

PETERSFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Grounds Committee held at the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Petersfield, on Thursday 17th September 2015 at 6.30 pm.

PRESENT: Cllr J Deane (Chairman), Cllr P Strawbridge, Cllr J Matthews, Cllr S Noble, Cllr N Orr and Cllr M Vincent.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Mr N Hitch (Town Clerk), Town Mayor, Cllr Mrs Farrow and Cllr Mrs Morgans were also present. There were 6 members of the public or press present.

G 0304 CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

The Chairman commented that it was a long agenda and there was a need to hear all with an input on items for discussion but he asked that everyone please be as succinct as possible. He also welcomed the new Senior Groundsman, Mr Dugg Budd following his recent appointment.

G 0305 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

G 0306 DISPENSATION UNDER SECTION 33 OF THE LOCALISM ACT (2011)

No requests for dispensation were received.

G 0307 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr J Deane declared a potential interest in the item concerning maintenance of land on the Rams Hill Estate as he lives on the Estate.

G 0308 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Grounds Committee held on 30th July 2015 be approved and signed.

G 0309 PUBLIC REPRESENTATION

No requests from members of the public to speak had been received.

G 0310 GROUNDS REPORT

Members received and noted the Grounds Report for September 2015 by the Town Clerk. *(A copy is attached to these Minutes as Appendix A)*

G 0311

MERRITTS MEADOW.

Members received a Draft Partnership Agreement and Management Plan document along with a verbal update report from Mr Nick Heasman from the South Downs National Park Authority. Mr Heasman advised that both the Draft Agreement and Draft Management Plan were the result of various consultations undertaken. He commented that there was a terrific amount of biodiversity in the Meadow. The intention is to keep the maintenance low key but keep the Meadow 'loved' and there were plans to move forward with some of the maintenance work in the autumn. The National Park had committed some funding for this work and would continue to offer its expertise to help with tree work and other works that were outside the scope of the Rangers to complete. It was also intended to raise the profile of the site to encourage more local volunteers to come forward to help with the work.

Members asked various questions over the future plans for the site, such as when the legal transfer would eventually happen to place the land in the ownership of the Town Council and were pleased to see the progress being made to improve this area of the town.

RESOLVED that the Draft Partnership Agreement and Draft Management Plan for Merritts Meadow be approved in principle.

G 0312

COMMUNITY RANGER FOR PETERSFIELD.

Members received a presentation from Mr Nick Heasman of the South Downs National Park Authority on the potential for a Community Ranger to be appointed for Petersfield.

The National Park's vision is to pull together all of the town's wonderful assets and to positively identify the town's natural environment and make sure that the character is truly looked after. There is potential for the National Park to facilitate a Community Ranger, funded through the National Park by Section 106 Agreements, who would undertake a full survey of all areas identified in the Neighbourhood Plan and facilitate other volunteer groups, managing things in a way to show that the town is a result of its environment. The variety of biodiversity seen in the town is considerable and needs to be celebrated with positive management of the various sites as well as of exiting Rights of Way.

Members asked various questions and thought the concept was an excellent idea which should be encouraged.

RESOLVED that the concept of a Community Ranger for Petersfield be supported with further discussions and details to be provided by the National Park as they become available.

G 0313

RAMS HILL PLAY AREA AND GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

Members received a presentation from Mr John Lees of the Rams Hill Residents Association on the potential for the Council to accept maintenance responsibility for the grounds on the estate and for the childrens play area.

Mr Lees advised the issue of Skinners Lane footpath has been separated from the rest of the Rams Hill Estate as far as adoption of the Estate by the Highways Authority is concerned and it is hoped that the Estate will be formally adopted early in 2016. The current Children's Play Area is in very poor condition having not been managed in a satisfactory way by the contractor responsible. Residents do not wish to see this company formally take over the play area and other green spaces on the Estate due to the poor management and maintenance work they have experienced and have asked the Town Council to consider taking on the responsibility.

