



**MINUTES**

**Meeting:** ENVIRONMENTAL  
COMMITTEE

**Date:** 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021

**Time:** 6.30pm

**Venue:** PARISH HALL, THORNWOOD

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**PRESENT:**

**Councillors (7)** G Mulliner (Chairman), A Buckley, Mrs S Jackman MBE, Mrs S Hawkins, B Clegg, Ms D Wood, A Tyler

**Also in Attendance (3)**

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

**Members of the Press (1)**

**Members of the Public (0)**

**E21.01 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

Councillor Tyler **PROPOSED** Cllr Mulliner as Chairman of the Committee, this proposal was **SECONDED** by Cllr Mrs Hawkins. There being no other nominations, Cllr Mulliner was duly elected as Chairman of the Environmental Committee for the current municipal year.

**E21.02 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

Councillor Tyler **PROPOSED** Cllr Buckley as Vice Chairman of the Committee, all Members **AGREED** unanimously. There being no other nominations Cllr Buckley was duly elected as Vice Chairman of the Environmental Committee for the current municipal year.

**E21.03 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (4)**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Bedford, Mrs Grigg, Ms Coop-Rodia Mrs P Etherington\*

\*Received too late to be reported at the meeting.

**E21.04 OTHER ABSENCES (4)**

No apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs Blanks, Irvine, Spearman, Stroud

**E21.05 MINUTES**

Members **APPROVED** as a correct record the Minutes of the Meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2020.

**E21.06 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**NOTED** there were no declarations of interest.

**E21.07 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

None present.

The Chairman asked Members if they would agree for Item 13 to be brought forward for discussion first. All Members **AGREED**.

#### **E21.08 QUEENS HALL CHARITY – REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE**

Councillors **NOTED** that the following request for assistance had been received from the Queens Hall Charity:

*The Queens Hall charity would like to ask if the environmental committee would be able to offer any support by way of funds for the pollarding of the goat willow tree that is in the far corner of the old car park, which previously the PC paid to attend to (approx 5 years ago). The reason for this application is that the tree is now touching the house that is close by and the owner has requested we look at this, I have received 2 quotations - one for £600 and one for £760, to pollard this tree and as the charity has like many had a year with a considerably reduced income this would impact quite heavily on our finances., we would therefore like to ask if there is any way we can ask for funds to attend to this. Works are also necessary around one of the sides of the Queen Hall, along the pathway between School Green Lane and Blackhorse Lane, where overgrown trees are seriously damaging the fencing. An additional £1,000 is needed to rectify the trees in this area.*

Cllr Ms Wood referred to the goat willow tree and said that the quote for £600 included the cost for pollarding of the tree, taking out the new growth from over the past 5 years and taking the cuttings away. Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE **PROPOSED** supporting the request for £600.00. All Members **AGREED**.

Cllr Ms Wood referred to the byway which runs adjacent to one of the Queens Hall perimeter fences. Overgrown trees have either fallen down or are leaning onto the fencing. Cllr Ms Wood stated that nobody will take responsibility for the byway and commented that if the fence were to fall down, the hall would have to close. To carry out the work to cut back the trees and remove everything from site would cost approximately £1,000. Cllr Ms Wood advised that for the past three years she had been trying to find out who the owner of the byway is. The PFO confirmed that it is Essex County Council and the landowners' responsibility to clear the byway, however she had looked at the Land Registry and it is not registered. Despite contacting ECC no one will take responsibility. The Chairman suggested that there should be a plan put in place to ensure that there are funds available to maintain the area each year. Cllr Ms Wood confirmed that would be her aim to have a maintenance programme in place and she would continue to try to establish who owns the land.

Following further discussion, the Clerk said that if the Parish Council agrees, she would suggest that an agreement is drawn up, a copy of which could be given to ECC Cllr Chris Whitbread to make him aware of the work that has been done. The Clerk suggested that Cllr Whitbread may be able to arrange for the Highway Rangers to carry out any future works. All Members **AGREED** to the request for £1,000 to cover the cost of the tree works.

#### **E21.09 PLAY AREA ANNUAL INSPECTIONS**

##### **a) Visual Play Area Inspection**

Councillors **NOTED** that the PFO had undertaken a visual Play Area Inspection of all three play areas on Wednesday, 16 June 2021. A copy of the report was attached to the Agenda. Members **NOTED** that all actions highlighted were either in hand or had been completed.

Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE asked how often the play areas were examined. The PFO confirmed that inspections are undertaken weekly and quarterly by the Parish Council's contractor (who has been trained by RoSPA). An annual inspection is also undertaken independently by RoSPA. The Clerk advised Members that the Parish Council is extremely proactive in its responsibilities under Health & Safety.

**b) Various matters relating to Play Areas**

Members **NOTED** the following:

- Thornwood Play Area – worn discs on cradle swing replaced 27.5.2021.
- School Green Lane Play Area – new bench installed June 2021.
- New Information Notices have been placed on entrances to all three play areas – June 2021. The Clerk confirmed that all notices regarding COVID restrictions had been removed, in line with Government guidance.
- Bins in all three play areas are now scheduled to be emptied twice a week during the Summer months.

**c) RoSPA Operational Playground Inspection Course**

Members **NOTED** that the Parish Council's contractor would be attending renewal training in September 2021. The training course was initially scheduled to be held in November 2020, however was postponed by RoSPA due to COVID restrictions.

**d) Annual Play Area Inspection**

Members **NOTED** that the Annual Play Area Inspections have been scheduled to be carried out in September 2021.

**E21.10 ALLOTMENTS**

**a) General Update**

Members **NOTED** the following:

- There is currently only one vacant plot, which is on Queens Road site.
- The Clerk and Senior Admin Officer visited Wheelers Farm Gardens and Queens Road sites on 10<sup>th</sup> June, following a complaint that a small number of plots are not being tended. The Clerk and Cllr Ms Coop-Rodia, allotment warden for Wheelers Farm Gardens, had a follow-up visit on Saturday, 26<sup>th</sup> June. The Clerk and PFO visited the site on Saturday, 4<sup>th</sup> July to undertake a further inspection.
- The Chairman and Cllr Mrs Hawkins have resumed the Allotment Sub Committee visits to Hastingwood site on the first Wednesday of each month, reporting back any concerns to the Parish Office.
- Damaged gate, Thornwood Allotment site: the Clerk has arranged for the entrance gate to be replaced with a new wooden gate due to Health & Safety and security implications. The PFO confirmed that this had now been completed.
- Community Garden, Thornwood: the Clerk has arranged for the fencing to be extended between the boundary of the allotment site and the Community

Garden. Cllr Mrs Hawkins advised that there was still some work to be completed on the garden.

- Thornwood Allotment site – access to Parish Hall Car Park: as reported at the Parish Council Meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> July, following a number of complaints from allotment users unable to access the car park when the barriers are locked, a meeting was arranged on site to address the issue. The Chairman of the Parish Council, Ward Councillors, the Clerk and the PFO were in attendance and it was agreed that allotment users could access the car park provided they signed an agreement to confirm that they would comply with the specific conditions set out in that agreement which would ensure that the security of the car park would not be compromised.
- Hastingwood Allotment Site – Marestail / Horsetail: all tenants on this site have received a copy of the spraying schedule in respect of the four unused plots. Immediately following the spot spraying, a notice is placed on the notice board to alert tenants. The Parish Council's contractor has advised that a second spraying is now due, dependant on the weather being dry. He has reported that signs of the first spray working are now visible.

#### **b) Upkeep of Allotment Sites**

Members were reminded that the upkeep of the allotments is ever increasing. The Rental received from tenants does not cover the yearly running costs. It was noted that following a visit to the Wheelers Farm Gardens site on Saturday, 26<sup>th</sup> June, the Clerk had received several requests for works to be considered, which included:

- Running new pipework to rectify the low water pressure
- Regular cutting of the grass in the communal areas

The Clerk referred to her report attached to the Supplementary Agenda and suggested that Members may wish to consider whether the rents should be increased to cover the extra costs. The PFO advised that any increase in fees would not be until 2023 as 12 months notification had to be given to tenants. The Clerk said that she is looking at all avenues with regard to the availability of any grant funding. Following lengthy discussion, Cllr Clegg **PROPOSED** that the Clerk and PFO undertake a financial investigation, the findings are then presented at a meeting in September, any increase can then be agreed and implemented by a date determined by the Clerk and PFO. All Members **AGREED**.

