

## WESTERHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Allotments, Playing Fields and Open Spaces Committee  
held at Russell House on

**Monday 5<sup>th</sup> October 2022 at 7.00pm**

Present: Councillors: Dr J Lord (JL) - Chairman  
Mr N Robson (NR)  
Mr C Elsdon-Wortley (CEW)  
Cllr Thompson  
Cllr Pither

In attendance: Deputy Clerk: Mrs D Rogers (DR)

Item		Action
1.	<b><u>Apologies for Absence</u></b> None.	
2.	<b><u>Declarations of Interest not previously declared</u></b> None.	
3.	<b><u>Minutes of the Meeting</u></b> Held on the 16h May 2022 were approved at Full Council on the 23 <sup>rd</sup> May 2022.	
4.	<b><u>Information items arising from the minutes of the previous meeting not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda</u></b> None.	
5.	<b><u>Clerks Report</u></b> <b><u>General update since last meeting for information</u></b> The report was noted. <b>Allotments:</b> <b>Deer</b> – there had been feedback from allotment holders that the deer eating crops was an increasing problem. <b>Maintenance</b> - strimming of overgrown areas and plots at Farley had taken place over the summer. There remained some tidying up to do by the contractor. <b>Unworked plots</b> – a small number of plot holders at each site had not been keeping their plots cultivated to the required standard in line with their tenancy agreement. Plot holders had been contacted by the Deputy Clerk. <b>Weed control membrane price increase</b> – to recoup the bulk of a further price increase the charge per metre will rise from £1.30 to £1.50 for allotment holders. <b>This will be communicated via the rent renewal letter and posters put at each allotment site.</b> <b>King George's Field:</b>	

	<p><b>Butterfly and Bee Wildflower Garden</b> - a tree for the Queens Platinum Jubilee had been planted within the garden. A plaque had been installed. Native butterfly and bee wildflower seed had been purchased and will be sown once the ground had been rotavated.</p> <p><b>ASB</b> – a picnic table had been damaged during the summer holidays. The GMO had undertaken repairs.</p> <p><b>Open spaces:</b></p> <p><b>Update on damage to grass verges</b> – the companies involved in the damage were carrying out remedial work.</p> <p><b>Update on Parking Project</b> - a letter will be sent to Costells Meadow residents regarding car park restrictions once the new signage had been received. <b>The Project Manager and Deputy Clerk are working together on this.</b></p> <p><b>Crockham Hill Garden Maintenance update</b> – the garden was now looking much tidier. A bench had been moved from its fixing and the GMO had secured it back in place.</p> <p><b>Summer hanging baskets and bedding planting</b> – the summer hanging baskets and bedding plants had been installed in time for the jubilee celebrations. The Westerham Society had made a donation towards the cost of the hanging baskets.</p> <p><b>Winter baskets</b> – the Westerham Society are happy to donate 50% of the costs for the winter baskets.</p> <p><b>Winter bedding</b> – the plants will be delivered and planted on the 1<sup>st</sup> November.</p> <p><b>Planting in the planter at Quebec Square</b> – there was substantial dieback in places this year with the lavender, but some sections are still very healthy and vigorous. The gardeners are deadheading soon so will look and advise. A small selection of new plants added would improve the impact. If it's all replaced in one go year 1 will be small and mostly hidden by the box hedge. KCC have been chased again for a repair date after the planter was crashed into during the summer. The planter edges are now uneven and there is a risk of the soil spilling out with fresh planting. The following response from KCC had been received on the day of the APFOS meeting and read out - <i>a job is being raised to replace the entire structure and rebuild entirely. It could take up to 90 days from the date that it is raised as the contractors will need to order all the materials in.</i> The Deputy Clerk had asked for information on the new structure design and if it will allow for planting. <b>An update will be given at the next meeting.</b></p> <p><b>Stone memorial table and bench (The Green)</b> – the Deputy Clerk had reported a crack in the stone to the family who are speaking with the manufacturer.</p> <p><b>Bench maintenance programme</b> – the identified work had been completed in September. The contractor had advised that all benches were in a satisfactory condition with none needing replacing. Benches are included in the asset register.</p> <p><b>Mowing</b> – with the dry, hot weather less cuts had been necessary during the summer months.</p> <p><b>Treatments to hard surfaces</b> – the reduction from 3 treatments per year to 1 treatment in July only seems to be going well. <b>This will be monitored again at the next APFOS meeting in November and a decision made for next year.</b></p>	DR
6.	<p><b><u>Finance</u></b></p> <p><b><u>6.1 To receive the APFOS Financial Statement up to 31<sup>st</sup> August</u></b></p> <p>Noted. The committee queried why the costs for the CH car park appeared in the budget line 4404. RFO to clarify.</p>	DM