Mr Lees advised that Taylor Wimpey had agreed to refurbish the play area to a satisfactory condition and a 'commuted sum' of £213,319.55 (as at 2003 prices) is included within the Section 106 Planning Agreement to be passed to the owner of the Children's Playground and green spaces.

Members discussed the principle and were broadly supportive of the concept bearing in mind that the Council owns and maintains the vast majority of similar spaces in the town and noted that the proposal agrees with the policy in the Neighbourhood Plan to enhance the town's green spaces.

RECOMMENDED: that further details are required before a decision can be made but that a meeting would be arranged with Taylor Wimpey to pursue the matter

G 0314

PARKRUN EVENT ON PETERSFIELD HEATH

Members received a request to run a Parkrun event on the Heath on a regular weekly basis.

It was noted that similar events run at Alice Holt and Queen Elizabeth Country Park that attract in the order of 200 runners per week. Considerable concern was expressed that permitting such an event on a regular basis on Petersfield Heath would seriously conflict with other uses of the Heath and also that the proposed route was not suitable for a weekly activity of this nature.

RESOLVED that the Heath was not a suitable location for a Parkrun event.

G 0315

EQUIPMENT AND HAND HELD TOOLS PURCHASE.

The Chairman and Town Clerk had requested the newly appointed Senior Groundsman to consider what additional equipment he considered it necessary to purchase in order to effectively undertake the labour intensive maintenance works on our grounds. Following discussion it was agreed that

equipment totalling a maximum of £4,626 be purchased from Winchester Garden Machinery comprising the following:

- 2 Honda HRH 536 HX mowers
- Stihl KM130 Kombi Unit
- Stihl Blade Attachment
- Stihl Pruner Attachment
- Stihl Strimmer Attachment
- Stihl Hedgetrimmer Attachment
- Stihl 1 metre Extension
- 2 Stihl BR600 Backpack Blowers

RECOMMENDED: that equipment be purchase from Winchester Garden Machinery at a maximum cost of £4,626 to comprise 2 mowers, 2 blowers plus a Stihl Kombi unit with attachments for various uses.

G 0316 **BOATHOUSE SLIPWAY.**

Members received and considered the report from the Town Clerk on the proposal to construct a slipway adjacent to the boathouse by the Pond in order to facilitate the concessionaire's transportation of the boats to and from the Pond as and when required. Currently his vehicle was struggling to find enough grip with a heavy load on board and damage was being done to the ground surface as a result.

Members discussed the proposal and were unsure whether the concrete or scalping surface was preferred. Before making a decision they requested that an additional quotation for the concrete surface be obtained

RESOLVED: that an additional quotation be obtained for a concrete slipway so that two quotations for both types of surface were available for consideration at the next committee meeting.

G 0317 **HEATH LEASE ARRANGEMENTS**

The Town Clerk received a report from the Town Clerk following advice received from the External Auditors on the best way in which to manage the Heath Charity land in the future.

It was acknowledged that the Heath always cost more to maintain than the income it generated so the necessity of opening a separate bank account for the Charity was introducing a greater degree of complication and bureaucracy to the financial management of the site.

RESOLVED: that the proposal for a lease to be created by the Heath Charity in favour of the Town Council in order to run and maintain the Heath on behalf of the Charity should be pursued and a meeting of the Heath Charity called in order to discuss and approve the proposal and terms of the lease.

G 0318 FRIENDS OF PETERSFIELD HEATH

Members received and noted the minutes of the Friends of Petersfield Heath's Committee meeting held on 7th July 2015.

G 0319 PEOPLE OF THE HEATH PROJECT

Members received and noted with interest the report from The People of The Heath Project entitled 'Understanding and Conserving Petersfield's Prehistoric Barrows'.

G 0320 PETERSFIELD HEATH BARROWS EXCAVATION REPORT

Members received and noted a detailed report from West Sussex Archaeology detailing the processes involved and outcomes from the recent excavation of Barrows 12, 13 and 14.