#### **c) Allotment Warden – Queens Road Site**

Members were reminded that the allotment warden for this site had resigned in April. It was noted that Members had previously agreed that wardens would not be charged a rental fee for 2021/22 in recognition of the invaluable role that they carry out. Following discussion, Members **AGREED** that they would not rescind their decision in respect of the Queens Road site, however the previous warden would be charged a rental fee for 2022/23.

### **E21.11 COMMUNITY ALLOTMENT GARDEN, WHEELERS FARM GARDENS SITE**

As reported at the Parish Council Meeting on 5 July 2021, Members noted that work on the garden continued. A small number of volunteers attend weekly sessions with the EFDC team, guided by Victoria Robinson who is the Community Development

Officer for this project. Councillors had been invited to attend a small ‘soft launch’ event for the community plot volunteers on Thursday, 29<sup>th</sup> July at 2.30pm to 4pm. The event will be hosted by Victoria and will showcase the work that has been undertaken so far and to demonstrate how and where the locality funding has been spent. It was noted that volunteers who had assisted Victoria in getting the garden ‘up and running’ during lockdown had also been invited to attend. Victoria had suggested that, although the event would not be fully advertised, it would be open to other allotment tenants who may wish to attend. The Clerk advised that the Parish Council had been asked to contribute £25.00 towards the cost of refreshments. All Members **AGREED**.

#### **E21.12 CEMETERY**

The Clerk reported, that following a recent visit to the Cemetery, it was found that one of the plots in Meadow Brook Section had been adorned with unauthorised memorials which included plastic flowers, lanterns, etc. The Chairman confirmed that they should be removed and asked the Clerk to write to the plot owner to remind them of the regulations in respect of this section of the Cemetery. The Clerk confirmed that she would ask the Cemetery groundsman to level the plot and grass seed it.

The Senior Admin Officer reported that several of the benches required cleaning and wood sealant. During the visit, it was found that a row of metal spikes had been attached to the back of a bench. Members noted that the benches had now been cleaned and the spikes removed.

#### **E21.13 NORWAY HOUSE, SUNFLOWER COMPETITION**

Councillors noted that the Sunflower Competition children at Norway House was now underway. A total of 30 plants had been provided by Cllr Tyler. Judging is expected to take place towards the end of August / early September. The Chairman of the Parish Council had been instrumental in or the organisation of this event, liaising with the Manager at Norway House on a regular basis. Cllr Buckley said that he would be arranging to visit to see how they are getting on. Cllr Tyler said that he would be donating a £20 voucher for the tallest sunflower.

#### **E21.14 GARDEN BY THE PARADE OF SHOPS, NORTH WEALD**

The Chairman of the Parish Council reported that another sponsor had been acquired. There are now a total of 6 sponsors, with £600 (minus the cost of the plaques) being used towards the upkeep of the garden. Cllr Buckley confirmed that the cemetery groundsman continued to tend the garden. Members noted that the wall had been damaged again and that Cllr Buckley had phoned and sent emails to the owner.

#### **E21.15 REPAIRS TO THE BRIDGE – HIGHAM VIEW, NORTH WEALD**

Members **NOTED** that Countrycare had undertaken, free of charge, some repairs to the bridge at Higham View at very short notice. A thank you had been sent by the Clerk and Cllr Bedford, who had originally reported the issue to the Parish staff.

#### **E21.16 DOG BIN – HIGHAM VIEW, NORTH WEALD**

Members **NOTED** that a local resident had contacted the Clerk to report that the dog bin situated in Higham View (by the steps leading to Weald Common) was

found to be regularly overflowing. The contractor responsible for emptying the bin had suggested that this bin could benefit from having another located nearby as it is nearly always full. It was noted that the nearest bins to this location are in Weald Common (opposite the Play Area) and in the Village Hall Car Park. It was noted that the Chairman of the Parish Council had checked on the bin following the report and had found that it had been emptied. The Senior Admin Officer had also checked the bin on another two occasions (the day after the bin had been emptied and again on the following Monday). The Clerk advised that the bins are scheduled to be emptied once a week on a Wednesday, however, on the week that she received the report, the contractor confirmed that there had been a delay and the bin in question was emptied on the Friday morning. Cllr Clegg suggested that the bin continues to be monitored before a decision is made to install another bin nearby. All Members **AGREED**.

