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 **Washington Parish Council**

 **Open Spaces (Recreation, Allotments, Footpaths and**

 **Conservation) Committee**

Draft **MINUTES** of the Committee Meeting held on Monday, held on 18th October 2021at 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

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1. **Declaration of interest and Dispensations**.

None declared

1. **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.

1. **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.

1. **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 s 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 uncultivatable.
* 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.*

1. **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.

1. **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.

 **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**.**

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**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.

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 **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.

1. **Footpaths and Bridleways**

Nothing to report.

1. **Conservation Issues**

Nothing to report.

1. **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.

1. **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……………………………………………**

 **Dated…………………………………………….**