G 0321 GROUNDS POLICY

Members undertook the annual review of the Grounds Policy. Following discussion it was agreed that the comment on fencing should more accurately reflect what the Council desires to deliver.

RESOLVED: that the Grounds Policy be approved with amendments being made to the comments on fencing to reflect the wish to better secure our premises from intruders and improve the security of the sites with the revised policy being attached as Appendix B.

G 0322 BUDGET 2016/17

Members were asked to consider what potential projects or spending they wished to see included within the first draft budget on the various grounds that the Council owned or maintained. There followed a lengthy and detailed debate with a wide variety of potential projects being considered and their merits assessed, following which it was:

RESOLVED: that the items within the Budget Items Report attached to these minutes as Appendix C be included within the first draft budget.

RESOLVED: that approval be given for the meeting to extend beyond 9.00p.m. with a 30 minutes extension being agreed.

G 0323 PETERSFIELD RUGBY CLUB

Members received an update on recent discussions with the rugby club from Cllrs Strawbridge and Matthews. It was agreed that at this stage there were no further decisions that needed to be taken and that discussions could continue.

G 0324 **HEATH POND WORKING PARTY**

Members received a report from the Town Clerk of the meeting of the Pond Working Party held on 31st July the notes of which are attached as Appendix D.

Members were advised that the visits to the ponds at Buriton and Midhurst hadn't been arranged yet because of holiday commitments during the summer but would take place shortly.

G 0325 **GROUNDS USERS MEETING**

RESOLVED: that the Grounds Users Meeting be held in the Rose Room at 7.00p.m. on 30th November 2015.

In view of the confidential nature of the business about to be discussed it was

RESOLVED that the public and press be asked to leave the meeting for the confidential session and the Councillors in attendance be granted permission to stay.

CONFIDENTIAL

G 0326 **PETERSFIELD CRICKET CLUB**

The Chairman and Town Clerk updated members on the outcome of the meeting with club officials held on 30th July in connection with their new lease. A further meeting would be arranged when the club had discussed in detail and agreed on its preferred outcome in respect of the future ownership of the Pavilion.

G 0327 **PETERSFIELD RUGBY CLUB**

The Town Clerk outlined to members the advice received from solicitors concerning the rugby club's use of the 'old hockey pitch' at Penns Farm playing fields.

RESOLVED: that the potential cost of counsel's opinion be sought.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.28p.m.

Grounds Report September 2015

This report seeks to inform councillors of matters of interest affecting any of the public open space land which we own or manage. Members are reminded that its contents are not available for debate, but questions can always be asked and we will seek to answer them, however it should be borne in mind that if they involve the need for investigation or would be complex or lengthy, answers will need to be given outside of the meeting. If councillors consider that any matter on the report is in need of debate, the subject can be added to a future meeting's agenda for this purpose.

The Heath

- Some trees have received treatment recently following branch falls or where potentially dangerous branches have been seen. Currently these are for 2 trees around the Pond and one between the cricket pitch and Heath Road East.
- Additional works have been Ordered through Burleys as requested by the South Downs National Park to facilitate the recent 'People of the Heath' event.

Love Lane Playing Fields

- The Order has been placed with East Hants District Council to install the chestnut paling fencing around the areas of Japanese Knotweed growth. Unfortunately, due to their current work pressures the work cannot be done until the end of September which is almost at the end of the Knotweed growing season. Bearing in mind that the whole area will need to be cut during the late autumn after the final Knotweed treatment of the year I have agreed with EHDC that we will delay them erecting this temporary fencing until spring 2016 when the extent of any future Knotweed growth is known.

Penns Farm Playing Fields

- An Order will be issued shortly for the repairs needed to the wet pour safety surfacing at the childrens play area.

Bell Hill Recreation Ground

- As with the Heath, some tree work has been commissioned following a tree shedding a substantial branch unexpectedly.
- There have been some recent reports of youth disturbance in and around the recreation ground, play area and car park late at night. This matter has been reported to the Police under the non-emergency '101' number and also through the Community Tasking Co-ordinating Group run by EHDC.

