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**STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET PARISH COUNCIL OPEN SPACES**

MINUTES of a meeting of the OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 9th March 2022 in The Mountfitchet Exchange, Crafton Green, 72 Chapel Hill, Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex

**PRESENT** CllrsA Barnes (Chair),G Braeckman**,** M Caton, A Guney, J Kavanagh, A Khan, J O’Brien, L Prior, F Richards

**ATTENDING** Mrs Ruth Clifford – Clerk to the Council

 Mrs L Azure-Marxen – Committee & Project Support Officer

1 member of the press

**355 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

 None

**356 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

 None

**357 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26th JANUARY 2022**

Cllr Prior had made the office aware that the phrasing of item 320a needs amending, so it is clear to the public that the committee members were asked to prioritise the items for the budget and didn’t reduce the number of items without reason.

Cllr Kavanagh pointed out that there should be no item a on 321 and 322 is missing an ‘e’ in “receive”.

**RESOLVED** to accept the minutes of the meeting held on 26th January 2022 as a true and accurate account.

**358 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON ACTIONS POINT FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

261 The Clerk has met with the landowner of Elms Farms, and they explained how the thieves got access to their equipment storage. The Clerk showed the committee members a map of the route and pointed out the access points and where the new bollards will go. This will be to prevent vehicles from gaining access to the road. The landowner will install the new bollard at their own expense and will keep the key. If the Council needs access to the land they will ask for the key. This solution has no costs for the Council.

317 The poll on the Jubilee Tree Location was held for two weeks as agreed, and the result was in favour of Mountfitchet Green by 42 votes to 16 and 9. The office is currently in dialogue with UDC on getting permission in principle to plant the tree until the lease is sorted out. The UDC Landscape Officer is also investigating if there are any utilities on Mountfitchet Green that wouldn’t make this an ideal tree location. Based on emails, there should not be any issues with SMPC getting the permission, but the office is still waiting on final confirmation. The Project Support Officer will chase UDC and CC Cllr Khan. The tree has been ordered, but it is still unknown if we can get a small or big English Oak. The Gardening contractor has not replied to recent enquiries on the tree order, so the office will chase him. As we are nearing the end of the planting season, there is a possibility that we will not be able to plant it in time. A tree will then need to be planted next season, starting in November, and be dedicated then. Cllr Prior asked about a plaque for the dedication and it was explained a small stone plinth with an engraved plaque would be installed. Cllr Khan asked about funding for the tree and the Project Support Officer explained that she had applied for a Jubilee Grant from UDC.

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The remaining action points had been completed.

**359 CHAIRMAN’S REPORT** See attached

Cllr Barnes read out his Chairman’s Report.

Cllr Guney enquired about who was awarded the grounds maintenance contracts agreed on at the last meeting. Grass cutting 1 contract was awarded to MD Landscapes and Grass cutting 2 and Gardening contract 1 were awarded to GWB Horticulture. Cllr Barnes added that he had sent out detailed evidence about the selection process of the contractors.

Cllr Richards enquired if the storm damage to the Knight sign was covered by insurance. The Clerk explained that it might not be worth going through insurance due to the excess, but the office was still awaiting quotes on the repair.

Cllr Caton added that she and the Clerk would raise the lack of progress on Elms Farm and Walpole Meadows at their forthcoming meeting with Peter Holt from UDC.

**360 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE**

**TO CONSIDER POSSIBLE METRICS TO EVALUATE GRASS CUTTING AND GARDENING CONTRACTOR PERFORMANCE**

A draft metric was circulated prior to the meeting and the Committee members discussed possible amendments. When the agreed amendments have been added the metrics will be adopted by the office. The metrics will be presented to the contractors, so they are aware that they are being evaluated. A formal quarterly evaluation against these metrics will be undertaken by the Clerk and the Chairman of Open Spaces and presented to the committee.

**361 CEMETERY**

**a INTERMENTS AND MEMORIALS**

Memorial approved for Joan Pigrum.

**b TO DISCUSS THE SECOND DRAFT OF THE CEMETERY RULES AND REGULATIONS**

The second draft was circulated prior to the meeting. The committee members acknowledged the many improvements and discussed the points raised including inscription on memorials and gravestones etc. The committee agreed to delete items which the Clerk is not able to enforce. The Clerk will further amend the draft as discussed and recirculate before next meeting.

**362 PLAYGROUNDS**

**a** **TO DISCUSS INSTALLING A PATH TO THE DISABLED EQUIPMENT ON MOUNTFITHCET**  **GREEN**

Cllr Barnes explained that a path to the new disabled swing and picnic bench would allow great accessibility by wheelchair all year round as the ground can be soft during wet months.. Cllr Barnes said that he had been made aware from the Clerk and the Chairman of Finance, that there were no additional funds available, if not raised by grants and it was agreed to try to find additional funds from other sources. Cllr Guney suggested that there might be a possibility of mental health grants and Cllr Caton will reinvestigate disability grants. It was also explained that the path(s) will be included in the funding application for the potential phase 2, which includes more disabled equipment. It was agreed that it was important to highlight to the public the plan to install the access path so that affected residents understand that it will be provided as soon as funds permit.

**b TO RECEIVE UPDATE ON PLAYGROUND INSPECTIONS AND MAINTENANCE**

 The basket swing on the Recreation Ground was recently vandalised and a quote for a new replacement basket has been ordered. There has been nothing else to report on the weekly

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inspections. The Committee would like to send thanks to Lucy and Levi for keeping the playgrounds safe and clean.

**363 TREES**

**TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE FURTHER WORK AT NEWMAN’S PLANTATION**

Remedial work at the Newman’s Plantation is planned for Saturday 12th March. The work will include the spreading of mulch and protecting the saplings trees with new metal guards after the damage caused by people and the recent storms. The office and Cllr Barnes have reached out to former volunteers and residents, but so far, have not been able to find any volunteers to help. Cllr Barnes asked the Committee members to come forward if they were available. As some of the damage was caused by pupils from Forest Hall School it was suggested that the office contact the school and invite the students to assist.

[Post meeting note: Cllr Barnes did some of the work by himself on the 12th but decided to reschedule for a new date to do the remaining work. Date to follow.]

**364 TO RECIVE AN UPDATE ON FOOTPATHS**

Due to bad weather conditions, Mr Stiles had been unable to walk many of the local footpaths paths and so had not produced a report this time.

It was asked if the car had been removed from the footpath on Stoney Common. The Clerk explained that the fire service had put a post out that they were dealing with it but was unsure if the car was still there. The twitchel by St John’s Lane is looking good, the shrubs have been cleared.

**365 MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR NEXT AGENDA**

None

Meeting closed 9.08pm

**ACTION POINTS**

358 The Project Support Officer will chase UDC on the planting of the Jubilee tree on Mountfitchet Green as will Cllr Khan.

The Project Support Officer will chase the gardening contractor on the tree order

359 Cllr Caton and the Clerk to raise the lack of progress on the Elms Farm and Walpole Meadows handover at the meeting with Peter Holt from UDC

362a The office to research mental health grants to support the installation of a wheelchair accessible path on Mountfitchet Green.

Cllr Caton to research disability grants