7.	<p><b><u>Allotment Sites</u></b></p> <p><b>7.1 Annual Allotment competition</b> – the winners had been announced and prizes were due to be awarded at the Westerham Horticultural Society's Autumn Show. The event had been cancelled due to the death of the Queen. Arrangements had therefore been made for awards to be collected from the office.</p> <p><b>7.2 Allotment Rent Review</b> – the Deputy Clerk had circulated a paper Showing rents of allotment sites in the local area. It was agreed that as WTC's plots are not a standard size this made comparison difficult. After lengthy discussion it was agreed to increase allotment rents by £2. This will take effect from 1 October 2023 and be communicated to allotment holders via rent renewal letters. The rising costs of labour and materials to maintain the sites and to provide water were taken into account. The increase is the same for a half plot to reflect that the admin costs are the same and to encourage full plots being taken. A recent water leak at Farley had cost approx. £400 to fix (awaiting final invoice). It was agreed that replacement of pipework should be planned for. The RFO to confirm how much is in the allotment reserves.</p> <p><b>7.3 Legionnaires review</b> – the Deputy Clerk had circulated a paper on Legionnaires. Following discussion, it was agreed to commission a Legionella Assessment for the three allotment sites. APFOS had received two quotes and it was agreed to accept the quote of <b>£450 + VAT</b> These costs would be paid for from the Allotment maintenance budget. There may be a further cost involved from any recommendations arising from the reviews.</p> <p><b>7.4 Oak Tree – Farley Allotment</b> – a request from a resident to reduce the height of the oak tree at Farley allotments, adjacent to their property was considered. Following discussion, it was agreed to proceed with a 1.5 m prune as recommended by our contractor as the tree is healthy. An outline cost for these works had been £540 +VAT. A formal quote would now be obtained by the Deputy Clerk. A response will be sent to the resident.</p>	<p>DR/DM</p> <p>DR/DM</p> <p>DR</p> <p>DR</p>
8.	<p><b><u>King George's Field</u></b></p> <p><b>8.1 Update on KGF redevelopment project – for information only.</b> A project report dated 29.9.2022 had been received and discussed. Comments by the APFOS committee would be fed back to the Project Manager before the next Council meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> October.</p> <p><b>8.2 Request for memorial bench</b> – a bench secured to paving slabs had been installed in July.</p>	<p>DR</p>
9.	<p><b><u>Open spaces</u></b></p> <p><b>9.1 Update on winter maintenance programme for the Green</b> – the annual weed and feed treatment had been carried out in early June. The grass is being monitored by the mowing contractor who will advise if further maintenance is required over the winter period. In July the Council became aware that The Green had been cut without permission by The Grasshopper on the Green. This had caused damage to the grass due to the extreme heat at the time of the cut. A letter had been sent to in respond to their actions. The following message had been communicated to the community via social media on the 15th July about the Green: <i>There's been a lot on social media about how the Council has maintained The Green. Just for the record, since the autumn we have reseeded the whole area - several times on bare patches: applied fertiliser on several occasions: cut the grass</i></p>	

when needed - just as you do with your lawn, we do it when it's necessary and leave it longer when it's going to be hot: we have strimmed the edges when we've been able to do so without damaging parked cars: we have brought in a specialist organisation to apply special weed and feed treatment.

Wear and tear resulting from lockdowns and Covid restrictions meant that The Green needed more TLC this year, and we gave it whatever was recommended. If anyone has a problem with what we are doing - please let us know 01959 562147 or email office@westerhamtowncouncil.gov.uk - or speak to any of us - we're often out and about round the town. We all want to keep The Green looking good - it belongs to all of us. Your Councillors

**9.2 Review of usage of the Green (9.2)** – despite formal requests to remove them one business continues to place their picnic tables on the paved areas and our requests have resulted in negative comments being placed on social media sites. A member of the public repeatedly complains to the office about the picnic tables and that they block the paved area. There continues to be requests from visitors and residents for more seating on The Green. It was an action point from the last meeting that the Committee would look at installing seating on the paved area and feedback their views to the Deputy Clerk. Following discussion APFOS believes there are three possible ways forward:

1. We agree that an exceptional circumstance continues with the current energy crisis and allow this to continue using this condition in our policy.
2. We issue a more formal communication with the business involved, with legal advice, formally withdrawing permission for placement of these picnic tables.
3. We consider that Covid has changed the way that people socialise and there has been a sustained move towards a 'café culture' with increased use of outdoor spaces. Based on this, and the positive comments received, we look to place 1 or 2 appropriate fixed benches / seating units in the paved area. We would install items that are environmentally friendly, do not block the paved area and are accessible to people with disabilities.

