

Report to Open Spaces Committee February 2021

The current COVID-19 crisis and the Government measures that have been in place since 23 March, has allowed the Town Council to review when it holds its meetings.

The Government published changes for Council meetings and the way that they can be held, as well as removing the requirement to hold an annual council meeting (The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020). Under regulation 4, it says that Councils *may alter the frequency, move or cancel such meetings*.

Regulation 5 allows local councils to hold remote meetings using its preferred form of electronic communications.

General info/updates

As a consequence of the current Lockdown restrictions and change to working regimes, and in addition the current extended leave for the Deputy Clerk, some matters for Open Spaces Committee will be deferred to the Committee's April meeting. However, operational activities do continue as part of the Town Council's routine business. Apologies to anyone who may have been expecting to receive details on some of the Council's and Committee's other projects.

The Memorial in the Cemetery dedicated to the staff and children of the LCC Residential School, Crockham Hill who died in WWII, was recently commissioned for cleaning and re-lettering. This has been carried out and it is nice the office has received some complementary acknowledgements of appreciation to the Town Council.

Market Yard Car Park/churchyard wall: The Diocese had agreed to an extension to allow repairs to the churchyard wall. However, due to the current Covid-19 pandemic, these works had been postponed last year. An update on arrangements for this year will be given at the April Committee meeting, or to full Council.

Bus shelter in Swan Lane: At the November meeting of the committee it was agreed to submit this to for a CIL bid. The CIL Board next meets in March. KCC Highways are yet to confirm if they would support a bus shelter in this location.

Skate Park improvements: The costings for the three items for the Skate Park have come back; £19.5k. As agreed at the last meeting, a CIL bid will be submitted and reported back to the April Committee meeting.

Fencing at the playground fence in Stangrove Park: As agreed at the November meeting, a CIL bid will submitted to the Board's next meeting.

Byelaws and signage: An audit of all the byelaw signage on Town Council land started last year. A number of the signs do need replacing. This expenditure will likely be in the new financial year.

Summer play scheme: The Committee would normally be considering the summer play scheme organised in conjunction with SDC. Due the current Covid-19 pandemic, there is no information at this time as to if this could happen. Last year's plans had to be cancelled.

Waste freight collections: The Committee piloted this at the end of 2019 and had agreed to support quarterly collections. However, due the current pandemic, this service is currently suspended. Once SDC are in a position to reinstate it will be reported back to this committee.

TO RECEIVE ANALYSIS OF THE COMMITTEE'S RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS TO 31 January 2021

The comparisons report attached includes the expenditure and income up to 31 December.

6. CORRESPONDENCE

6.1 Annual wildlife report: Each year the Council receives a detailed a report on daily wildlife observations from a local resident, Mr David Eade. Over the years these have built up into a unique record of the flora and fauna trends in a specific habitat lying between Lingfield Road and the River Eden. Mr Eade has once again produced this detailed really useful report for 2020. This report is not available for open publication but is available for members and other relevant organisations via the Council office.

6.2 Skate Park – Grind box: In November, the groundstaff discovered that "persons unknown" had installed a new item of skating equipment along the far side of the ramps at Blossoms Park - without any prior contact with the Town Council at all; (see picture). This put the Council in a very difficult (insurance) position if anyone used this and hurt themselves, a notice was put on it to say it was an unauthorised installation, not to be used, and requested its removal. This was done very amicably and there have since been several exchanges of communications. The box itself has been constructed to a good quality of the build. The people who constructed it would like "gift" the item at their own expense to increase the range of riding.

The grind box has been designed for a number of roller blade skating enthusiasts, mostly 30-something in age group but some younger; some are local people and others come from a wider area who really like the ramps at Blossoms Park.

The existing ramps are independently inspected against the BS EN 14974:2019 standard for roller sports equipment, and any addition would need to meet this criteria when inspected. If the item was provided by an authorised company, they would have Public Liability and Employer's Liability insurance for the construction and installation process, and the Council would expect a warranty for the equipment to cover the quality of the item and if any subsequent defects emerged.

Also, the Council is already planning to add some additional items of equipment in the asphalt area on the north side of the existing ramps (reported to November meeting).

Enquires have been made to the constructor/maintenance company for the existing skate ramps for the cost of a new grind box added in to the proposed extension. The question to incorporate the use the unauthorised grind box has been asked as well, and photographs and details of its construction have been provided (in early January 2021). As yet, a response to the questions has not been received.

An update can be provided at the April meeting. However, in the meantime, if advice comes back that it could accommodate the grind box, but that a new one would need to purchased, would Members want this cost included in the CIL application for the current approved improvements.

How do Members want to proceed?