#### **E21.17 TREE PLANTING 2021/22**

Following on from the tree planting project undertaken at Weald Common earlier in the year, Members were asked to consider if there were any locations within the parish (preferably situated on PC owned land) which they believed would benefit from extra tree planting. For reference purposes, the locations identified in 2020 were listed as follows:

Weald Common	Old Wooden Play Park	PC Owned – trees planted 2021 – Eldridge Wood
Weald Common	Close to Small Football Pitch	PC Owned – trees planted 2021 – Eldridge Coppice
Weald Common	Triangle Nature Reserve	EFDC Own
Weald Common	Far field near to Higham View Bridge and adjacent to Access Road	PC Owned
High Road NW	At the Front of Brick Building Building Hurricane Way	EFDC Owned – Suggestion By Cllr Alan Buckley
High Road NW	In Front of Norway House	EFDC Owned – Suggestion By Cllr Alan Buckley
Hastingwood	Hastingwood B Allotment (Currently Being De Allotmentised)-	PC Owned
Thornwood	Allotments – Community Orchard and Community Garden	PC Owned
North Weald Airfield	Trees to be placed in shape of Aeroplane	EFDC Owned - Suggestion by Cllr Nigel Bedford

Following discussion, no other locations were identified.

#### **E21.18 LITTER PICK**

Members recalled that Cllr Tyler had raised a question at the Annual Parish Council Meeting regarding the possibility of a litter pick being organised for North Weald, to cover local footpaths and bridleways which are suffering from an increase in litter such as plastic bottles and disposable face masks. The Clerk had suggested that Cllr Tyler liaises with Cllr Ms Coop-Rodia who had been allocated £500.00 from the Community Fund for this purpose.

Cllr Tyler apologised that he had not had the opportunity to investigate the matter further, however confirmed that he was still keen to be involved. The Chairman

reminded Members that he had organised litter picks in North Weald on the first Saturday of every month for over three years and only himself and Cllr Buckley used to turn up. However, the Chairman said that because people used to see them, they found that people would take it upon their own initiative to litter pick on other days. Cllr Tyler commented that the village itself does look a lot tidier. The Clerk mentioned that EFDC had an item on their next agenda whereby a motion is being put forward with regard to litter picks and this would be going out to Parish Councils. The Clerk said that she would forward the information on to Cllr Tyler as the information specifically says that some resources would be made available to Parish Councils to then go out to the community. The Clerk confirmed that the item would be on the September Parish Council Agenda.

#### **E21.19 REPORT – MILLENNIUM WALK, HASTINGWOOD**

Councillors **NOTED** that the Clerk had received a report from a local resident who had requested a meeting to discuss the contents in more detail. Members were reminded that as the Parish Council is a facilitator, we can only pass the problems and concerns raised on to District and County Council, who will ultimately decide if any action is required. The Clerk advised that the resident would be attending the District/County Councillor Surgery in Thornwood on Friday, 23 September to raise concerns with Cllr Chris Whitbread.

#### **E21.20 CHRISTMAS TREES / LIGHTS 2021**

Members were asked to consider the following:

a) Christmas Tree to be purchased and placed on the Village Green in North Weald next to the flagpole. All Members **AGREED** to purchase a taller tree this year, if available.

b) New lights and battery packs to be purchased for the Christmas Tree in North Weald. The current lights were purchased a number of years ago and it was noted that the Clerk had received comments that last year's lights were not very bright. All Members **AGREED**.

c) Members recalled a request made to the Parish Council in December 2020 for a Christmas Tree to be placed in the garden at the parade of shops in North Weald. Councillors had agreed that the matter would be reconsidered for December 2021. Members expressed concern that the garden would not be the best location for a Christmas Tree and following discussion agreed to **DECLINE** the request.

d) As in previous years, a contribution of £40.00 to be made to Hastingwood Village Hall, to be used towards the purchase of a Christmas Tree. All Members **AGREED**.

#### **E21.21 CHRISTMAS LIGHTS – BEST FESTIVE DISPLAY**

Members recalled that last December a competition for the Best Festive Display was trialled for North Weald Village. Residents were encouraged to contact David Jackman at Everything Epping Forest to register their property in the competition. David then uploaded photographs of the entries onto social media for people to vote for their favourite. Following discussion, all Councillors **AGREED** to trial the competition again but extend it to include the whole of the Parish.

