

WASHINGTON PARISH COUNCIL



Clerk to the Council.
Ms Zoe Savill.
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Washington Parish Council Open Spaces (Recreation, Allotments, Footpaths and Conservation) Committee

MINUTES of the Committee Meeting held on Monday, held on 18th October 2021 at Washington Village Hall (Dore Room).

PRESENT: Committee Chairman, Cllr S Buddell (SB), Cllr B Hanvey (BH) and Cllr A Lisher (AL).

ALSO: Clerk to the Council Zoe Savill

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: 0

ABSENT: 2

The Chairman opened the meeting at 18:30 hrs

1. Receive apologies for absence

None received

2. Declaration of interest and Dispensations.

None declared

3. Approval of the Minutes of the last Open Spaces (Recreation, Allotments and Open Spaces meeting

RESOLVED to **APPROVE** the minutes of the last meeting on 20th September as the correct record to and duly signed by the Chairman.

4. Public Speaking

Two Stewards from the Council's Allotment spoke regarding the annual allotment rent and tenancy review and tenancy inspection. Members noted their comments which were considered in the discussions later in the meeting.



5. Allotments

To Report monthly inspection of the Allotment and consider any recommended action

The Chairman reported on the monthly allotment inspection. It was noted that some of the plots were not being cultivated this year and are being monitored by the Stewards.

A steward commented on the importance of plot holders getting in touch with them as soon as their plots become difficult to manage so that assistance can be offered, or a solution found. Clerk to include this in the rent reminder letters with the contact details for the stewards.

To Report on the Allotment Waiting List and Notices for Vacation

It was noted that there are 5 people on the Waiting List. Stewards have been notified.

Plot 1

It was noted that the tenant for this plot has given 2 months' notice to end his tenancy from 31st December and has also informed one of the stewards.

RESOLVED to accept the notice in accordance with the terms of the Tenancy Agreement and to offer Plot 1 to the next person on the Waiting List, subject to formal agreement of an application by the Committee. Clerk to action. Stewards agreed to meet with the prospective tenant on site beforehand to discuss the plot and tenancy requirements.

Plot 8

It was noted that upon inspection, Plot 8 is not being worked or maintained and requires improvement.

RESOLVED to write an improvement letter to the tenant requiring the plot to be tidied within one month and to confirm intentions for the plot to the Council. Clerk to action.

Plot 11B

It was noted there is no evidence of activity on the plot this year and that it has become overgrown with weeds in breach of clause 2 of the Tenancy Agreement. The tenant has not responded to the Council's 5 communications including two letters of improvement on 20th September and 11th October.

RESOLVED to serve notice of termination of the tenancy for the plot and requirement to remove personal property in accordance with the terms of the Agreement.

Plot to be offered to the first person on the waiting list, subject to formal approval of an application by the Committee.

To Review the annual rent and tenancy agreement terms for 2022 and Agree any changes.

Members discussed the previously circulated Tenancy Agreement 2021. The following points on costs for the Allotment this year were noted:

- The Allotment generates £390 in rent income
- Reported costs for the Allotment are a proportion of £600 for the hedge-cutting which includes the Recreation Ground. Historically, the budget for the Allotment is shared with the maintenance costs for all the Council's assets and general administration.
- There is no recorded expenditure for tree management, but general reserves are earmarked for unforeseen works which can be significant. The next tree inspection is due next year, and this may recommend works on the Allotment.
- Management costs of the Allotment are not recorded and can be significant especially if there are issues to resolve.
- Due to inflation, if there is no increase in rent in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) this

would effectively be akin to a reduction in budget. When the current budget was set for maintaining the assets, it was not felt to be larger than needed. A reduction would decrease the level of service and, if required, site improvement.

A steward commented that based on the reported costs, there was no justification for increasing rents. He pointed out that tenants should not be expected to pay for any on-site costs like hedge cutting as this is an amenity much like the Recreation Ground which the Parish Council maintains without charge to the public. The steward was informed that costs of the Council's other amenities such as the Recreation Ground, are charged to residents through the precept which had not been increased this year.

The Chairman reported that in consultation with Tenants last year, it was agreed that subject to an annual review, any increases in rent should not be more than the rate of inflation using the Consumer Price Index (CPI) unless agreed otherwise after consultation. It was noted that the CPI for September was 2.8% and that this would represent a small increase of around £10.90p in total for the whole site based on the current rates.

Capital 'Pot'

The Stewards proposed that if the Committee proposes a rent increase, this would be made more palatable to Tenants if a proportion is set aside for a capital pot. These funds could then be used towards site improvements such as clearing overgrown vegetation in the 'dead areas' at the rear of some of the plots, tidying up fencing and the gate. It was noted by Members that if the Tenants form an association they would be able to make grant applications for funding. The Stewards reported that the site is too small to form a workable association.

