



Bearsted Parish Council

Minutes of the Environment Committee meeting of Bearsted Parish Council held at the King George V Memorial Hall, Manor Rise on Tuesday 21st November 2023 at 7.30pm

Present: Cllr Richard Ash
Cllr Pat Catt
Cllr Frank Jagger
Cllr Denis Spooner

Also, in attendance was the Clerk Joanne Upton, and two members of the cricket club.

The Clerk chaired the meeting as the Chair and Vice Chair were absent.

Reports from members of the public

There were no reports from members of the public.

1. Declarations of intention to record.

The Clerk declared that the meeting would be recorded for minuting purposes.

2. Apologies and absences

Apologies and reasons were duly noted for Cllr M Harris & Cllr C Smith.

3. Declaration of Interests, Dispensations, Predetermination or Lobbying

There were none declared.

Cllr Spooner proposed Cllr Ash to Chair the meeting this was seconded by Cllr Catt and resolved with all in favour.

Cllr Ash took the Chair.

4. Signing of the Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes from 19th September 2023 were agreed as a true record and duly signed.

5. Clerk report

The Clerk reported the contract for the Community Payback Scheme had been signed and returned and they will start on the 21st January 2024 and attend work days on the 3rd Sunday of every month. Cllr Spooner noted they should only undertake clearing works. Cllr Ash is working on a list of jobs and areas for the CPS to clear.

ACTION: CLLR ASH

The Clerk reported that Medway Valley Countryside Partnership have yet to confirm the dates for the workdays in 2024 for the pond and Meadow Bank.

The Clerk confirmed Bearsted CAN have begun maintenance of the land opposite the train station, which is now known as the 'Bearsted Station Roadside Nature Reserve'.

The office has received the risk assessment, and the public liability is with KCC. Cllr Jagger suggested that Bearsted CAN should have a plaque or notice to advise residents of the work they are undertaking and the plan for the area.

ACTION: OFFICE

Bearsted CAN requested the Environment Committee views their statistics for litter picking. These were noted and the hard work and dedication acknowledged.

The Street Allotments decided not to take the £50 petty cash, previously agreed by the Committee.

The Clerk advised that BPC's bid was recently rejected for the Rural England Grant fund, but they are offering a second opportunity to apply for funding. No decision was made on reapplying for the funding.

The Clerk requested that the Committee consider extending the existing grounds maintenance contract for one year. Information has come to light that not all works

are included in the schedule of rates and believe more detailed information is needed to complete a more comprehensive specification and schedule of works, to put out to tender. The Clerk advised she had spoken to Cllr Harris who had suggested also considering companies that could price for the grounds maintenance contract along with other inspections like play areas and trees. Cllr Ash proposed to extend the grounds maintenance contract with Warings for one year, whilst further work is put into writing the specification and seeking tenders. This was seconded by Cllr Jagger and resolved with all in favour.

6. Church Landway/Church Lane Car Park (Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 s57(1)(a) and LGA 1972s126)

- a) Car park drainage: The Clerk advised the initial works had been undertaken, Evans & Langford have so far established that initial indications of the soakage tests are that the soakage is poor on the site. A full report to follow soon.
- b) Church Lane car park barrier: A resident has requested the Council considers installing a barrier to prevent use of the car park at night to stop anti-social behaviour. Cllr Jagger asked about the outcome on previous discussions about extra lighting or infrared cameras to see at the other end of the car park. The Clerk confirmed the Committee decided against this as no recent complaints received. The Clerk confirmed two recent incidents had been reported by the resident. The Committee acknowledged the difficulties of installing a barrier as it would require someone to lock and unlock each day. Cllr Jagger, suggested we investigate through KCC, companies that provide security barriers on public car parks and schools. The office will research this and report back to the next meeting.

ACTION: OFFICE

- c) Removal of old steps at car park: Cllr Springett had requested this item to be considered by the Committee as this is a safety issue. Cllr Jagger suggested we investigate the option of turning this into a ramp for accessibility. It was agreed the office will investigate costs to remove steps and make into a ramp to be considered at the next meeting.

ACTION: OFFICE

Cllr Ash proposed the committee moves to item 8c, this was seconded by Cllr Spooner and resolved with all in favour.

