



Battle Town Council



MINUTES of the ESTATES COMMITTEE MEETING

held on TUESDAY, 2 APRIL 2024 at The Almonry, High Street, Battle at 7.30pm

Present: Cllrs B Brown (Chairman), A Austen, A Barton, S Burton, D Buss, V Cook and C Sprong.

In attendance: C Harris (Town Clerk)

Public question time – None.

1. Apologies for absence – None.

2. Disclosure of interest – Cllrs S Burton and V Cook declared an interest in item 6, as District Councillors. Cllr V Cook declared an interest in item 18 as involved the management of the Guide Hall.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 February 2024 were agreed and duly signed by Cllr Brown.

4. Clerk's Report

- The Surveyor has advised that a structural engineer will need to be appointed for advice on the **rear wall at St Mary's Churchyard**, due to the Grade I Listing of the Church which will encompass the grounds. He will forward a quote in due course. The Clerk will advise the Church PCC and adjacent landowner of the current situation.
- The **urgent tree works** have been carried out, as agreed.
- The **Allotment Agreement** was agreed, via email, and will be issued to all new tenants. A request will be issued to all existing tenants to adhere to the new conditions in relation to bonfires, water capture and the use of pesticides.
- The availability of the **tennis courts**, and its booking service via the Lawn Tennis Association(LTA), will shortly be promoted via the Council's social media and E-bulletin. It was suggested that funding support from the LTA should be researched.
- Quotes are being sought for the end of **season pitch renovations**.
- The **lights at Harrier Lane** have now been repaired and the cost has been passed to Breheny prior to any payment to Streetlights.
- UKPN has confirmed that the **repair to the hedge at Virgins Croft allotments** will be undertaken shortly.
- Following the successful **Sussex Lund grant application**, letters will shortly be issued to all properties in Asten Fields adjacent to the **planned works at the recreation ground**.

5. Financial matters

a) The budget report to 29 February 2024 was noted, as attached. The Clerk highlighted:

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|-----|------|--|
| 210 | 4800 | £4000 for MUGA lighting to be reabsorbed to General Reserves. £1460.75 will be funded from EMR 351 for litter bin replacement; |
| 230 | 4205 | £7910 is for LED replacement and will be funded from EMR 395 Street light repairs; |
| 240 | 1280 | annual rents have now been received and will show in the accounts for March. |

b) Members considered appropriate virements for year-end and agreed that, with the knowledge that **main pathway repairs at allotments sites are outstanding, any **unspent funds 220 4205 be set to an Ear Marked Reserve for this purpose.****



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Cllrs Burton and Cook repeated their interest in the following item.

6. Rother District Council – fund for Community-led mini orchard

It was noted that insufficient information is available at this time and that, if there is further advice, it will be discussed at the next meeting.

7. Allotments

- a) The **report from the Asst to Town Clerk(ATC)**, including inspection report was noted, as attached.
- b) The minutes from a meeting of **Senlac Allotment Association** held on 18th January 2024 were noted. A Risk Assessment for the forthcoming summer BBQ is awaited.
- c) Former members of the South & South East in Bloom Sub Committee had volunteered to carry out some improvement works to the **Cherry Garden community area**. Members were asked to consider providing some grounds staff time to carry out specialist items eg removal of weed suppressant, reduction and shaping of larger specimen shrubs. It was noted that some items would be completed health and safety works. Members requested that plastic mesh is not used as contrary to the Council's environmental policy. The Clerk to liaise with the group and bring further detail to the next meeting.
- d) The **Action Plan for allotments 2023-2027** was noted, as attached.
 - i) *Organise annual allotment competition; agree judges and judging criteria* **Cllrs Barton, Neill and Sprong agreed to join a staff member to form the judging panel**. The ATC to arrange an appropriate date and time for this. **The judging criteria was agreed, as attached.**
- e) There was no additional report from Cllr Buss.