Plot Sizes

There followed a discussion on plot sizes, and it was proposed by the Chairman to conduct a survey of all the plots in the new year. This is with the view to introducing a fairer system of rent charges the following year. It was noted that historically, plots like numbers 4 and 5 have been paying the same rates as the large plots even though they are significantly smaller in size. The Stewards agreed to the concept but that they would like to consult with Tenants first as some may feel unfairly disadvantaged by the changes.

Liability

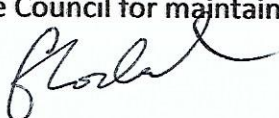
It was noted that Tenants have personal liability for their plots and paths and should be reminded that the Council's insurance policy does not include cover for this. Tenants are under no obligation but are advised it is in their own interests to have a policy in place if they have not already done so.

Rampion 2 proposed cable underneath the Washington Recreation Ground/Allotment land

The Chairman reported that Rampion has given an assurance to the Council that if the proposed cable route goes ahead, there was sufficient latitude to move it further away, underneath the Recreation Ground, and at least 20m from the Allotment boundary, with no damage to the land.

A Steward reported it was difficult to know exactly what impact there would be on the Allotment, including any effects on access. The Chairman reported that the Council has done as much as it can to date to keep the cable route as far away from the allotment as possible. It was noted that Rampion's land agents should be liaising directly with Allotment Tenants on these issues and any concerns.

RESOLVED with one voting abstention that rents increase 2.8% in line with the latest CPI, with effect from 1st January 2022. **REASON:** to reflect the cost of the Council for maintaining the site.



Further **RESOLVED** to:

- Reduce the rent for Plots 4 & 5 to £15 as half plots and not as full plots
- Reduce the rent for Plot 13 to £24. This reflects the Council's historical concessionary rate due to the plot being uncultivable.
- Recommend that the Finance Committee considers a Capital 'pot' of funding from rent income for Tenants. To be discussed at the Committee's Council Budget Review on 15th November.
- Review plot sizes for next year pending the outcome of a consultation between Stewards and Tenants in the new year. Stewards to liaise directly with Tenants and report back to the Committee.

The Chairman thanked the Stewards before they left the meeting.

6. First Extension Graveyard

To Report monthly inspection of the First Extension Graveyard and Consider any recommended action.

The October inspection of the graveyard was taken as read. It was NOTED that the lime tree will be felled on Tuesday 16th November by Gale Tree Consultancy following approval of the Council's planning application by the Local Planning Authority. It was NOTED there were no other issues requiring any further action.

7. Recreation Ground and Parish Property

To Report on any matters arising from the last meeting.

Bid for SDNPA Community Infrastructure Levy Funding (CIL)

It was NOTED that the Council's CIL funding application to the South Downs National Park Authority towards a link pathway through the Recreation Ground was unsuccessful.

A decision letter from the SDNPA was previously circulated. It included an invitation to submit the re-submit the application again or bid for a new project, Applications will be considered in the next Call for Projects bidding window for the SDNPA 2021/22 CIL fund from 1st November 2021 until 28th February 2022,

RESOLVED to review the pathway project at the next meeting and whether to make a another funding bid.

Street light, London Road bus stop – update on repairs

It was NOTED that the light has not been replaced despite assurances from SSE, via Horsham District Council on 8th September that it would be done that month.

RESOLVED to contact Mr Chris Jende, Building Services Engineer at HDC again for a firm completion date. Clerk to action.

Faulty bollard lamp between The Street and Holt in Washington Village

The clerk confirmed that she could not find anything in the Council's legal archives folder relating to the bollard light or its ownership.

Members noted the clerk's report of communication from Mr Chris Blight, Senior Street Lighting Engineer for WSCC earlier in the day. He proposed that potentially he could ask WSCC's service provider to check the safety of the light, under duty of care, without taking ownership. If the Parish Council wishes it to be repaired or removed, he could put it in contact with their service provider to assist, subject to funding from the Parish Council.

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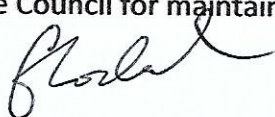
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RESOLVED to take no further action in the absence of any proof of ownership of the light. Clerk to notify WSCC

To Consider quotation for new goal posts on the Recreation Ground and MUGA goal nets
Councillors considered and **RESOLVED** to engage Mr Derek Collis to replace the football goal posts and MUGA goal nets as specified at a cost of **£1,895**.