**The recommendation from APFOS is that Council adopt option 3.**

JL

**9.3 Benches on the Green** - a member of the public had been injured as a result of a bench being moved from its mounting. A risk review had been undertaken by the APFOS Chair and Deputy Clerk. Existing controls are - Quarterly inspections, bench maintenance program, Groundsman maintenance of The Green. Additional Controls put in place – all benches now secured by the GMO. The effectiveness will be monitored. If more robust fixings are required an initial quote to do this had been approximately £100 per bench.

**9.4 Applications for events** – a Charity Football Match, planned for the 16<sup>th</sup> of July at the WSA club & KGF had been cancelled. No further event applications requiring consideration by the committee had been received.

**9.5 To consider the transfer of 3 (flower) planters in High Street from Westerham Society to WTC** - details had been circulated by the Deputy Clerk. After discussion it was agreed to transfer them to WTC. The Deputy Clerk will liaise with the Westerham Society.

DR

**9.6 Annual review of APFOS risk Assessments** - a review had been completed by the Deputy Clerk and APFOS Chair in August. The proposed amendments/updates had been circulated to the APFOS committee who had agreed to them going to the H&S Committee for approval.

DR/AH

	<p><b>9.7 – Visual Inspections</b> – the Committee were reminded forms must be completed and returned to the Deputy Clerk four times a year. Do not wait until an APFOS meeting to report any defects/issues.</p> <p><b>9.8 Box Moth Update and future Action</b> - 2 sets of treatment for the box moth since instruction had been applied by our garden contractors. The original spray to tackle and then another at the start of September. This is it for the current year. There will now be no moths, caterpillars, or damage until end of March/start of April depending upon weather. The garden contractor had suggested putting in 2 minimum up to 5 pheromone traps around town at about £25 each at the start of next years season. These reduce the breeding pairs and are specific to the box moth. Once box moth is in an area it is likely to always reoccur as it establishes in the country. It was <b>agreed</b> to purchase the necessary number of traps.</p>	<p><b>APFOS</b></p> <p><b>DR</b></p>
10.	<p><b><u>Climate Change/Environmental &amp; Bio Diversity</u></b></p> <p><b>10.1 Update on the APFOS Action plan</b> – an updated action plan had been circulated by the Deputy Clerk. There were some suggestions about changing the colour and definitions of the progress keys. Any suggested changes will need to be approved by Full Council as the document template is used by all committees and therefore must all be the same for everyone. The Deputy Clerk will discuss with the Clerk.</p> <p><b>10.2 Wilder Kent Awards update</b> – WTC's submission had won a Sliver award for Towns and Villages! Positive feedback had been received and circulated to the committee for information.</p> <p>It was discussed and agreed to look at a joint project with Youth &amp; Community and to involve the local primary school to install and monitor bird, bugs or hedgehog boxes. The Deputy Clerk to discuss further with the Clerk.</p> <p><b>10.3 Prevent Plastic Pollution Project</b> – the North Kent Countryside Partnership (NKP) on behalf of the Darent &amp; Cray Catchment Partnership had been working together over the summer with the Rivers Trust to deliver the Preventing Plastic Pollution (PPP) Project. The corporate volunteers and NKP collected 21.6 kg`'s of rubbish from the river corridor and banks of the Darent at Westerham's Darent car park on the 23 August. Most of the rubbish consisted of plastic drink/water bottles(41 items), crisp &amp; sweet packets (89 items) and drink cans (75 items), assorted plastic (55 items) and wet wipes (27 items). A push bike was also pulled from the river corridor and 8 traffics cones. The bags of litter and bike were left by the recycling bins as agreed with the Deputy Clerk for collection by SDC. The Committee were delight with the success of this project and thanks had been sent on behalf of the Council.</p>	<p><b>DR/AH</b></p> <p><b>DR/AH</b></p>
11.	<p><b><u>Public Rights of Way</u></b> None.</p>	
12.	<p><b><u>Correspondence</u></b></p> <p><b>12.1 Sevenoaks Greensand Commons tasks days</b> – circulated for information</p> <p><b>12.2 Kent's Plan Bee July &amp; August Newsletter</b> – circulated for information</p>	
13.	<p><b><u>Reports from Councillors</u></b> None.</p>	
14.	<p><b><u>TN16 Magazine, Edenbridge Magazine and website</u></b> Article about The History of the Green</p>	<b>DR</b>

15.	<b><u>Matters for District and County Councillors</u></b> Use of The Green	
16.	<b><u>Further Matters for consideration at the next meeting</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Proposed budget for 2023/24</li></ul>	
17.	<b><u>Date of next meeting</u></b> - Monday 7 <sup>th</sup> November at 7pm	

The meeting was concluded at 9.55 pm

Minutes confirmed as a correct record:

Chairman