8. Cemetery

- a) **Cllr B Brown reported that an asbestos test on the old cemetery workshop had proved positive, although the building appears sound in relation to asbestos**. Members agreed for Cllr Brown to seal existing holes in the panels, grounds staff to erect a chicken wire fence around the structure and "Keep Out – Danger" signs to be erected. This will be monitored in six and twelve months. The Clerk was asked to respond to the resident that had raised concern.
- b) An estimate of cost for the seeking and potential **repair of the underground leak** had been received, similar to previous underground pipe repair cost. Following discussion, **Members agreed that quotes for the complete replacement of pipework, surface and underground, from the entrance gates to the new pipes in the new cemetery should be sought**.
- c) Members agreed that there should be no further consideration to the **mortuary building** at this time.
- d) The **Action Plan for Cemetery 2023-2027** was noted, as attached.
 - i) *Increase awareness of services & facilities, agree method to market to funeral directors* **Members noted that all local funeral directors had been issued with the latest list of fees and charges and reminded of the Battle Cemetery leaflet.**
- e) There was no further report from Cllr Cook.

9. Recreation Grounds

- a) Cllr Barton reported on the Terms of Reference and notes from the **Pavilion Funding Task & Finish Group meetings**. The list of potential funders and applications in progress were noted, which included an application to the Rural Community Infrastructure Grant of £20,000 and, in progress, to the Community Ownership Fund for £200,000. The Easter Event on the recreation



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ground, to be held the following day, was highlighted as a small fundraising and major raising awareness event. It was noted that expressions of interest to donate funds could be collected. It was suggested that borrowing the final funds should not be excluded, although this would require further consultation. The Fundraising T&FG were invited to request individual anticipated costs for potential appropriate grant applications.

- b) Cllr Brown reported that **Pavilion Technical Team Task & Finish Group** had not met and would be responsible for examining the tender document provided by the preferred contractor to identify items that require design clarification and if there is any feasible value engineering available. He confirmed that it is not intended to go to a further Tender process.
- c) Members noted that there had been an unfortunate **accident on play equipment** at the recreation ground. All Risk Assessments, RoSPA inspections and staff reports had been issued to the Council's Insurer. The Clerk had met with the Council's insurance assessor and the EIBE representative will also be visiting the site shortly to complete their own investigation.
- d) The **Action Plan for recreation ground 2023-2027** was noted, as attached.
- e) There was no further report from Cllr Buss.

10. Street Furniture & Lighting

- a) The **Action Plan for street furniture and lighting 2023-2027** was noted, as attached. The Clerk was asked to circulate the updated MPAN for identification of how many LED lights have been installed, when available.
- b) There was no further report from Cllr Barton.

11. Remainder of BTC's Estate

- a) It was noted that the **Hornbeams opposite Abbey Green** would be better planted in the ground. As they are currently blooming, it was agreed to add new compost and feed and monitor through the summer period.
- b) Members agreed the requests for **use of Abbey Green** by:
Battle Medieval Fayre – Saturday 25 May to Monday 27 May;
Battle Bonfire Boyes – Sunday 1 September for the 10k Run and Friday 1 November to Sunday 3 November for the Bonfire event
- c) Members considered the suggestions for the Amenity Field and Mansers Shaw detailed on the Ecological and Biodiversity Assessment and agreed:
 - i) *The large open green space is a public asset that could be used for gatherings (rented out) for local groups etc. and thus it could be managed as such.* The Amenity Field is being appropriately managed.
 - ii) *The brambles adjacent to the school wire fence should be trimmed off (not the other side of the entrance strip).* This is being appropriately managed.
 - iii) *The issue of brambles needs to be reviewed every five years. i.e. In 2028* This is being appropriately managed.
 - iv) *Numerous log piles can be set into the margins of the site to benefit invertebrates, reptiles and amphibians.* When logs are available, even small piles should be stacked.
 - v) *Place old or rotting timbers in the area to provide habitat for stag beetles* The grounds staff are asked to identify and site as appropriate.
 - vi) *Some of the dead Ash are within the school curtilage and limbs overhang the access route to the site by 10m. There is a risk that dead limbs from the trees could fall on visitors to the Amenity Field. Advise the school needs of this risk.* The Clerk was asked to contact the school.



