

HASSOCKS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the GROUNDS AND ENVIRONMENT Committee held on 25 July 2019 at 7.30pm in the Parish Centre, Adastra Park, Hassocks.

Attendees: Cllrs Jane Baker, Leslie Campbell, Georgia Cheshire (from Item 6), Frances Gaudencio, Peter Gibbons, and David Hammond.

In attendance: Ian Cumberworth – Parish Clerk

Tracy Forte – Deputy Clerk

GE19/33 APOLOGIES. Apologies were received from Cllrs Kate Bailey, Bill Hatton and co-opted Member Tony Copeland.

GE19/34 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST. There were no declarations of interest.

GE19/35 MINUTES.

RESOLVED to accept the minutes of the Grounds and Environment Committee meeting held on 27 June 2019.

GE19/36 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION. There was no public participation.

GE19/37 OFFICER'S REPORT.

Science Trail – Adastra Park. Members noted the change in arrangements for the Science Trail from an ongoing open activity to a supervised activity on two different dates over the summer. Once to coincide with the Mid Sussex Family Activity day on 5 Aug and again when Hassocks Village Market is open on 24 Aug.

Pavilion Water Tank Repairs. Members noted the undertaking of remedial repairs to the hot water tanks in pavilion at a cost of £626.54 plus VAT and that expenditure will come from the Pavilion Repair and Renewals budget.

The Deputy Clerk informed Members that the Parish Office had lodged an enquiry with WSCC regarding any potential impact of the current works at Stonepound on the Fingerpost and Trough. Confirmation had been received from WSCC that these structures would not be disturbed and that the contractors would be made aware of the need to ensure they are suitably protected.

Cllr Georgia Cheshire joined the meeting.

GE19/38 PARKLANDS ROAD ALLOTMENTS.

19/38.1 Verbal Report. There was nothing to report.

19/38.2 Allotment Rent. Members were invited to approve an increase in rent for the Parklands Allotments from £35.00 to £36.00 for 2019/20 per half plot using the agreed formula based on inflation.

Using the agreed formula, applying inflation to the basic rent for a half plot for 2018/19 would make an increase of 42p (2.1%) bringing the total overall rent to £35.63.

Therefore using the previously adopted principle that the rent should be rounded up or down to the nearest pound the rent should be increased to £36.00 pa per half plot

It was **RESOLVED** that rent for Parklands Road Allotments would increase to £36.00 per half plot and £18.00 per quarter plot for the year commencing 1 October 2019.

19.38.3 **Allotment Tenancy Agreement.** Members were invited to approve the proposed revised Allotment Tenancy Agreement to be implemented in October 2019 which had been previously distributed.

It was **RESOLVED** that to approve the revised Allotment Tenancy Agreement as presented to the Committee to be implemented in October 2019.

Cllr Jane Baker extended her formal thanks on behalf of the Committee to Jane Barker, Administrative Assistant, for all of her hard work in the administration and management of the allotments.

GE19/39 BURIAL GROUND GATES. Members were informed that the wooden Burial Ground gates had been damaged beyond repair due to a vehicle reversing into them and had required complete removal. The entrance to the Burial Ground is currently being kept secured by the metal bollards and the car park is not being opened during the day. Members were shown photographs of the damage and of the current appearance of the entrance. The Committee was invited to agree the re-opening of the car park for visitors during the week and to agree a review at a future meeting as to whether replacement gates or frontage are necessary from both a security and appearance perspective.

It was noted that the absence of the gates provided an attractive entrance to the Burial Ground, however it also created the appearance of a public open space for those unaware of the area. The current siting of the Burial Ground sign is to the west of the entrance and is not clear, often being hidden by parked cars. There was also some concern as to whether the bollards could provide sufficient security for the car park. After some discussion it was AGREED that:

- The Burial Ground car park would be re-opened Monday – Friday between 9am and 3.30pm. (Action: GROUNDSMAN)
- The Deputy Clerk would explore possible options and costings for gates and/or bollards and carry out a review of the Burial Ground signage for a future G&E meeting. (ACTION: Deputy Clerk)

Cllr Gaudencio thanked the Deputy Clerk for her work regarding the Burial ground.

