

Hughenden Parish Council
Remote Meeting Held Via Zoom Communications

Services Committee Meeting

Tuesday 27th October 2020 at 7.30 pm

Confirmed Minutes

1. Present:

Cllr P Gieler (Chairman)

Cllr P Ewart, Cllr M Hilder, Cllr P Nicholls, Cllr C Sammut, Cllr M Tyler

2. Also present:

Mr A McEwan (McEwan Forestry) Mr McEwan left the meeting after presenting the recommendations of the Tree Safety Survey (item 5).

3. Officers:

M Woof (Clerk), J Armshaw (Deputy Clerk)

4. Public participation

There were no members of the public present.

5. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies.

6. Declarations of interest

Cllr Sammut declared a non-pecuniary interest and sought dispensation with respect to agenda item 5 Tree Safety Survey. Cllr Sammut is the joint owner of a residential property bordering council-maintained land and has a request to carry out tree work pending. The Clerk granted dispensation to participate in the discussion and Cllr Sammut elected not to participate in the vote.

Cllr Sammut declared a non-pecuniary interest and sought dispensation with respect to agenda item 6 Allotments. Cllr Sammut is an allotment tenant. The Clerk granted dispensation to participate in the discussion and to vote.

7. Previous minutes (Appendix 1)

Resolved

- That the minutes of the remote Services Committee meeting held on 17th September 2020 be approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman at the next face-to-face meeting.

8. Tree safety survey (Appendix 2)

The Chairman invited Andrew McEwan (McEwan Forestry) to introduce himself and summarise the findings of the Tree Safety Survey.

Mr McEwan explained that he had identified a backlog of tree work and recommended a programme of work to reduce risk. The recommendations of the Tree Safety Survey are listed in Appendix 2. Mr McEwan also summarised the findings of the recent Ash Die Back Survey and suggested a phased management approach. To date Ash Die Back has not significantly affected trees. Mr McEwan provided information about the professional qualifications and experience of suppliers invited to quote for the tree work and explained the recommended priorities/time frame for the work. Mr McEwan then answered questions from members concerning the Tree Safety Survey and recommended tree works.

The Clerk thanked the Deputy Clerk for her Tree Safety Survey Report (Appendix 2) and advised members to consider the implications of carrying out tree work on landholdings with differing ownership/management responsibilities.

The Committee considered the Tree Safety Survey, recommended tree work, tree surgeon quotations, land ownership/management responsibilities and financial implications.

The Committee agreed to

Recommend to Finance & Policy Committee on 29th October 2020

- That an additional £15,000 be transferred from council reserves to the tree budget to cover costs associated with tree management.

The Committee agreed to

Recommend to Full Council on 10th November 2020

- That Council resolve to accept:
 - a) The recommendations of the Tree Safety Survey (2020) as proposed by McEwan Forestry.
 - b) The quotation to carry out tree work as supplied by Lowther Forestry Group Ltd.
 - c) That Tree Protection Order consent be obtained by contractors where applicable prior to the commencement of any tree work.
 - d) That tree work be carried out at land owned by Hughenden Parish Council.

- e) That tree work be carried out at land owned by Hughenden Parish Council and leased to third parties (Hatches Field, Widmer End Football Club Pitch, Hughenden Valley Football Club Pitch).
- f) That tree work be carried out at land owned by Hughenden Parish Council where lease negotiation is ongoing (Great Kingshill Common/Cricket Club).
- g) That Cllr Gieler & Cllr Nicholls contact the landowner at Cryers Hill Allotment to discuss recommended tree work.
- h) That tree work be carried out at land not owned by Hughenden Parish Council where lease negotiation is ongoing, subject to prior permission being granted by the landowner (Hughenden Community Support Trust).
- i) That tree work be carried out at land with no registered owner where Hughenden Parish Council assume responsibility for community benefit (Cockpit Hole Great Kingshill.)
- j) That Council engage the professional services of McEwan Forestry to provide ongoing arboricultural advice including working with Cllr Gieler, Cllr Hilder and Deputy Clerk to draft a comprehensive Tree & Hedge Management Policy.

The Chairman thanked Officers and Members for their work on this matter.

9. Allotments

a) Security Working Party Report (Appendix 3)

The Chairman summarised the report. Members of the working party will visit allotments individually to assess security issues. The working party will reconvene to discuss collective findings and make a full report and recommendations to the Services Committee in early 2021.

b) To rescind resolution 19238 Full Council 11th June 2019

That delegated authority be given to officers to proceed with the most appropriate proposal up to a budget of £2,700 to carry out plot clearance at Cryers Hill Allotment.

The Deputy Clerk explained that the resolution had not been actioned due to soft ground conditions preventing access to the site and a lack of demand for plots at Cryers Hill Allotment.

The Committee agreed to

Recommend to Full Council on 10th November 2020

- That resolution 19238 be rescinded.

c) **To rescind resolution 20190 Full Council 14th July 2020**

That written notice be given to allotment tenants that on 29th September 2021 rent will increase to £52/whole plot, £26/half plot and that an administration fee of £25 be made for any change to the Allotment Tenancy Agreement or application for a temporary structure. Concessionary rent may be granted at the discretion of the Clerk.