8. Bearsted Green (Open Spaces Act 1906 ss9-10)

- c.) Additional tree on the Green: The Cricket Club requested permission to replace the dead larch tree on the Green, the Cricket Club will pay for the new tree and asked for permission to add a plaque to commemorate 275 years of cricket on the Green. Cllr Jagger requested a conifer is considered to assist with the ongoing issue of leaves blocking the drains and causing flooding. Cllr Spooner stated this needs to be a native species. Cllr Jagger proposed to approve the request, this was seconded by Cllr Spooner and resolved with all in favour.
- d.) Football on the Green: Cllr Hall had requested the Committee considers football clubs usage of the Green. Cllr Spooner believes use by under 10 teams is fine but older teams playing 9 a side can cause more damage over a larger area. The Committee are happy to continue to support use by under 10 teams.
- e.) Crown lift on tree on the Green: The request was made by the Market Manager to assist vehicles accessing the Green for the Market. The Committee acknowledge the work was needed. Cllr Jagger advised we need to establish the height required to be able to seek quotes.

ACTION: OFFICE

f.) Cricket Club:

- i. Cricket Covers: The Committee asked the attending cricket club members if there is a way to secure the covers. The club Chairman

advised they can be secured but the club would be unable to guarantee the security in that situation due to the sheer force of the downwind caused by the air ambulance. In the summer they can be staked down. Cllr Jagger queried the liability of the club for the covers, the club Chairman explained in that particular instance the liability is with the air ambulance. The club has public liability to cover instances caused by the club or if the covers lifted in bad weather conditions. Cllr Ash proposed to allow the cricket club to continue to use the cover in the summer, this was seconded by Cllr Spooner and resolved with three in favour and one abstention.

- ii. New Fencing: Cllr Jagger raised this issue, since the mesh fencing was changed it is difficult to see in the dark and is a potential health & safety issue. The club members advised the fencing has been this way for three years with no reported incidents. Cllr Spooner suggested painting the posts white. The club Chairman suggested reflective stickers, which they will look into. The Committee decided not to take further action, unless there are reported incidents.
- iii. Improvements to the Pavilion: The club Chairman advised that renovation would be very expensive due to the age of the building and redecorating cannot cater for the additional needs, like separate changing rooms. The club members confirmed they are happy to allow BPC use of the new building for events and potentially for Council meetings. The club are asking the Council to consider a contribution to the £3000 plus VAT costs for a feasibility study. The Clerk asked the club if the project goes ahead would the Council be approached for funds towards building costs. Cllr Jagger requested that the office check the lease to establish ownership of the building before Full Council agrees to any financial contribution. The Clerk confirmed this would be reviewed and then added to the agenda for Full Council to decide on whether a contribution will be made and how much.

ACTION: CLERK

- a) Pond Repairs: The Clerk requested this item is deferred until the next meeting whilst we wait for quotes.
- b) Wooden Posts: Cllr Jagger explained that many of the wooden posts on the Green were installed incorrectly. The protective metal shield is too high so the wood below ground level is exposed and is now rotting, when replacing the damaged posts both the post and concrete will need to be removed and replaced. This will be done over a period of time when a post needs to be replaced rather than looking to replace all of them at once. The Committee agreed costs for this will need to be included in the budget for next year.

7. General Maintenance (Open Spaces Act 1906 ss9-10 and Highways Act 1980 s96)

- a) Ashford Road Bench: Cllr Jagger proposed to accept the Balmoral quote at £423. This was seconded by Cllr Ash and resolved with all in favour.

ACTION: OFFICE

- b) Annual Tree Inspections: Cllr Jagger expressed concern that only trees with problems would be noted on the report, meaning there is no evidence the remaining trees have actually been inspected. The Committee agreed to defer this item until the next meeting. The office will make further attempts to gain additional quotes.

ACTION: OFFICE

- c) Litter bin at the Yeoman car park: Cllr Ash proposed we purchase the bin and confirm with MBC that they will empty it, this should be located next to the noticeboard. This was seconded by Cllr Spooner and resolved with all in favour.

ACTION: OFFICE

9. **Allotments** (Small Holding and Allotment Act 1908 ss23,25)

Cllr Jagger proposed to cover half the cost of £720 to clear the compost area to create a new allotment, quoted by Warings. The Church Lane Allotment Association to cover the remaining 50% of the cost. This was seconded by Cllr Ash and resolved with all in favour. The Committee decided that toilets are not an option at the current time and requested further detail and clarification on the need for and use of the dipping troughs which can then be considered at a future meeting.

