

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ALLOTMENTS ANSD OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE HELD ON
MONDAY, 19TH APRIL 2022 IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM OF THE PARISH COUNCIL OFFICE**

PRESENT: Cllrs. R. Roud (Chairman), R. Haffenden, P. Leale, J. Luque, S. Millson and D. Thornewell

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: None Received

APPROVAL AND SIGNING OF MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 14TH FEBRUARY 2022

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday, 14th February 2022 be **APPROVED AND SIGNED** by the Chairman.

MATTERS ARISING

(i) **Fencing – East Malling Allotments**

The Clerk reported that the work is now complete and the resident of The Grange who has experienced problems with the fence being broken down has emailed thanking everyone involved with having the work carried out as a good job has been done.

(ii) **Trees at East Malling Playing Field**

It was **NOTED** that a revised quotation had been obtained from Qualitree for the reduced tree work at East Malling Playing Field for the sum of £725 plus VAT =£870.

It was **AGREED** that the quotation be **ACCEPTED** and they be asked for a date for carrying out the work.

(iii) **Roundabout at Larkfield Recreation Ground**

It was **NOTED** that the new roundabout has now been installed and the safety surface repaired where it is sited.

ALLOTMENT MATTERS

(i) **Padlocks and Keys – Lunsford and East Malling Allotments**

The Clerk reported that the new padlocks have now been put in place at both Lunsford and East Malling allotments and only very few people have not collected the new keys.

OPEN SPACES MATTERS

(i) **Replacement of 4 seat Seesaw at Larkfield Recreation Ground**

The Clerk reported that Safeplay have provided a quotation for a more substantial seesaw with two springs instead of one. The one there previously which did break on numerous occasions at the base.

The price for this piece of equipment is £1850 as opposed to £1550.

It was **AGREED** that the quotation be **ACCEPTED FOR THE SUM** of £1,850.

(ii) **Village Field, East Malling**

The Chairman outlined his notes of suggestions for action that could be taken at Village Field, East Malling which had been circulated, as follows:-

After visiting East Malling Field this week, I could find no evidence of tree/bush nesting birds and on discussion with an ornithologist can confirm that it is unlikely there are any ground nesting birds there either. EMR entomologists also confirm there is little or no evidence of significant insect population.

Therefore, I think that following the success we have had at the Lower Mill pond site we should consider a similar course of action at East Malling Field.

1. Clear away all undergrowth and self-seeded saplings.
2. Leave standing all mature trees.
3. Bury some of the roots of the more mature saplings about 600mm deep. This will produce a habitat for Stag Beetles.
4. Clear away all weed growth and sow wild grass and wild flowers to create a meadow but leave some nettles along the railway fence fringe to the benefit of those insects that inhabit them, butterflies, lacewings and others. This may also encourage Hedgehogs into the area.
5. Create with help from MAAG a representation of the walkway discovered during the dig. The bushes of this representation could provide nest sites for Hedge Sparrows.
6. Formalise the current footpath by the use of wood chips so as to make a safer path to tread in wet weather. The current one is to say the least extremely slippery when wet.
7. Install some kind of information panel showing the results of the excavations.
8. Install Tit and Bat boxes in the more mature trees.
9. It may also be possible to create a wet area somehow or other to encourage amphibians.
10. Create a hibernacula.

In doing the above I think it would discourage the allotment holders from using the area as a tip for unwanted green waste that cannot be composted.

It may be possible to get TMBC to collect green waste for this un-compostable cuttings, etc. Recycle it.

Cllr. Thornewell had also sent an email to Members with his thoughts over the site, as follows:-

Went up to the "dig" this afternoon and despite it being Easter Sunday they were working on the site.

I gather they are still of the view this is possibly some religious site and I was shown a similar layout of a site in Belgium.

They are also doing a dig on a more exposed site at West Farleigh and due to that they are likely to reduce the digging here to once a week for a couple of months and then resume two days a week here. They said the trees here protect the site more.

