it was agreed that the Committee would look at the possibility of installing compost toilets on the allotment sites. However, the PFO stated that the Clerk had suggested this suggestion be put on hold until later in the year due to Covid-19 and the rules and regulations regarding public toilets.

b) Hastingwood Allotment Site

Members were reminded of the problems experienced with controlling Marestail at the Hastingwood Allotment site. It was noted that one of the tenants had recently given up one of two plots due to the on-going problem. The PFO advised that Marestail is notoriously difficult to remove. Removal of the weed will involve a prolonged, consistent attack and it could take up to 5 years to eradicate it, if at all. The PFO asked Members if they would be in agreement to the Parish Council's contractor attending site to start the process of weed killing on a regular basis. Cllr Buckley asked how large the area was. The PFO compared the area to being twice the size of the floor space in North Weald Library. The Clerk compared the weed to Japanese Knotweed. Cllr Grigg stated that she believed the Committee had no option but to ask the Parish Council's contractor to start weed killing, to stop the problem from spreading to other plots. The Chairman asked if it had been investigated if there were any specialists who had access to weed killers that ordinary members of the public cannot get hold of. The PFO advised that she had not looked into this. Cllr Spearman advised that if someone has a spraying licence then they can buy a commercial grade of weed killer. Following discussion, it was agreed that the Clerk would speak to Cllr Spearman with regard to this

c) Allotment Wardens

Members were reminded that the role of Allotment Warden is carried out on a voluntary basis. In recognition of the wardens hard work and commitment, Members were asked to consider the possibility of allocating an allotment plot, free of charge, as a gesture of thanks. Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE stated that she thought that the suggestion was a very good idea. Cllr Tyler stated that he would be happy to propose the idea. Cllr Mrs Grigg suggested that it should be just one plot per

Warden that would be offered free of charge. Following discussion all Members **AGREED** that each Allotment Warden would be allocated one plot free of charge.

d) Community Allotment Garden – Wheelers Farm Gardens Allotment Site

As reported at the Parish Council Meeting on Monday, 6th July, the Clerk reminded Members that it had been agreed that an allotment plot would be allocated on Wheelers Farm Gardens site to be used as a Community Allotment Garden. The garden would be similar to the one near to the M&S car park in Epping. The Clerk confirmed that the garden would be run by EFDC's community worker. A maximum of 6 people would be allowed to take advantage of the garden at any one time. The purpose of the garden is to combat social isolation and loneliness. EFDC's community worker would be on site to give lessons in various planting techniques. Existing allotment tenants would also be permitted to take advantage of those lessons. The Clerk confirmed that funding was in place for clearing the allotment plot. EFDC would be providing the plants. The Chairman asked Members to confirm their agreement to the project. All Members **AGREED**.

E20.10 CEMETERY

a) Maintenance of Memorial Benches

Members **NOTED** that there are a total of 9 memorial benches located in the Cemetery, all of which are in need of some maintenance. It was noted that a quote to prepare and treat the benches had been received from the Cemetery Grounds Contractor, the total cost of which will be £795.00 (includes all materials and labour). The Clerk had recommended that this work be undertaken as soon as possible. Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE **PROPOSED** the recommendation to accept the quote. Cllr Tyler **SECONDED** the proposal. All Members **AGREED**.

b) Repairs to Picket Fence – Memorial Garden

As reported at the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday, 6th July 2020, Members **NOTED** that the white picket fence surrounding the Memorial Garden is in need of some repairs. Following a site visit with the Cemetery Grounds Contractor, the Clerk had recommended that the repairs be carried out as soon as possible. The cost quoted for completion of the work is £180.00. Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE **PROPOSED** the recommendation to accept the quote. Cllr Tyler **SECONDED** the proposal. All Members **AGREED**.

