

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AMENITIES AND OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE
HELD ON 5th FEBRUARY 2008 AT 7.30 p.m. AT HARTLEY LIBRARY, ASH ROAD**

Present: Cllr Mr A Barnett (Chairman)
Cllr Mrs P Cole
Cllr Mr D Graeme
Cllr Mr S Granger
Cllr Mr M Harris
Cllr Mrs A Oxtoby

In Attendance: Mrs J Hoad (Clerk)
9 members of the public

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Mr J Gaywood and Mr V John (New Ash Green and Hartley Cricket Club).

2. Declaration of Interests

Cllr Mrs P Cole declared a personal interest under minute item 15 (a) in respect of the playground at Woodland Avenue as she lived opposite the recreation ground.

Cllr Mrs A Oxtoby declared a personal interest under minute items 5 and 16 in respect of Hartley Wood as her private residence was located adjacent to the woodland.

Cllr Mr M Harris declared a personal interest under minute item 12 (b) in respect of the Scouts monthly waste paper collection due to his membership of the Scout Group.

3. Minutes of previous meetings

RESOLVED: That, the minutes of the meeting of the Amenities and Open Spaces Committee held on 18th December 2007 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4. Order of business

RESOLVED; That, pursuant to Standing Order 26(d) the order of business be altered so that agenda item 14 (a) relating to the tree clearance work undertaken by Network Rail be taken as the next item of business.

5. Hartley Wood

The Committee considered a letter dated 23rd January 2008 from a resident of Gorsewood Road, who had complained about the recent works undertaken by Network Rail to clear the embankment next to Hartley Wood of trees and vegetation, which had resulted in a loss of privacy to his property. He also expressed concerns about the possible hazard from flying stones hitting pedestrians using the public footpath. The resident had asked for the Council's support in persuading Network Rail to meet the cost of reinstating a screen of trees on land owned by Kent County Council and Hartley Parish Council in Hartley Wood next to the railway line.

The meeting was adjourned at 7.39 p.m. to allow the resident who had written the letter of 23rd January 2008 to explain his concerns about the clearance works. A number of other residents from Gorsewood Road also expressed their concerns about the recent clearance works.

The meeting resumed at 8.00 p.m.

The Committee expressed its outrage at the clearance work undertaken by Network Rail, which it considered was unsightly, detrimental to wildlife and adversely affected the visual amenity and quality of life of residents living near the railway line. The Committee was also concerned with reports that the tree stumps had been poisoned and therefore there would be no possibility of regeneration.

A number of alternative proposals to alleviate the problem were considered by the Committee, which included the provision of a new fence, similar to that offered by Network Rail to the property owner of Beesfield, and replanting to infill the gaps. It was generally felt that due to the falling ground levels the provision of a fence would be impracticable. It was suggested that residents could apply next autumn to the North West Kent Countryside Project for free trees through the “Free Tree Scheme” and that these trees could be planted in Hartley Wood on land owned by Hartley Parish Council next to the railway line, but it was acknowledged any replanting scheme would take many years to mature.

RESOLVED: That, a letter be written to Network Rail expressing the Council’s serious concerns about the recent works to clear the railway embankments and cuttings of trees and vegetation from Longfield Station to Longfield Hill and beyond and that the letter be copied to the tree officer at Sevenoaks District Council, the local member of Kent County Council and the local Member of Parliament.

6. Football at Manor Field

There was no report from Hartley De Sales FC,

7. Cricket at Manor Field

It was reported that the New Ash Green and Hartley Cricket Club was preparing its planning application in respect of the practice net and that it would not be possible to submit an application for funding through the Members Community Fund until planning permission had been granted.

RESOLVED: That, the report be noted.

8. Cricket at Longfield Hill

There was no report from Meopham Cricket Club

9. Financial Report

The Committee considered a financial report indicating the net position of the allotments, open spaces and Manor Field Pavilion as at 30th January 2008.

RESOLVED: That, the financial report, attached as appendix 1 to these minutes, be noted.

10. Grass cutting contract 2008 – 2010

The Committee examined quotations, as set out below, in respect of the grass cutting contracts for the Council’s open spaces and playing fields at Manor Field and Longfield Hill.

Contractor	Contract 2 Grass cut open spaces Total per annum	Contract 3 Grass cut Manor Field and Longfield Hill Total per annum
Sencio Community Leisure	£3,504.00	£3,465.00
KCCS	£8,000.00	£3,600.00
Green Acre	£4,200.00	£2,815.00

KCC Landscape Services	2 pages missing from quotation	£3,087.96
Westcut mowing	£4,200.00	£2,610.00
T D Munday	No quotation returned	No quotation returned

The Committee noted that the Council was not obliged to accept the lowest quotation.