To Agree and Sign Contract and Direct Debit Payment Mandate for the Council's bin collection.
It was NOTED that Horsham District Council's Business Waste service can only provide a monthly or ad hoc collection agreement for the Council's new bin. They are unable to provide a quarterly service as requested at the last Full Council Meeting. The Clerk has asked HDC to review this and offer a confirmed schedule of less frequent collections without the need to book ahead.
A copy of the service agreement and direct debit mandate form was previously circulated.
RESOLVED to defer this item to the next meeting pending new collection agreement dates.

To Consider a resident's request to change the gates to the Play Area
At the Chairman's discretion, this item was deferred to the agenda item on the Play Area later in the meeting

Approve Payments

It was noted that the clerk used her emergency spending and delegated powers to agree the following repairs in the Play Area:

- Repair of a small hole in the grass by the fencing in the toddler area with new turf and concrete edging
- Replacement of damaged seat timber of the picnic bench
- Bark chippings to cover a new exposed area under the see-saw

The works have been completed satisfactorily by Mr Derek Collis for the sum of £170.00 and his invoice was noted. **RESOLVED** to approve the payment.

An invoice for £115.20 from the Parish Litter Warden for September's collection was previously circulated. **RESOLVED** to approve the payment.

The following reports were NOTED:

Ground Maintenance

Nothing to report

Tree Management

Gale Tree Consultancy has carried out an inspection of the lime tree on the Recreation Ground on 7th October. Report pending. Basal growth was removed for inspection access.

Village Hall:

Pathways are cracked in places but not hazardous. Clerk is seeking quotes for the Committee to consider replacement of the pathway in next year's budget.

Defibrillators:

Defibs at Village Hall and Pixies Corner are fully charged.



MUGA

Nothing further to report.

Children's Play Area

Incident Report on 6th October 2021

Members NOTED a report from a parent that her 17-month-old slipped in a small hole in the toddler area and sustained a minor head injury on concrete ground support edging. She has thanked the Council for making swift repairs after requesting that the area is made safe. The clerk approved the repair to include new turfed area. This was under her emergency powers within the Council's agreed maintenance budget and in consultation with the Council Chairman. To be ratified at the next Council meeting.

The email correspondence and clerk's response were previously circulated.

It was NOTED that the clerk reported the incident to the Council's insurers who have provided a case reference number. BH proposed and it was **RESOLVED** to note the report and thank the clerk on expeditious handling of the matter.

Gates to the Children's Play Area

Members discussed a request from the same parent to replace the soft-closing gates. She reported that the gates are not fit for purpose because they do not prevent young children from escaping the play area. This is potentially dangerous for those parents who may be distracted when caring for their other children. She has suggested gates with the traditional latch-closing mechanism. Members also noted the clerk's report that the gates are safety-compliant and regularly inspected. The last RoSPA inspection was carried out in the summer with no safety issues.

The gates are designed to make it virtually impossible to slam shut, making it free from finger traps, crush points and shear actions that could cause injury. It also stops the gates from bouncing back off the post when pushed hard. The gates were installed following consultation with parents from St Mary's School in the village in 2014/15. A RoSPA-approved safety notice is installed by the main entrance.

BH proposed that the safety notice is amended. This includes wording to reinforce the requirement for parental supervision of children in the Play Area.

RESOLVED not to replace the gates as they are fit for purpose and that the latched gates are dangerous. Clerk to seek advice on the proposed wording of the new signage for further consideration at the next meeting.

Hole in the seat timber of picnic bench

See payments.

Safety surface under See-Saw

See payments.

Bus Shelters and Vera's Shelter

Clerk to progress the disposal of the two redundant bus shelters and report to the next meeting.

Parish Noticeboards

The clerk has instructed Mr Collis to repair the noticeboards as agreed at the last OSRA meeting.

8. Footpaths and Bridleways

Nothing to report.

9. Conservation Issues

Nothing to report.

10. Any other urgent Open Space, Recreation & Allotment and Footpaths & Conservation issues that may arise OR items for the next Agenda To Report items for the next Agenda

None raised.

11. Date of the next meetings at the Washington Village Hall

Parish Council Meeting: Monday 1st November, 7:30pm

OSRA Committee Meeting: Monday 15th November, to be brought forward to 6.30pm

Finance Committee: Monday 15th November, 7.15pm

Planning & Transport Meeting: Monday 15th November, 8:00pm

There being no other business to report, the meeting was concluded at 19:45hours

Signed.....

A yellow rectangular redaction box covers the signature area. To the left of the box, there is a handwritten mark resembling a stylized 'C' or a signature flourish.

Dated.....

15/11/2021