7. HEAD GROUNDSMAN'S REPORT FEB 2021

- We have taken delivery of our new heavier roller as approved by the members in a previous meeting. We have been able to get out on it once so far and it was a great success. Once the

ground dries out a bit we will incorporate the rolling into our pitch maintenance program across the councils sport pitches.

- I have begun the winter tree survey and hope to have the majority of it finish within the next week or so. A full report will be presented at the next meeting.
- The winter headstone check has been completed with no major issues. We are in the process of contacting the families of any headstones that were flagged up as in need of attention.
- The team has renewed a number of posts across the council's sites including all the bollards around the car park at blossoms park.
- I will be meeting with the community warden in the coming days to discuss the possibility of sowing some wild flower areas this spring. We hope this is something we will have the resources to do and I feel it will be an exciting project for the council to undertake.
- With the wet weather we have seen over the last few months and an increase in footfall across our sites we are understandably seeing a lot of muddy areas appear. I am in contact with a local contractor with the hope of getting a delivery of wood chip so the team can build some temporary paths in the worst hit areas.
- The team have continued with the disinfection of the towns play areas and gym equipment

Agenda items:

7.2 To approve the expenditure of up to £600 for a scarifying rake for the tractor.

Do Members support the expenditure of up to £600 for the new scarifying rake?

7.3 To note: some weather improvements to the path at the Recreation Ground, near the bridge. Cllr Aldridge had raised concerns with the condition of some of the paths around the public rights of way due to recent heavy rains and public use. Having viewed these, only the one in the bottom corner of the Recreation Ground near the bridge is on Council land. Arrangements have been made to put a layer of wood chippings along this section of path.

7.2 Items for the future

The Grounds team will be working with the Sevenoaks District Council on the town wild meadow area. Last year, there were some conversations with SDC about the field at Mowshurst where the long grass was, and whether this area was suitable for wild meadow. SDC may be able to help with cutting the grass at the beginning of the season. This would be done at the same time as the work to the town field. If this was to be possible is this something the Members would support?

Do Members support trialing an area at the Mowshurst field to create a wild meadow?

8. OPEN SPACES BUSINESS

8.1 Burial report: At the time of writing this Cemetery three has just 6 plots remaining. Cemetery four layout has been drawn-up and is ready for allocation of plots; approximately 250, plus space for more ashes plots. A formal vinyl copy of the layout is in the process of being created.

8.2 10/30 year maintenance plans – to approve the preparation of a proposal for the Recreation Ground refurbishment: The refurbishment of the Recreation Ground playground is in the 30-year maintenance plans and is coming up for refurbishment. The Forward Planning Steering Group and Finance Committee have recommended that this projected should be funded via the CIL funds. Some preliminary research has started to take place on possible costs and designs to help with preparing a

specification to go out to tender. Consultation with local users of the park would also be included to help when preparing the tender. A CIL bid to the Town Council's CIL Board needs to be prepared and submitted for the playground refurbishment. A CIL bid has been submitted to SDC to hopefully fund the area for older children.

Do Members support the proposal to submit a CIL bid to the Town Council's CIL Board for funding the Recreation Ground refurbishment and improvements?

Do Members want to nominate a small group to work with the proposals that will be used to form the tender specification?

Currently, Cllrs Todd (Chairman of Open Spaces Committee) and Baker (Vice-Chair of Open Spaces Committee) have been working with officers.

8.3 Defibrillator for Stangrove Park: The Community First Responders having been looking at siting a defibrillator and cabinet at Stangrove Park. The type of cabinet is currently yet to be confirmed, but it had been considering a solar powered box/cabinet. The preferred location would be near the outdoor gym area and accessible from the main footpath that runs through the park.

Do members support Stangrove Park to be a location for a defibrillator and cabinet?

It is likely the Council could receive a donation to purchase a suitable defibrillator and cabinet for up to 80% of the total purchase cost. If this was to be the case,

Do Members wish to proceed to purchase the defibrillator and cabinet, which would be then be included on the Council's register.

8.4 Dog fouling signage for Stangrove Park: Dog fouling continues to be an issue in Stangrove Park around the play, basketball and outdoor gym areas. The proposal is to have new signage displayed around these areas in the Park. A3 metal (or aluminium coated) signs, on a metal post and plate. The Community Warden will be looking to liaise with the SDC Dog Warden and arrange to attend Stangrove Park; and to do some promotional awareness events.

Do Members approve the expenditure of up to £150 for two signs to be sited near the basketball area and outdoor gym.

8.4 To approve the expenditure of up to £200 for the replacement sundial: The sundial which was presented to the town twinning committee some time ago by Mt. St Aignan in France, has had the gnomon stolen. A quote to replace it has been obtained to replace like for like or, instead of having a plain gnomon for the sundial, it could be decorative design. Of interest, apparently the gnomon had been attached the wrong way round.

Do Members approve the expenditure of £200 for a replacement gnomon for the sundial?