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**STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET PARISH COUCIL OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE**

MINUTES of a meeting of the OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 6th March 2024 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 Love,

L Prior and T van de Bilt

**ATTENDING** Mrs Ruth Clifford – Parish Clerk

Cllrs Ghosh and Jones

**468 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Khan – still at work

**RESOLVED** To accept the apologies from Cllr Khan.

No apologies were received from Cllr Braeckman

**469 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST -** None

**470 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22nd NOVEMBER 2023**

**RESOLVED** To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd November 2023 as a true and accurate account.

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

Action points were noted in the Clerk’s report.

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

Attached

Cllr Kavanagh read her report to the meeting. This included reference to an outstanding action point on dog fouling, a report on which is also attached for information.

Referring to a meeting held earlier in the day with the gardening contractor, Cllr Kavanagh explained to members that no autumn bulbs had been planted in 2023 and so the budget funds allocated could be used to supplement planting in various borders. By a show of hands, members supported the suggestion to plant day lilies (provided these are not poisonous to animals), crocosmias and peonies.

Cllr Barnes reminded the meeting that a discussion had taken place regarding the planting of poppies in the Memorial Gardens and the Clerk undertook to raise this with the contractor again.

**473 TO RECEIVE A CEMETERY REPORT**

Included in the Clerk’s report and noted.

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

Received and circulated to members ahead of the meeting.

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

The report had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Cllr Barnes reported that the working group were meeting the following day to pursue the wildflower project. The draft policy on the use of glyphosate should be ready for consideration by members in the near future.

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**476 TO RECEIVE THE QUARTERLY REVIEW ON GARDENING AND GRASS CUTTING CONTRACTS**

The report had been circulated earlier in the day and the Clerk pointed out that two compliments had been received for the gardening contractors since the last report. It was agreed to add the watering of the three commemorative trees to the schedule.

**477 TO RECEIVE FEEDBACK FROM THE PLAY AREAS WORKING GROUP FOLLOWING THEIR SITE VISITS**

Comments from two members of the working group, following the site visit in January, had been circulated as part of the Clerk’s report. A discussion took place around the list (previously circulated) of repairs/maintenance required and the associated costs. Cllr Barnes pointed out that the estimated costs exceeded the budget agreed for 2024/25. With permission from the Chair to speak, Cllr Jones suggested splitting the maintenance work over two years, allocating up to £5,000 per year leaving some funds available for unforeseen events.

It was agreed that the working group would meet again, with the Clerk, to prepare a report on each of the key play areas. Each report would include a list of the items in the area, which if any required maintenance work, which if any were nearing the end of their life and which if any should be replaced or removed. It was agreed to delegate authority to the Clerk in consultation with the working group members to place contracts for necessary repairs within the financial framework above.

The Clerk stated that the previous weekend, Cllr Caton had been informed that the zip wire at the Mountfitchet Green was broken. On investigation by our Environmental Ranger, it was confirmed that it is still working but has been vandalised further. Weekly reports have identified damage in the form of large teeth marks around the rubber seat and the base of the fabric which protects the chain. Photographs indicated that the damage was likely to have been caused by a large dog, possibly using the equipment as a large dog toy. It was agreed that a post should be prepared for social media with residents asked to alert the council if they witnessed any such misuse of the equipment.

**478 TO SET A DATE FOR A LITTER PICK**

A date has been set for Saturday 27th April 2024. Cllrs Barnes, Caton, Jones, Kavanagh, Love and van de Bilt agreed to attend. The event will run from 10am – 12noon with volunteers meeting outside The Mountfitchet Exchange. The Clerk stated that she would notify members of the Youth Council and the Youth Club and Cllr Jones agreed to inform Sustainable Stansted. The office would publicise the event and if any member noted any areas of the village which are particularly bad, they should notify the Clerk ahead of the event.

**479 TO REVIEW THE TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY AND TO RECOMMEND ADOPTION BY FULL COUNCIL**

A draft copy of the policy showing the proposed amendments had been circulated ahead of the meeting. The Clerk explained the reasoning behind the proposed changes and these were supported by members. In addition, it was agreed to incorporate wording suggested by Cllr Hogg in relation to wood for burning.

Members unanimously supported the following:

**RECOMMENDATION**  That the Council adopt the amended Tree Management Policy.

Members noted that our current Tree Warden is temporary and asked that the Clerk make another attempt to find someone willing to serve on a permanent basis.

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

No report available.

Meeting closed at 8.50pm

**ACTION POINTS**

472 Clerk to raise the planting of poppies in the Memorial Gardens with the contractor.

476 Add watering of the 3 commemorative trees to the gardening schedule.

477 Working Group to meet with the Clerk and prepare a report on key play areas.

478 The Youth Club, Youth Council and Sustainable Stansted to be informed of litter pick date and event to be publicised on social media.

479 Advertise for a permanent Tree Warden