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**STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET PARISH COUNCIL OPEN SPACES**

MINUTES of a meeting of the OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE held on Wednesday 11th October 2023 at 7.30pm in The Mountfitchet Exchange, Crafton Green, 72 Chapel Hill, Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex

**PRESENT** Cllr J Kavanagh (Chair), Cllrs A Barnes, M Caton, A Guney, A Khan,

 A Love, L Prior and T van de Bilt

**ATTENDING** Cllr Braeckman (via Zoom)

Cllr P Jones

Mrs Ruth Clifford – Parish Clerk

 Mrs Emma Philbrick – Deputy Clerk

 Mrs Laila Azure-Marxen (via Zoom)

 1 member of the public (via Zoom)

**200 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Braeckman – Away at Uni

 This was unanimously approved

**201 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Caton declared an interest in the Cemetery with a family member buried there.

**202 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6TH SEPTEMBER 2023**

Item 155: Cllr Barnes had enquired about three dying trees – this will be amended.

Correction of a typo in the action points, item 155

**RESOLVED** To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 6th September 2023 as a true and accurate account

**203 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON ACTION POINTS FROM THE LAST MEETING**

155 - The Clerk will inform s106 officer of the condition the allotments on Walpole Meadows. This has been done. Still awaiting update.

156 - The office to discuss cleaning the Coronation Shelter with Lucy. Lucy has cleaned the bus shelter

160 - The office to do an inventory of existing benches and their condition. Lucy is working on a map of the village, and is reviewing the inventory of seats, litter, dog and grit bins and is most of the way through. This will be on the next OS agenda.

**204 TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM THE CHAIR, CLLR JO KAVANAGH**

Report attached.

Walpole Meadows Allotment: Members enquired about ongoing maintenance costs when handed over. The Clerk informed that grass cutting costs should be low and tenants’ rent will cover grass cutting, water, repair of fence etc. The first year after handover the maintenance of the grounds will be the responsibility of the developers, and then it will be working into the Parish Council contracts. There will possibly be a separate grounds maintenance contract for the whole of Walpole Meadows in the future.

Elms Farm Park: The area has been sprayed again, but there are still some patches of thistle which might seed. Some areas of grass look good, but will need monitoring.

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**205 TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM THE PROJECTS OFFICER**

 Report attached.

Cllr Kavanagh expressed concerns about Cllr Gooding’s lack of response on the licence support, as it is vital for the UDC funding application, with a deadline on the 4th December. Cllr Gooding will be chased again.

**206 TO RECEIVE CEMETERY REPORT FROM THE CLERK**

Interments:

Zoe Ferrier 10th October 2023

**207 TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM SUSTAINABLE STANSTED**

Report was circulated before the meeting.

 The group will soon be sending out leaflets on household energy savings.

Business sticker initiative: Cllr Caton suggested that the group liaise with the Business Forum as one of their pillars is sustainability. Cllr Jones will discuss with the group.

The Biodiversity Audit: Cllr Jones explained that it is mainly data collection, aimed at residents. He will circulate info on this.

**208 TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM THE BIODIVERSITY WORKING GROUP**

Report circulated before meeting.

Trial areas for wildflowers and rewilding: Proposals to be outlined and budgeted. Match funding amount needed for the UDC grant but will need to be considered by F&GP as part of the budget process. Ongoing maintenance should be included in the programme.

Chemical use: The working group has contacted other Councils which have made alternative arrangements. If a ban on pesticides and herbicides is considered possible budget implications should be investigated. This will require discussions with contractors. The working group will produce a proposal for chemical use for the next OS agenda.

No Mow May: The working group questioned why only May? and believes rewilding will have greater benefit. It would need more evidence to support a change to grass cutting contracts. This might require a visit to other Councils with a No-Mow May policy.

**209 TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM THE St MARYS CHURCHYARD AND CEMETERY WORKING GROUP**

Report circulated before meeting.

The working group proposed a simple solution to the grass cutting issue at the Churchyard and Cemetery by allowing for weekly cuts during the season. This was in line with discussions between the Chair and the contractor and noted at the September meeting.The Clerk had costed this and it would add a further £4,816 to the budget. This was a maximum figure and is likely it would be lower as weekly cuts may not be necessary for the whole period.

The issue of un-maintained graves in the Cemetery was discussed and it was agreed that the office would contact the Community Payback team to see if this was something they might take on. If they were able to undertake the first clearance, perhaps a voluntary group could maintain thereafter.

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The Chair mentioned that the remit for the working group was also future proofing, for when a location for the new cemetery was decided.

**210 TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON PLAY EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE**

A report had been circulated before the meeting. Flagged up items are not urgent and have been costed since the report was sent out and quotes will be presented at the next meeting. Play equipment repairs have already exceeded budget this year.

Lighting in Skatepark: UK Power Network supply has failed to the whole car park. It is with Uttlesford District Council as owners of the site.

**211 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE REPORT ON FOOTPATHS**

Mr Stiles’ report had been circulated prior to the meeting. The Deputy Clerk confirmed that any actions that could be undertaken by the office have been completed. Cllr Jones offered to try to establish the landowner at Elsenham Road.

Meeting closed at 8.21pm

**ACTION POINTS**

160 Inventory of existing benches and their condition on next Open Spaces agenda

208 The biodiversity working group will produce a proposal for the future use of pesticides and herbicides

209 The Cemetery Working Group to look into establishing a volunteer group to maintain graves.

 The office to investigate the possibility of Community Payback team to take on a one-off cut-back of the unmaintained graves in the cemetery.

211 The office to investigate who owns the land at Elsenham Road.