They have not yet done anything in the empty allotment plot and several allotment holders have said that once their plots are a bit clear of produce they can dig in them. However most of the allotments are within the boundary of the scheduled site so permission would be required by Historic England. They have given permission to do a "scan" and they will do this at a later date.

At present it is the square building at the eastern end of the site they are particularly still working on and this is likely to take some time.

It would be helpful if the pile of dumped matter could be removed at the western end of the site which would make it easier for a "scan" there to take place but they are not sure there would be anything there. It is the square building at the eastern end if their priority. They had noticed we have a put up a notice asking people to do add to the dumped area.

They said people are always coming up to ask about progress and there is a lot of local interest.

The Chairman suggested that GROW 19 might be able to help in removing the pile of earth, etc. dumped by allotment holders and it was **AGREED** they be approached and arrangements be made for a skip to be available for when the work is carried out.

After considerable discussion It was **AGREED** that Derek Whitehead at Medway Valley Countryside Partnership be sent a copy of the Chairman's notes with a view to setting up a site meeting with him for his advice.

Cllr. Millson expressed his concern that East Malling was in danger of losing areas such as this so they become too formalized. Whilst he thought several of the Chairman's suggestions were worthwhile, he felt the area should not be over-managed. It was **AGREED** this point be taken into account when forwarding to MVCP.

(iii) **Fair – South Ward Playing Field– 16th May to 23rd May 2022**

The Clerk reported that Tommy Smith has requested access to South Ward Playing Field for the Fair from Monday, 16th May until Monday, 23rd May opening only on the Friday, Saturday and Sunday both weekends.

It was **AGREED** that this request be granted subject to the usual conditions.

(iv) **Gate at Carroll Gardens – Quotation**

The Clerk reported that during the recent storm the entrance gate to the land owned by the Parish Council was badly damaged in Carroll Gardens, pictures were circulated.

A quotation had been received from Parkers Gates and Fencing Ltd for the sum of £2,736 inc. VAT had been received for the supply and fitting of a replacement gate.

It was **AGREED** the quotation be **ACCEPTED** and request that the work be carried out as soon as possible.

(v) **Southern Golden Retriever Society – Request for Use of Larkfield Playing Field and Larkfield Village Hall – 29th May 2022**

The Clerk reported that the above organization are asking for use of Larkfield Playing Field on Sunday, 29th May 2022 for their Annual Fun Day as they have been let down at their previous venue.

The total cost for use of the field and the Village Hall will be £276.

It was **AGREED** that their request be granted subject to the usual conditions of clearing any litter etc.

(vi) **Any Other Open Space Matters**

Cllr. Thornewell reported that he has been trying to contact Bob Ulph at Leybourne Parish Council for the quotation to surface this Parish Council's length of path at Willow Road.

Cllr. Thornewell reported that he is meeting with Jackie Hirsch from the Larkfield Community Group at the fire station regarding the planting of a garden area around the Larkfield Village Sign. It was been agreed that the Parish Council pay £200 towards the cost of plants and the plaque they intend providing.

CORRESPONDENCE

All Seasons: **East Malling W.I. Tree at South Ward Playing Field**

Mark Steward from All Seasons who cuts the peripheral areas of South Ward Playing Field has expressed concern at the siting of the tree planted by East Malling W.I. as he feels the gang mower from Landscape Services will not be able to mow between the fence and the tree or the bench and the tree and it will lead to more work for him. Also, he states that it is where the Picnic in the Park normally have the music stage and stalls.

It was **AGREED** that the Chairman and Cllr. Thornewell visit the site on Thursday, 21st April 2022 to assess the situation.

ITEMS CONTRIBUTED BY MEMBERS

Cllr. Millson asked about Cllr. Tatton's suggestion that a information sign be provided at East Malling Station for places of interest in East Malling and maybe a route for a walk around East Malling.

The Clerk will ask the latest situation in this respect.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Monday, 16th May 2022

CLOSURE: The Chairman declared the Meeting closed at 8.30p.m.