RECOMMENDED: That, (1) the quotation for the sum of £4,200 from Westcut Mowing to cut the grass at the Council's open spaces for the periods 1st April 2008 to 31st October 2008 and 1st April 2009 to 31st October 2009, as specified in Contract 2, be accepted and, (2) the quotation for the sum of £2,610.00 from Westcut Mowing to cut the playing fields at Manor Field and Longfield Hill for the periods 1st April 2008 to 31st October 2008 and 1st April 2009 to 31st October 2009, as specified in Contract 3, be accepted on the grounds that:

- Westcut Mowing had been contracted by the Council to undertake the works specified in the contracts 2 and 3 for a number of years and had a thorough knowledge and understanding of the work involved and,
- Westcut Mowing had undertaken the contracted works to the satisfaction of the Council and,
- it was preferred that the same contractor should undertake the works specified in contracts 2 and 3 and,
- Westcut Mowing had submitted the lowest total quotation sum of £6,810.00 and therefore represented good value for money.

11. Pavilion

(a) Boiler

It was reported that no further progress had been made to seek advice on a suitable system to replace the "Anderson" water heater located in the boiler cupboard.

RESOLVED: That, the report be noted.

(b) Calor Gas Supply

It was reported that the regulator fitted to the Calor gas tank was replaced on 10th January 2008, due to a leak. The Committee was advised that the Calor gas tank was due to be replaced later in the year.

RESOLVED: That, the Clerk's actions be confirmed.

(c) Breast Cancer Walk

The Committee considered a request to use the facilities at the Pavilion free of charge from the organisers of a charity walk to be held on Sunday 4th May 2008.

RECOMMENDED: That, the organisers of the charity walk in aid of Breast Cancer to be held on 4th May 2008 be offered the use of the Pavilion free of charge.

(d) Storage

The Committee considered the possibility of utilising the roof space in the Pavilion for additional storage.

RESOLVED: That, the matter be investigated further.

12. Manor Field

(a) Meter cupboard

The Committee was reminded that quotations had been invited to provide a secure structure around the existing meter cupboard on the grounds that the existing arrangements were considered to be vulnerable to vandalism.

The Committee considered a letter dated 12th December 2007 from the landowners of the 20 foot wide strips of land bordering the western and southern boundaries at Manor Field, Messrs H F & J H Glover. The landowners had declined permission for a permanent structure to be built on their land, explaining that the Parish Council had never paid an easement for the meter. The landowners suggested that consideration should be given to moving the meter onto the Parish Council's property.

It was reported that discussions had taken place with EDF Energy to relocate the meter into the Pavilion, but EDF Energy had advised it would not be possible to joint the cable at the position of the meter, as the existing service cable running from the meter to the Pavilion was not suitable for use as a mains supply cable. This being so, EDF Energy advised that a new mains supply cable should be laid from the road to the Pavilion and estimated the cost of this work to be in the region of £6,000 plus VAT. All builders work would be an additional cost, which would include the provision of a trench and ductwork.

The Committee questioned why Messrs H F & J H Glover were now objecting to the position of the existing meter cupboard, as it was understood they had agreed to the present siting of the meter at the time the Pavilion was built. There was some question over the line of the boundary fence, which appeared to bend behind the meter cupboard, and it was felt that the meter cupboard could already be sited on the Parish Council's land. Furthermore, it was considered the 1975 Conveyance of Manor Field to the Parish Council could contain rights of access for services.

RESOLVED: That, (1) a letter be written to Messrs H F & J H Glover seeking clarification over their views regarding the position of the meter cupboard, (2) investigation be carried out to establish the location of the underground cables and, (3) investigation be undertaken on the legal rights of access affecting the services.

(b) Scouts monthly waste paper collection

It was reported that the Longfield and Hartley Scout Group no longer wished to use the overspill car park at Manor Field for their monthly waste paper collection.

RESOLVED: That, the report be noted.

(c) Clearance of land behind the Pavilion

It was reported that the landowners of the 20 foot wide strip of land bordering the southern boundary of Manor Field, Messrs H F & J H Glover, have no objection to the land being cleared by Kent Industrial Training Services.

RESOLVED: That, arrangements be made with Kent Industrial Training Services to clear the land behind the Pavilion from the overspill car park to the new Burial Ground.

13. Rectory Meadow

(a) North West Kent Countryside Partnership

The Committee considered a letter dated 14th January 2008 from Ms J Winters informing the Council that she was leaving the employment of the North West Kent Countryside Partnership.

RESOLVED: That, the letter be noted.

(b) Botanical Survey

It was reported that no response had been received from the Universities of Kent, Greenwich or Hadlow College to the Council's enquiry about students undertaking a botanical study as part of their studies.

The Committee was reminded that a quotation for the sum of £475 plus VAT had been received from the Kent Wildlife Trust to undertake a botanical survey and that the Council's Financial Regulations 11.1 (a) (ii) need not apply to contracts for specialist services, so it would not be necessary to seek further quotations.