Cllr Jagger raised the issue of fencing along the car park side. The allotments have grown as a high bank which now rests on the fencing. This would make it impossible to replace the fencing and new fencing would continually be damaged due to the earth resting against it. This will need to be discussed with the CLAA as a large amount of earth would need to be removed to replace that fencing.

ACTION: OFFICE

10. **Open Spaces** (Open Spaces Act 1906 ss9-10)

a) **Planting & Maintaining three large planters:** The Clerk advised the revised quotes had not been received and requested this item be deferred. Cllr Jagger stated that approximately £10k per year to plant and maintain only three planters in the village is excessive and will provide little benefit to the community, it will not help towards the beautification of the village. The Committee agreed the Council could encourage shops and businesses to provide their own floral decorations, like the Funeral parlour.

b) **Reseeding the EHF:** Cllr Jagger confirmed there is two large bare patches on the EHF which need reseeded to the south of the field. Cllr Jagger will provide photos to the office and the Committee agreed to obtaining a quote for the works.

ACTION: CLLR JAGGER/ OFFICE

11. **General Correspondence**

a) **Cycle rack locations:** Cllr Ash suggested that this is passed to the Traffic Committee as it is in the Terms of Reference. The Traffic Committee will consider requests for cycle racks behind the cricket pavilion and outside the Madginford library. The cricket club members pointed out the land behind the pavilion is leased to them and it was agreed BPC would consult with them on any plans for cycle racks in that location.

Cllr Ash requested that an agenda item is added to Full Council to request that any Councillor making an agenda item request should attend the meeting.

ACTION: OFFICE

b) **Hedgehog Highways:** The Committee asked for the organisation to attend a meeting to explain in more detail the importance of this project if they would like BPC to financially support it.

ACTION: OFFICE

c) **Lighting request on steps between Ware Street and Hill Brow:** Cllr Ash suggested if the overgrown tree at the bottom is cut back this should allow sufficient lighting. Cllr Spooner suggested the white lines at the edge of the step should be repainted, which would help with visibility, this should be requested via MBC. Cllr Ash will investigate if the tree is on a residential property and then request it is cut back.

ACTION: CLLR ASH / OFFICE

d) **PROW request for footpath at Ragstone Road:** Cllr Jagger queried the need for it to be made a Public Right of Way. Cllr Spooner advised that it is owned by KCC, the public have the right to access it and use it so there is no need to register it as a PROW. The resident would need to contact KCC directly to request this.

e) **Madginford Community Engagement Week:** The Committee agreed it would be best to direct the school to work with Bearsted CAN on the litter picking project

and we can support by asking if our volunteer litter pickers would like to be involved.

The Committee suggested we direct the school to contact a resident of the village who has extensive historical knowledge.

ACTION: OFFICE

- f) Footpath diversion: The Committee agreed it could see no benefit to the public and therefore would not support this request. This was proposed by Cllr Ash, seconded by Cllr Spooner, and resolved with all in favour.

12. Budget

The Committee agreed we need to include additional cost for the cricket club feasibility study, costs to replace the wooden posts around the Green, costs to repair the pond water filling system, cost for Medway Valley Countryside partnership workdays for the pond and Meadow Bank and £440 per year for a maintenance contract for the CCTV system at the Church Lane car park.

Cllr Jagger also requested £35,000 to be included for the works needed to resolve the drainage issues at the car park. Cllr Ash stated this should come from special projects or Full Council reserves as this is not routine maintenance. The full budget will be agreed at Full Council in December.

13. Frequency of Meetings

The Clerk confirmed that the office can support an additional Environment Committee meeting in the last week of the month, on the months where this committee is not scheduled. This could not be on a Tuesday as this clashes with the Planning Committee. It was agreed Wednesdays is suitable for most members. This will be discussed with Cllr Harris, and trialled for 2024, providing use of a hall can be confirmed.

ACTION: OFFICE

14. Future Agenda Items

- Planters
- Allotments
- Church Lane car park security barriers
- Wooden bollards at the Green
- Pond repairs
- Ashford Road bench
- Community Pay Back Scheme
- Church Lane car park drainage
- Litter bin at Yeoman car park
- Removal of old steps at car park
- Annual tree inspections
- Ground maintenance contract
- Reseeding EHF

15. Date of next Meeting, 23rd January 2024.

There being no further business to transact, the meeting ended at 21:53pm

Signed.....Date.....