E20.11 PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY ADJACENT TO CEMETERY

Members were **REMINDED** of the ongoing issues with quad bikes and motorcycles using the bridleway adjacent to the cemetery to access the disused Golf Course, as reported at the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday, 6th July. As agreed by Councillors at that meeting, Members of this Committee **NOTED** that the Clerk had ordered a gate, delivery of which is expected within the next 2 to 3 weeks. A sign has also been ordered. The Clerk reported that she had spoken with the owner of the Golf Course who had advised that he had spoken to the Fishing Club and hopefully 26 metres of Heras Fencing will be erected in the next week. The Clerk reported that PC Cook had visited the area at the weekend following an email from the Clerk sent on the Saturday. Lengthy discussion ensued regarding the matter of signage and erecting extra fencing. Cllr Buckley suggested that the Clerk contact the owner of

the Golf Course, as well as Catalyst. Cllr Blanks advised that following a visit to the Golf Course, he had noted the number plate of one of the vans dropping off at the site and it was agreed that he would give details to the Clerk in order that she can pass it on to PC Cook.

E20.12 PLAY AREAS

a) Annual Play Area Inspections

Members **NOTED** that the Annual Play Area Inspections have been scheduled to take place at the end of September / early October. The PFO confirmed that monthly and quarterly inspections continued to take place.

b) Repairs to Wet Pour (Safety Surfacing)

As reported at the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday, 6th July 2020, Members **NOTED** that all three play areas have had repairs to the Wet Pour. The work was completed on 24th June. The Clerk asked the Chairman if she could bring forward the Supplementary Item regarding this matter. The Chairman **AGREED**.

Supplementary Agenda Items:

1. Play Areas

Members **NOTED** that in July 2019 as part of the Annual Asset Check all of the Parish Council's Play Areas were checked for defects. Following this, at the end of August 2019 an estimate was received for some repairs to the wet pour in the play areas. The repairs were not undertaken at the time, but were reported at the budget meeting. Since that meeting in December 2019, Covid-19 has emerged and we have been under 'Lockdown'. The Play Areas were subsequently closed. In order to ensure safe re-opening, the recommended repairs were undertaken, as per the original estimate. The estimate had increased due to the time lapse and also the increase in materials.

Members **NOTED** that following satisfactory risk assessments, the Play Areas were opened on the 4th July. However, when this year's Asset Checks were undertaken, it was noted that additional wet pour repairs were going to be needed. It was noted that the damage would only get worse between now and the ROSPA Annual Play Area Checks, scheduled to take place in September / October 2020.

Members **NOTED** that the cost for the repairs is expected to be no more than £3,200. It was noted that the cost included the repairs to cover the fire damage caused by vandalism at the Weald Common Play Area (£1,000 approx.), the Clerk will attempt to recover some money from the insurance company to pay for this. Cllr Buckley asked what progress had been made with regard to obtaining CCTV coverage. The Clerk confirmed that it had been requested. Following further discussion, Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE **PROPOSED** that the repairs are undertaken as soon as possible to ensure that there is no question of the wet pour being unsatisfactory when the Annual Play Area Checks are carried out in September. Cllr Mrs Hawkins **SECONDED** the proposal. All Members **AGREED**. The Chairman asked if the amount covered everything on the list. The PFO advised Members that the list of items emailed prior to the start of the meeting detailed recommendations for works required over the next 6 to 12 months.

2. NOTICE BOARD

Members recalled that it was agreed at the Parish Council Meeting on Monday, 6th July that the Clerk would source a quote for a Notice Board for the Playing Field at Thornwood. The Clerk informed Members that Cllr Ms Wood had advised her that similar problems are also being experienced at Queens Hall and therefore suggested that Members may wish to consider purchasing a second Notice Board.

Members **NOTED** that the Clerk had looked at two Companies, one which supplies Wooden Notice Boards which, whilst aesthetically pleasing, would require maintenance every three years (prices for this type of board start from £2,800). The Clerk provided a photograph of an alternative Notice Board which has a 5 year guarantee, is hard wearing and should not need any maintenance during that time. The cost of this board would be £1168.80 (incl. VAT). There would be an additional cost for installation. It was noted that the Notice Board could be purchased from funding from the Brent House Farm monies which are available for 'Community Use'.