RESOLVED: That, the quotation for the sum of £475 plus VAT from the Kent Wildlife Trust to undertake a botanical survey, as set out in a letter dated 4th October 2007, be accepted, subject to confirmation that the Trust would be willing to stand by its original quotation

(c) Countryside Stewardship Scheme

The Committee considered a letter dated 22nd January 2008 from Natural England setting out the criteria to be met for future grant claims involving educational access visits.

RESOLVED: That, (1) the letter be noted, (2) the local Scout Group and active retirement clubs be invited to visit Rectory Meadow and, (3) an article be placed in the Hartley Herald.

(d) New Trees

The Committee considered the new trees recently planted under the, "Free Tree Scheme", could benefit from the application of herbicide to the surrounding area and the distribution of woodchips around the base of the new trees.

RESOLVED: That, the Clerk be authorised, upto a sum of £75, to make arrangements for the area recently cleared in advance of the tree planting to be sprayed with herbicide and for the distribution of woodchips around the base of the new trees.

14. Gorse Wood

It was reported that a tree had recently blown over in Gorse Wood, causing an obstruction to the footpath and that the Clerk had made arrangements for the tree to be cleared.

RESOLVED: That, the Clerk's actions be confirmed.

15. Playground

(a) Woodland Avenue

The Committee was shown schemes prepared by Kompan and Playdale in respect of the proposed refurbishment of the playground at Woodland Avenue. Further schemes were awaited from two other play equipment suppliers. The Committee briefly considered how the local community should be engaged with the scheme.

RESOLVED: That, the report be noted.

(b) Chantry Avenue

The Committee considered a number of issues raised by a resident of Chantry Avenue at a Members Surgery held on 12th January 2008 relating to the playground at Chantry Avenue. She felt that the playground was underused because the equipment was out of date and that not many people knew of its existence as there were no direction signs.

The Committee felt that immediate residents would object to the erection of a sign at the footpath between the properties of 48 and 50 Chantry Avenue. However, the Committee

considered that the profile of the Chantry Avenue playground should be raised through the production of a publicity sheet, similar to those being prepared by the Communications Committee and through the Council's newsletter.

RESOLVED: That, the matter be referred to the Communications Committee

(c) Roundabout – Woodland Avenue

The Committee was reminded that problems to the bearings on the roundabout at the play area in Woodland Avenue had been identified during the weekly visual inspections of the Council's playgrounds. Furthermore the quarterly operational inspection undertaken by Ms M Cook on 23rd October 2007 had identified slight wear to the bearings on the roundabout and it was recommended that the Council should monitor the situation.

The Committee considered two quotations to replace the bearing as set out below:

- Park Leisure Ltd for the sum of £750 plus VAT to dismantle the unit, replace top and bottom bearing sets, inspect and report on any spindle damage.
- Safeplay for the sum of £470 plus VAT to remove the unit and replace the bearings. Safeplay advised that the roundabout was inspected on 31st October 2007 and it was found that the steel protective skirt under the unit was connecting with the concrete base. The reason for this was probably due to bearing wear, causing the unit platform to move up and down, and causing the steel skirt to connect with the concrete base. Whilst the problem with the unit would not pose a significant risk, vertical movement on the platform was causing ground clearance to fluctuate, which would increase if the bearings were not replaced.

It was reported that a further quarterly operational inspection report had been just been received, but as yet had not been properly examined.

RESOLVED: That, the bearing on the roundabout at Woodland Avenue continue to be monitored, provided the current operational report did not identify the defect as being a medium risk, in which case the Clerk be authorised to make arrangements for the necessary repair.

16. Hartley Wood cont'd

The Committee considered a quotation for the sum of £270 from Mr Glidewell to supply and install a new notice stating the Council was only responsible for the maintenance of woodland under its ownership, as agreed by the Committee at a meeting held on 18th July 2007.

RESOLVED: That, no further action be taken.

17. Foxborough Wood

The Committee examined two quotations to undertake a land survey of Foxborough Wood to mark the extent of the land owned by the Parish Council in Foxborough Wood.

The Committee requested further information and it was suggested that Members should examine the survey work undertaken by Glenn Surveys in Hartley Wood.

RESOLVED: That, the matter be deferred.

18. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 25th March 2008 at 7.30 p.m. in Hartley Library

The meeting closed 10.10 p.m.

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Chairman of the Amenities and Open Spaces Committee

Hartley Parish Council
Summary of Receipts and Payments
Amenities and Open Spaces

Cost Centre	Receipts		Payments		Net Position Underspend (+) /Overspend (-)
	Estimated	Actual	Estimated	Actual	
5 Allotments	300.00	433.59	575.00	728.67	-20.08
6 Open Spaces	1,783.00	3,012.19	26,575.00	21,378.16	6,426.03
7 Manor Field Pavilion	1,000.00	2,383.25	7,825.00	6,362.47	2,845.78
NET TOTAL	3,083.00	5,829.03	34,975.00	28,469.30	9,251.73
Total for ALL Cost Centres		113,140.67		96,070.02	
V.A.T.		3,510.52		4,000.31	
GROSS TOTAL		116,651.19		100,070.33	