#### **E21.22 ENQUIRY – LAND AVAILABILITY – ENCLOSED AREA FOR SAFE TRAINING AND EXERCISE OF DOGS**

Members **NOTED** that the Clerk had received an enquiry from a resident who is looking to rent an enclosed area of land for the safe training and exercise of dogs. Members were asked if anyone knew of the availability of any suitable areas within the parish. No one knew of anywhere suitable for this purpose.

**E21.23 GRASS CUTTING WITHIN THE PARISH**

Members **NOTED** the Parish Council's concerns with the standard of grass cutting on the public areas within the parish. The Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr Buckley, reported that he had asked the contractors why the standard is so poor and was informed that it is because of the wet conditions. Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE commented that the standard was the same in other areas, not just North Weald. Cllr Clegg commented that the overgrown vegetation at the junction of Upland Road was a danger to motorists. Following lengthy discussion, Members **AGREED** that the Clerk should contact the appropriate Portfolio Holder regarding the concerns.

**E21.24 THE QUEEN'S PLATINUM JUBILEE BEACONS – 2<sup>ND</sup> JUNE 2022**

Councillors **NOTED** that details regarding the lighting of Beacons to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee will be included as an item for consideration on the agenda for the next Parish Council Meeting to be held in September. It was noted that information regarding the organisation of events is available to view on the Essex Association of Local Council's website. The Clerk asked Members to bear in mind that neither herself nor the PFO would be available over the Bank Holiday weekend, should they decide to consider organising an event.

**E21.25 SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA ITEMS**

**a) Wheelers Farm Gardens Allotment Site Visit**

Following a recent visit to the Wheelers Farm Gardens Allotment Site by the Clerk and the PFO, it was noted that there were several Health & Safety concerns regarding overgrown vegetation along the ditches and a lack of signage and barriers to alert people to their whereabouts.

Members were asked to consider the following recommendations:

- Ditch along farmer's side: cut back and strim overgrown vegetation and consider agreeing to put a regular maintenance programme in place. Agree to the installation of signage and some form of barrier to alert people to the ditch.

- Ditch running adjacent to Cyril Hawkins Close side: although this ditch has recently been strimmed, consideration to agree to put a regular maintenance programme in place is required. Some form of barrier and signage needs to be installed at either side of the path that goes through the centre of the allotment site to alert people to the ditch.

- Pathway between Queens Road and Wheelers Farm Gardens Sites: there is a narrow pathway, the ditch runs underground as you move between the two sites, this area needs fencing to protect people from falling into the ditch.

Following discussion, Members **AGREED** that there is a need for a regular

maintenance programme to be put in place for the ditches. This will be put forward as an item for consideration at the Budget and Precept Meeting later in the year.

Members **AGREED** with regard to the pathway that runs between the two sites, fencing should be put in place to protect people from falling into the ditch. Members **AGREED** that no signage would be installed to alert people to the ditches.

**b) Report on Allotments**

The Clerk had attached a report to the agenda for consideration. It was noted that during lockdown there was a large uptake of allotments. However, a small number of allotments are now not being utilised to their full potential. The Clerk had expressed concern that if the allotments are given up by the tenants as they have let them become overgrown and we pay them to be cut back, the tenants may simply wish to take them back after they have been trimmed.

The Clerk advised that the cost of strimming a medium sized allotment plot is approximately £50. The additional cost of membrane and putting it down needed to be added to this. Members were asked to consider the following:

- Should we put any allotment holder who gives up their allotment on the normal waiting list and make a note that they have previously given up in the previous season and pass any costs onto them.
- Do we pass on costs to new Allotment Holders.
- Do we pass on costs to all Allotment Holders.

Cllr Tyler suggested that a £50 deposit could be collected from new tenants and said that the deposit could be returned if the plot is given up, provided it is left in a satisfactory condition. The Chairman asked if there was a communal strimmer available to tenants and if so, could they be trained to use it. The PFO advised that if a tenant wanted to use the communal strimmer they were asked to sign a disclaimer beforehand, no training is given. The PFO said that tenants used to visit the Parish Office to sign, however this no longer able to happen since lockdown. Following discussion, All Members **AGREED** that arrangements should be made to trim the plots identified by the Clerk.

Meeting closed: 8.45pm

Signed .....

Date .....