The Deputy Clerk explained that resolution 20190 had not been actioned because the introduction of an administration fee may constitute a change in the terms of the Allotment Tenancy Agreement. The implications of this change on office resources meant that it was not possible to complete the action before Rent Day (29th September).

The Committee agreed to

Recommend to Full Council on 10th November 2020

- That resolution 20190 be rescinded.

10. The Deputy Clerk gave a verbal report summarising allotment occupancy. The figures are as follows:

Number of plots: 233 (8 allotment gardens)

Number of vacant plots: 13 (5.5%)

Number of tenants in rent arrears: 6 (2.5%)

Number of tenancy agreements pending: 12 (5.2%)

Annual rent payment process will be completed by 11th November 2020.

The Chairman thanked the Deputy Clerk for her report.

11. Hedges

a) Management policy

The Clerk summarised council's responsibility for hedges which can be sub-divided into management of council owned hedges and devolved responsibility for serving hedge enforcement notices for overgrown private hedges. Council also has responsibility to effectively communicate hedge management policy to the community and to manage hedges wherever possible to increase biodiversity.

The Committee agreed that the proposed Tree Management Policy (item 5) be expanded to include hedge management.

b) North Dean Allotment (Full Council 08/09/2020 & 12/03/2019)

The Clerk reported that no progress had been made in this matter due to workload. The Clerk will provide an update at the next meeting.

12. Garden of Rest

The Deputy Clerk gave a verbal report. On average there are 3 interments per month compromising 2 cremated ashes and 1 full burial. Each grave is double depth with a ratio of 1:1 for the current number of first and second interments. The ratio of in parish and out of parish interments is 1.2:1.7.

Due to Coronavirus there were few interments of cremated ashes from March – July. This resulted in a busy period during August and September when the backlog of interments took place. Following an enquiry an overgrown conifer will be removed from a grave as it has overgrown adjacent graves. A review of all overgrown conifers is planned for 2021.

Officers and contractors continue to receive positive feedback for the service provided and for the care given to grounds maintenance at the Garden of Rest. The Chairman thanked the Deputy Clerk for her report.

13. Common Road Old Allotment (Appendix 4)

The Chairman summarised the report of the working party who are working on an environmental plan to be implemented at this site. There will be a site meeting on 3rd November 2020 to consult with Katie Horgan of Bucks, Berks, Oxon Wildlife Trust to discuss next steps on how to implement the plan. The project has a resolved budget of £4,000.

Cllr Nicholls reminded the committee that for several years, council provided local organisations with bulbs in early autumn to be planted in grass verges throughout the parish. It was suggested that this scheme be reintroduced.

14. Playgrounds

There was no progress to report due to Officer and Councillor workload associated with other matters. The working party are in communication and have obtained updated quotations for play equipment. The working party will continue their work and report to the Services Committee in early 2021.

15. Devolved services

The Clerk informed Members that council undertook a full public competitive tender in 2016 for contracted services. The five contracts were initially awarded for a three-year period then extended by 12 months. On 13th October 2020 Council resolved to extend the existing contracts by a further 12 months to 31st March 2022. The Clerk has written to service suppliers concerning the extension and is awaiting their response. Members and Officers agreed that the current team of external contractors are working well with council and delivering good service.

16. Environmental policy

The Chairman expressed his intention to review/create a comprehensive Environment & Services Management Policy which will incorporate sections on trees & hedges, grass verges, ponds, meadows, biodiversity, allotments, Garden of Rest etc. in addition to a summary overview stating the mission.

The Committee agreed that the first step in the process is to develop a Tree & Hedge Management Policy (see item 5J) which will form part of the overall Environment & Services Management Policy.

17. Budget 2021-2022

The Clerk suggested that members of the Services Committee consider plans and budgets for 2021-2022 to be able to contribute to the precept meeting in December 2020. The Committee agreed to investigate funding options from external sources in addition to precept and income.

The Clerk to circulate budget information to Members to aid budget planning.

The Clerk & Cllr Ewart to establish historical background and legal responsibility for streetlight maintenance and to report back to the Committee to aid future planning and budgeting.

18. Future agenda items

The next meeting will focus on budget 2021-2022.

The Clerk invited Members to send motions and items for inclusion on the next agenda to her by 14th November 2020.

19. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 24th November 2020 at 7.30pm via Zoom Communications.

20. Close of meeting

There being no further business the Chairman thanked Members and Officers for their input and closed the meeting at 9.26pm.

Chairman's Signature:

Date:

These minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record at the meeting held on 24 November 2020 and will be signed as such at the first opportunity.

Appendix 1 – Previous minutes

Appendix 2 – Tree Safety Survey (redacted version)

Appendix 3 – Allotment Security Working Party Report

Appendix 4 – Common Road Old Allotment Working Party Report