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**STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET PARISH COUNCIL OPEN SPACES**

MINUTES of a meeting of the OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE held on Wednesday 22nd November 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 Love and L Prior

**ATTENDING** Cllr A Guney (via Zoom)

Mrs Ruth Clifford – Parish Clerk

Mrs Laila Azure-Marxen (via Zoom)

1 member of the public (via Zoom)

**264 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Braeckman – away at university, Cllr Guney – unwell, and Cllrs Khan and van de Bilt – work commitments.

The reasons for absence were unanimously approved.

**265 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None

**266 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11TH OCTOBER 2023**

**RESOLVED** To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 11th October 2023 as a true and accurate account

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

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

208 The biodiversity working group will produce a proposal for the future use of pesticides and herbicides. Working group still working on this

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. The suggestion to use the Community Payback Team requires running water and toilet facilities. The office has approached Lynda Dale regarding the use of the church toilets, and she has requested a meeting. An alternative is to engage with Forest Hall School which used to have volunteer days. Clerk will investigate further.

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

Cllr Jones took on this job – update awaited

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

Report attached. As the grassed areas appear to be making a good recovery, councillors agreed to review the re-seeding of the football goal areas on the Recreation Ground in February.

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

Report was circulated before the meeting.

Clerk pointed out that the dates for the Energy Surgery were wrong – it is on Saturdays 18th and 25th. It was noted that the Toy Swap is taking place on Wednesday 6th.  It was suggested that, if possible, it would be good to have a weekend session. The Clerk stated that Touchpoint are aware of this event and would be making contact direct with the group to see if there was scope to do something together.

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

Interment: Suzanne Warwick on 13th November 2023

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**271 TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM THE BIODIVERSITY & CHURCHYARD AND CEMETERY WORKING GROUPS IF AVAILABLE**

No reports available this time.

**272 TO RECEIVE QUARTERLY REVIEW ON GARDENING AND GRASS CUTTING**

Report circulated before meeting.

It is end of season, so not much to note. The grass cutting is done and the hanging baskets have been taken down. Grass cutting will start again in March.

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

Report circulated before meeting.

The Councillors discussed the costs of the repairs listed and the budget implications. The maintenance budget has already been exceeded for this year and will not cover the repairs needed. It was discussed to assess all playgrounds, and consider to have fewer playgrounds in each area, and not replace all items as this has proven to be costly. It was agreed to form a working group which will assess the sites with an external expert. Councillors Barnes, Love and Caton volunteered. Cllr Prior will assist if there is a need for public consultation. The office will message all councillors to ask if anyone else wants to join – max 2 more members.

It was also discussed to recommend to F&GP to increase the play equipment maintenance budget. Having been proposed by Cllr Barnes and seconded by Cllr Caton, it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** To recommend to increase the play equipment maintenance budget to £10,000 next year

**274 TO RECEIVE A MAP SHOWING THE LOCATION OF SEATS, LITTER AND DOG BINS AND GRIT BINS**

A map showing the locations of each asset was tabled at the meeting.

The councillors discussed the map. The councillors were reminded to request more bins if needed, for the Environmental Rangers believe that we have sufficient. Cllr Kavanagh raised the issue of dog owners leaving dog poo, even if there is a bin nearby. Cllr Kavanagh will investigate what Newport have done to improve the same problem. It was also agreed that Cllr Kavanagh will find information material to be shared with the residents.

The grit bins are currently placed where Essex Highways originally put them. It was agreed to request the Highways sub-committee to review adding more grit bins around the village.

**275 TO CONSIDER FUTURE ENTRY INTO ANGLIA IN BLOOM COMPETITION**

It was agreed to financially support Anglia in Bloom and cover the registration fee, as the competition will raise the village profile and includes community groups. The councillors asked if Dan could continue to support with communications in 2024.

**276 TO CONSIDER QUOTE FOR CUTTING BACK AN OVERGROWN AREA ON THE RECREATION GROUND**

Having been proposed by Cllr Caton and 2nd by Cllr Barnes it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** approve the quote to cut back the overgrown area on the recreation ground.

**277 TO CONSIDER HOLDING A SPRING LITTER PICK 2024 AND IF SO TO CONSIDER SETTING UP A WORKING GROUP**

Members discussed if one litter pick is enough to make a difference. Stansted Mountpickers are currently not active and UDC have reduced their manpower picking litter, so less litter is removed in the village. It is agreed there is a need for more litter picking, but to start with one Spring pick and consider more if successful. It was also discussed to involve the Youth Council.

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**278 TO CONSIDER A REQUEST FROM A RESIDENT IN FIVE ACRES TO ERECT SIGANGE ON THE PUBLIC OPEN SPACE**

After discussion members agreed that it could prove a dangerous precedent to allow erection of signs on Parish Council land. The sign could also end up causing damage to the grass, if drivers start reversing onto it. It was agreed to ask UDC to add an additional cul-de-sac sign on the other side of the entry to Five Acres to discourage drivers going to the houses on High Lane. It was agreed not to allow the signage.

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

A report had been circulated before the meeting.

The footpath report was discussed. If the Clerk receives any further reports of a fallen tree at Grippers, she will contact the landowner.

Meeting closed at 8.46pm

**ACTION POINTS**

209 The Clerk to investigate if Forest Hall School can assist with the one-off cut of the unmaintained graves in the cemetery.

269 The office to raise adding an additional Toy Swap date on a Saturday

273 To recommend an increase on the play equipment maintenance budget to F&GP

The office to message all councillors to join the new play equipment working group.

274 Cllr Kavanagh to investigate what Newport have done to improve their dog poo problem

Cllr Kavanagh to find information material to share with the residents

275 To request the Highways sub-committee to review adding more grit bins around the village

276 Ask Dan to continue supporting Anglia In Bloom with communication in 2024

278 The office to ask UDC to erect an additional cul-de-sac sign on the entry to five acres.