GE19/40 ADASTRA PARK.
19/40.1 **Adastra Park Turkey Oak Tree.** The Clerk provided the following update on a report from the condition survey recently commissioned for the Turkey Oak (*Quercus cerris*) Tree in the South Field of Adastra Park:

It had been recently identified that a fungus was growing on the specimen Turkey Oak tree located at the top of the south field, this was subsequently identified as *Ganoderma resinaceum* – bracket fungus and there was evidence of decay within the lower trunk in and around the area of the fungus.

A study was commissioned from a suitably qualified arboriculture consultant who carried out a site inspection. Tomography tests were undertaken which involves the transmission of sound waves through the tree to provide a detailed scan of the trunk area. This identified significant decay within the lower trunk area.

To supplement this, further resistance drilling was undertaken which supported the tomography test that significant decay was present within the lower trunk of the tree.

In light of the proximity of the tree to other amenities the skate park/cricket pitch /Garden of Remembrance, climbing rock and the informal path used by dog walkers the consultant was requested to assess the risk if any the tree posed. The three recognised industry risk assessment models were applied and the assessment concluded that there was a potential Health and Safety risk posed by the tree and remedial action was required.

Based on this advice it is concluded that the Council has limited options due to the extent of decay and the proximity to other amenities, the recommended action required was that the tree is felled.

Three appropriately qualified companies have been contacted to provide a quote for the cost of these works (two of which attended site yesterday). It is anticipated that this it is likely to cost between £5,000 - £10,000, insufficient allocated funds are available to cover tree works of this scale, funds will therefore need to be identified to cover the cost of this work.

The Clerk informed Members that it is likely an extra-ordinary council meeting will need to be convened to identify suitable funding and to select the contractor to undertake the works.

Being a Turkey Oak (non-native species) the timber has limited commercial value therefore the cost elements associated with the job are likely to include:

- Site management (H&S)
- Tree works
- Grinding of stump & potentially removing the roots
- Removal of timber from site

During the course of this work it is likely the surrounding area will be required to be cordoned off which could also include the temporary closure of areas in and around the skate park, cricket pitch and Garden of Remembrance.

Members were shown slides from the Tomography report which showed the extent of the decay. Whilst Members all expressed extreme sadness at the loss of this much loved tree, based on the outcome of the tests and the report it was unanimously agreed that the complete removal of the tree was the proper course of action.

Members agreed that it is important for the Council to communicate effectively with the parish as to why this work is reluctantly having to be undertaken, various methods for doing this were considered.

It was noted that due to the fungal disease, it was possible that a replacement tree could be planted in the same location. However the Parish Council is very much in

favour of continued planting and it was fully agreed that further trees would be planted in Adastra Park in particular to replace this special tree.

It was also noted that the installation of the Skate Park was not related in any way to the decay in the tree as this had been developing over an extended period of time.

Further questions were raised by Members, and the Clerk and Chair confirmed that all matters raised had been considered and were in hand. The Committee were in full agreement that the Clerk should continue with the management of the situation at his discretion.

Cllr Baker thanked the Clerk for his efficient and reactive response to this situation.

19/40.2

Adastra Park Masterplan. Verbal Update. Cllr Frances Gaudencio reported that the Park Working Group was considering the next phase of the masterplan. They were looking at options for the facilities located at the top (southern) area of the North Field i.e./ Tennis Courts, Adult Fitness and Under 8's Play Area and additional play facilities for older children in the vicinity of the Skate park. It was clear that adults may not make the best decisions for facilities for children, therefore it was agreed that the experience of an expert would be valuable to ensure that costly mistakes were not made in future plans. This lead to the next item on the agenda.

Adastra Park Masterplan. Members were invited to approve the appointment of Sports & Play Consulting to support the delivery of future elements of the masterplan as they come forward. The proposal for future projects would be to utilise the consultant on initial consultation/design development proposals to inform the implementation programme, in addition to supporting the tendering and project management of various elements as they progress. This is likely to be based on a fee structure related to the value of the contract. It is proposed that the funds will be met via the overall masterplan budget. Members were invited to approve the appointment of Sports & Play Consulting to support the masterplan.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the appointment of Sports & Play Consulting to deliver future elements of the masterplan as they come forward. To be funded from the Adastra Masterplan budget. (ACTION: Clerk)

19/40.3

Adastra Skate Park. Cllr Gaudencio informed Members that the Skate Park opening on Saturday 13 July 2019 had gone well and that it had been a good team effort amongst Councillors and the Parish Office to organise the event. Thanks were extended to everyone who had been involved in the organisation.

