

Minutes for the **Open Spaces Committee** held online on Skype on Tuesday 2nd February 2021

Present:

Chair: Cllr M Gunn

Committee: Cllr F White, Cllr L Wilcock, Cllr B Hamilton, Cllr V Higgins and Cllr S Shepherd

In Attendance:

Officers: Cllr P Burton, Cllr A Shearman, Adam Barnett (Grounds Manager), Jake Taylor (Assistant Grounds Manager), Mrs J Earp (Deputy Town Clerk and RFO) and Mrs H White (Town Clerk)

OS334 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr R Swann.

OS335 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made regarding any items on the Agenda.

OS336 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 10th November 2020 were considered.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 10th November 2020 to be confirmed as a correct record.

OS337 Action List

Consideration was given to the current Action List. The Chair of Open Spaces had revisited the list in detail.

Items discussed included possibly allowing local schools to decorate the skatepark, when Byelaws are reviewed maybe look at keeping dogs on a lead around the play area, possibly erecting hedges around the zip wire, looking at an advertising policy on the open spaces, look at who owns the piece of land at the top of North Street.

RESOLVED to remove number 4 Netball Court Provision, 10 Dog Survey, 11 Sign Posts and Information Boards for Herne Hill, 12 Advertising on Town Council Property, 13, Natural/Wildlife Encouragement Areas and Market Town Investment Group and to update the list accordingly.

OS338 Financial Monitoring

Consideration was given to the Open Spaces Committee budget and expenditure figures produced.

Discussions covered the tennis courts and how we may need to resurface them. The cost was £30,000 15 years ago. Three trees had to be trimmed as they were close to the power lines at Orchard Vale. Cost is £500 per day.

OS339

Grounds Team Report and Chipper Report

Consideration was given to the report prepared by the Grounds Manager. Discussions included the hedge laying and cutting of hedges on Herne Hill and Brittens Field. There was also mention of the Ash die back. It was brought to the Councillors attention that the Council had quite a few Ash trees on their land. At this stage the Grounds Manager and Assistant Grounds Manager were monitoring the trees. If the disease is present in the tree then the Grounds Team will dispose of them in the correct manor.

Congratulations were given to the Grounds Team for their ongoing improvements to the open spaces and how fantastic it's all looking.

The Grounds team also provided a chipper report. The grounds team feel they would benefit from the use of a chipper as hiring one is not cost effective. The Nature Reserve needs continuous maintenance. With a chipper the grounds team could use the chip to lay paths. It would also reduce the amount of wood they need to burn. The chip has already been used on the Nature Reserve and has made a big impact of the ground. The chip is placed onto raised areas and drains and culverts have been created to assist with drainage.

RESOLVED for the Grounds Manager to look at the comparable costs of hire against the cost of a purchase of a chipper. Also to include costs for usual maintenance, annual inspections, possible casing replacement and any other ongoing costs if a chipper were to be purchased.

OS340

Lawsons Circus

Consideration was given to the request to allow the circus to come Monday 12th to Wednesday 14th July.

Consideration was given to COVID 19 and that all parties needed to be aware of the lockdown precautions at that time.

A COVID 19 risk assessment was a requirement.

RESOLVED to agree to Lawsons Circus attending subject to the Government guidelines on outdoor events and for a COVID 19 risk assessment to be provided ahead of the event.

OS341

Skatepark

Consideration was given to the request from a resident for signage at the skate park.

Discussions were had as to how this could be taken forward.

Discussions also included the mention that some adults put their child minders in all-in-one playsuits and use the ramps as a slide. There were concerns that this could cause a nasty accident with the older children and teenagers hitting a small child. There are concerns that a head injury could cause a death.

Consideration was given to whether a notification could be put out on FaceBook to warn people about the dangers.

Discussions moved the signage and whether stickers could be produced to discourage toddlers using the skatepark so that the skaters and those with scooters are able to use the skatepark without having to worry about knocking over a small child.

At present the Byelaws aren't going to be addressed as this has to wait for a meeting in the Chamber so there is no further action that can be taken there. Stickers on the side of the skate park might be the best way forward. The Town Council can't micro manage the public but could make signage to say that the skatepark is used at their own risk.

RESOLVED to delegate to the Deputy Town Clerk, The Clerk and Chair of Open Spaces to design a punchy, short notice to attach to the skatepark that residents use the skatepark at their own risk and to include some short detail about only to be used by wheeled vehicles. The amended words from the Byelaws could be adapted.

OS342

Ecological Emergency

Consideration was given to the implications of the Town Council considering an ecological emergency.

The Town's Environment Champion had spoken at the last Open Spaces Committee meeting. An ecological emergency is similar to the climate emergency but considers additional factors.

The Committee began to consider whether they could meet all the requirements and the work involved. Examples included having to have all waterways functioning at their best. This has an impact with the phosphates issue that is currently affecting the area.

The Committee considered whether more research should be completed before anything is declared. If an ecological emergency is declared before enough is known about the detail the Town Council could be opening themselves up to fail.

The Committee need to begin to look at areas of the ecological emergency and be aware of what is involved, be positive and work towards a declaration in the future.

OS343

Benches

Consideration was given to the replacement bench at the tennis courts. It had been agreed at a previous meeting on what bench the committee were happy to purchase. Unfortunately, due to COVID 19, the bench was not available for 8 months. Further options were provided.

RESOLVED to try and purchase the alternative selected bench with wooden slats for £559.00.

Meeting closed 10:22pm