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- d) Members agreed the amendments to the **Estate Management Programme**, particularly in relation to the treatment of trees in accordance with the new Tree Policy, as attached.
- e) The **Action Plan for remainder of BTCs estate for 2023-2027** was noted, as attached.
 - i) Review, update as necessary and agree risk assessment **This was agreed, as attached. The Clerk was asked to seek advice from the Insurer on frequency of professional tree condition survey.**
 - ii) Ensure that an up-to-date record is maintained of the land & property for which the Committee is responsible **Members noted the updated list**, as attached. The Clerk was asked to ensure that the inspections are updated. This will be brought to the next meeting.
- f) A **report from Cllr Burton** had been circulated prior to the meeting highlighting concerns and Members agreed:
 - i) *Erosion of a pathway at Mansers Shaw* The Clerk was asked to obtain costs for repair for consideration at the next meeting.
 - ii) *Excessive mud both sides of the footpath close to the cricket ground* It was noted that the installation of the proposed shared use path will alleviate this.
 - iii) *Deep vehicular tracks at George Meadow.* Access by the tenant farmer to the fields is essential. The area to be monitored over the summer.
 - iv) *Exposed black matting exposed at the Cherry Gardens community area.* Agreed to be removed at item 8b.

13. Correspondence & Communications received post Agenda circulation

- Notification from Specialist Hygiene Services, contractor for the public toilet at the recreation ground advising that they are no longer able to sustain the current service from 1 April 2024. This has been in operation since 2016, when the Council employed the services of Rother District Council's service provider. To keep costs to a minimum until Council is able to discuss this matter, SHS have been asked to clean and close the facility until further notice.
- The Women's Walking Football group have agreed to use the junior pitch on a Wednesday evening 6.30pm-7.30pm at a fee of £200 per season. Signage will be erected to highlight regular use of the facilities at the recreation ground.
- A resident at Asten Fields has been given authority to access the rear of their property via the recreation ground for essential fencing work at their property. An agreement to repair any damage has been made.
- An email of concern at the condition of the new trees in the recreation ground has been received. The grounds staff have been asked to ensure that attention is given to these trees.
- A report that the lines for pickleball on the multi-use-games-area (MUGA) have faded and a request for the Pickleball group to use the tennis court had been received. The Clerk had confirmed that the tennis courts are not available for alternative use but that lining could be reinstated. The potential to regularly book the MUGA will be discussed at the next meeting.

14. Matters for information / future agenda items

To consider **development of hire policy** for the recreation ground, including considerations such as sustainability, green practices, litter management, and distinguishing between community events and club recruitment activities.

15. Date of next meeting: provisionally Tuesday, 4th June 2024

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

There were no members of the public.



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16. Erection of fence on Council land

Members noted that a fence adjoining the cemetery had been partly erected on Council land. **It was agreed to recommend to Full Council that permission be granted for the fence to remain in position until any future replacement, when the fence should be returned to its proper boundary and that this does not imply any transfer in ownership of this section of land.**

17. George Meadow / Upper Stumblets lease conditions

Members noted the meeting between Cllr Sprong and the Clerk with the Tenant Farmer that had resulted in payment of the 2023-24 rent and a request for one year's rent free period in return for the removal of the section of land between the cricket pitch and the boundary of High Street properties from the current Agreement. **Members agreed that Cllr Sprong and the Clerk issue a letter confirming that the terms of the Agricultural Holding Agreement must be adhered to and that Council has no wish to reclaim this land, although it already maintains it.**

18. Battle Pre-school lease conditions

The Clerk reported that the current Lease issued in 1977 for an initial term of 5 years confirms a peppercorn rent. Six months notice to terminate may be given by either party before the 23 November in any year. **Members agreed to recommend to Full Council that a new Lease be considered.**

There being no further business the meeting closed at 22.03.

Cllr B Brown
Chairman