Cllr Gaudencio reported that the improved Skate Park appears to be a very welcome addition to the park and users span a wide range of ages and abilities. There are still some etiquette problems and at times the facility appears overcrowded, however it is hoped that these will settle down over time.

The Clerk informed the Committee that all S106 money towards the Skate Park had been received from MSDC.

GE19/41

FESTIVE LIGHTING. Members were informed that the current festive lighting contractor had confirmed that he was nearing the completion of the HERS certification as required by SSE, the WSCC Street Lighting contractor, and that this would be ready

in time to allow the application for the festive lighting licence. Due to the age of the previously used festive lights, the Contractor had offered to provide new lights for 2019 and therefore Members were invited to view 4 designs and agree on a design for 2019.

It was **RESOLVED** to agree lighting design number 4 for the festive lights to be attached to the street lights for 2019.

The Clerk updated members on the situation regarding the damaged festive lighting in the London Planes in Keymer Road, Hassocks. An insurance claim had been submitted to WSCC for the damage to these lights which was believed to have been caused during tree work carried out by contractors, working on behalf of WSCC. The claim had not been successful. However the situation was additionally complicated due to a more stringent enforcement being applied by SSE to the licensing for festive lighting. Festive lighting strung from trees to the top of street lights is no longer permitted and therefore all existing tree lights will now need to be removed. Members discussed whether solar lighting might be an option to be considered in the future and it was AGREED that the Deputy Clerk would explore this option for 2020. (ACTION: Deputy Clerk)

GE19/42 PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY (PROW).

19/42.1 Verbal Update. Nothing to report.

19/42.2 **To re-consider application DM/19/1893 - Hassocks Golf Club to divert the existing Public Right of Way - Footpath 9C crossing the former Hassocks Golf Club.** Members had previously considered this application at the G&E Committee meeting held on 30.5.19 and made recommendations to the Planning Committee when the application was considered at its meeting held on 10.6.19.

Members were informed that the Planning Committee had noted that a response had been submitted by the WSCC Public Rights of Way Officer on this application, proposing that further action was required by the applicant in order for the application to be considered formally. Therefore Planning Committee Members agreed to withhold any formal comments until the production of a formal Path Order.

The Deputy Clerk informed the G&E Committee that correspondence had since been received from MSDC with the following information, and to request if the PC would be willing to re-consider the previous refusal to comment on the basis of this.

The procedure that has been followed for the proposed diversion is the same process that MSDC always follow and the letter received previously by Hassocks PC is sent to engage with any consultees with an interest in the proposal, prior to the formal Path Order being produced. If any concerns are raised, the Council can try to resolve the concerns prior to the commencement of the formal process which allows less flexibility in terms of MSDC's ability to discuss concerns/amendments. The consultation received is not a substitute for the formal consultation, which will follow in due course, but an effort to engage with the Parish Council at the earliest time to resolve any concerns.

Given the time frame for this correspondence, the application was not included on the Planning Agenda for the meeting held on 22.7.19. However it was reported at the meeting under Urgent Matters, where Members indicated full support for the submission of a response on this application by the G&E Committee based on its previously recommended comments as follows:

GE19/15.1 It was agreed by the Committee that overall both diversions were acceptable, however the following points were noted:

Temporary Diversion:

- There is a dip/stream along the diversion route which will need to be addressed.*

Permanent Diversion:

- This diversion is longer than the original route, however it was agreed that the diversion appears to retain a more rural character which is preferred.*

The G&E Committee were therefore invited to approve the submission of the previously proposed comments to MSDC.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the submission of following the response to MSDC on behalf of Hassocks Parish Council regarding DM/19/1893 - Hassocks Golf Club to divert the existing Public Right of Way:

'Hassocks Parish Council considers that overall both diversions are acceptable however would request that the following points are noted:

Temporary Diversion:

- There is a dip/stream along the diversion route which will need to be addressed.

Permanent Diversion:

- This diversion is longer than the original route, however it was agreed that the diversion appears to retain a more rural character which is preferred.' (ACTION: Deputy Clerk)

GE19/43 URGENT MATTERS at the discretion of the Chairman for noting and/or inclusion on a future agenda. None.

GE19/44 DATE OF NEXT MEETING. The date of the next meeting is Thursday 26 September 2019.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 8.47pm

SignedChair Date.....