Councillor Mrs Jackman MBE asked if the Clerk could find out if there would be a discount if two boards were purchased. The Clerk confirmed that she would find out. Cllr Buckley asked if there was enough money to cover the purchase of two Notice Boards in the fund that is being used. The PFO advised that monies could be used from the Queens Hall Reserve fund to purchase the board for the Queens Hall. Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE **PROPOSED** that two of the alternative Notice Boards be purchased. The proposal was **SECONDED** by Cllr Buckley. All Members **AGREED**.

E20.013 CONTRACT FOR GRASS CUTTING – WEALD COMMON

Members **NOTED** that the Parish Council is responsible for cutting two of the fields on Weald Common. Mr Kerr cuts the larger of the fields (known as field 'B') twice a year at a cost of £250.00 per cut. The Parish Council's Grounds Maintenance Contractor cuts the grass where the old play area used to be, the pathway leading to the football pitch and the pitch itself, this field is known as field 'A'. Members **NOTED** that the remainder of field 'A' is not cut at the present time. The PFO showed a map of the area on screen. The PFO asked Members if they would confirm that they were in agreement for Mr Kerr to continue cutting field 'B'. All Members **AGREED**.

E20.014 CONTRACT FOR GRASS CUTTING – THORNWOOD FIELD

Members **NOTED** that following issues regarding the grass cutting of Thornwood field, the Clerk has been liaising with a new manager at Pinnacles, the company which is contracted to cut the field. It was noted that a total of 5 cuts were missed during 2019-2020 season, therefore the Parish Council has received a credit of 5 x £48.00. Moving forward, it has been agreed that a total of 16 cuts will be carried out per season. The Clerk confirmed that the grass cutting will be monitored over the coming months. Cllr Buckley asked if the cuts were throughout the year and stated that more may be required if the football club resumes playing. The Clerk advised that the cuts were from April to October, however, additional

cuts could be arranged, if required. Cllr Mrs Hawkins stated that in her opinion the field looks the best that it has ever been following the last cut.

E20.015 GARDEN AT THE PARADE OF SHOPS – SPONSORS

Councillor Buckley reported that due to the impact of Covid-19, this year the plaques had been offered to the usual Sponsors at a reduced cost of £75.00. Members **NOTED** that the plaques had been ordered and were due to be delivered shortly. Cllr Buckley will be liaising with the Parish Council's Grounds Maintenance Contractor with regard to putting them in place.

E20.016 NORWAY HOUSE SUNFLOWER COMPETITION

Members **NOTED** that the Sunflower Competition has had to be cancelled this year. Cllr Buckley reported that he had been liaising with staff from Norway House and was advised that, due to the Covid-19 crisis, staff are continuing to work from home. When staff have to visit Norway House social distancing measures need to be adhered to, therefore they felt that it would not have been practical to hold the competition this year. Cllr Buckley advised that Cllr Tyler has agreed to grow Sunflowers again for next year.

E20.017 CHANGES TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL & GREEN POLICY

As noted at the Parish Council Meeting held on 6th July 2020, Members **AGREED** to adopt the temporary changes to the Environmental & Green Policy. The changes are required due to the impact of Covid-19.

E20.018 REPORT FROM CLLR IRVINE

Members **NOTED** that Cllr Irvine had picked up concerns, via social media, regarding an area which is walked quite often by residents in North Weald. A copy of his report was attached to the agenda. It was noted that the area in question, although located in the parish of Theydon Garnon, borders North Weald. It was noted that Cllr Irvine had expressed concern about the use of barbed wire. The Clerk confirmed that she had written to Simon Taylor, PRow Enforcement and Liaison Officer for Essex County Council, regarding this matter. Following discussion, Members **AGREED** that the Clerk should forward a copy of the report to Theydon Garnon Parish Council.

Meeting closed: 8.21pm

Signed

Date