General

- We extend a warm welcome to Dugg Budd, who has recently started work with us as the Senior Groundsman. Dugg will take over from me in compiling these reports to the committee on a monthly basis.
- Dugg and I have been discussing the security of our grounds generally and the use of 'dragons teeth' as a means of preventing unauthorised vehicular access to a number of our recreation grounds. Our view is that this is not an effective way of dealing with this problem as many of the posts are simply pulled out of the ground by people if they want to gain vehicular access. Instead, we propose installing a 'post and rail' fence during the winter months at the various sites involved which includes Bell Hill recreation ground, Borough Road recreation ground, Love Lane playing fields and Penns Farm playing fields. The outcome will be a far more pleasant appearance and the work can be done by our own staff at the cost of materials only.
- At my and the Chairman's request, Dugg has provided a list of equipment that he considers is necessary to purchase in order to effectively do the job required. The specific requests are an agenda item for this meeting.
- Dugg and I have also been discussing the most appropriate way to deal with the amount of 'green waste' that we are and will produce. It has been suggested that the Council orders and uses a 'green skip' which can be hired at a modest cost from a local farm and is emptied as and

when required at a cost of approximately £300 by the provider. The potential for storing this bin next to the container in EHDC's compound (assuming permission is granted by EHDC) is being explored and progressed.

Neil Hitch
Town Clerk
4th September 2015

**PETERSFIELD TOWN COUNCIL
POLICY FOR GROUNDS COMMITTEE - G 0321 September 2015 refers**

APPENDIX B

To encourage and promote full use of Petersfield Town Council's Open Spaces and Sports Grounds for the enjoyment of the public in a sustainable manner.

- Allotments:** To hold users meetings every year in the Autumn. To ensure all sites are maintained in a reasonable condition.
- Fairs/Circus:** To allow a maximum of 3 fairs/circus per year at each venue although this may be waived in exceptional circumstances. In letting any facilities the Town Council to be mindful of the impact on the amenity of neighbouring residents.
- Trees and Hedgerows:** To maintain existing trees and hedgerows and protect worthwhile specimens. To plant trees as necessary, in consultation with an arboricultural expert. To remove all dead/dying trees in accordance with Health and Safety policy
- Dogs} Litter}** To place dog signs and waste bins at all open spaces and sports grounds and to empty the bins on a regular basis.
- The Heath:** To encourage and promote the management of The Heath and The Heath Pond, as advised by the Heath Integrated Management Plan.
- Angling:** To work together with the Heath Pond Association to promote good fishing practice at The Heath Pond.
- Boats:** To work together with the Boating Concessionaire to ensure boating is carried out in a suitable and safe manner. To limit the number of boats on The Heath Pond to a maximum of 45.
- Model Boats:** To allow use of the Pond for the purpose of sailing model boats.
- Play Equipment:** To maintain, repair, enhance and replace (when necessary) play equipment at open spaces and sports grounds and to put in place a strategy document to determine appropriate play provision for both children and young people.
- Seats:** To maintain and repair existing seats at open spaces and sports grounds.
- Contractors:** To use local workforce whenever possible.
- Access for the Disabled:** To provide access for the disabled to all Petersfield Town Council's open spaces, sports grounds and facilities, where reasonable.
- Recreation Grounds:** To allow occasional use for overnight camping by established, organised groups.
- Fencing:** To maintain and repair fencing at sports grounds and open spaces to ensure the grounds remain secure whilst being accessible to the public.
- Sports Grounds:** To encourage full use by the public of all facilities available at Petersfield Town Council's Sports Grounds and to facilitate User Meetings.
- Conservation Group:** To work in partnership with conservation groups working on Petersfield Town Council land.
- Carbon Footprint:** To pay due regard to the Town Council's carbon footprint and the environmental impact of the Grounds policies and activities.
- Users Meeting:** To hold a Grounds Users Meeting in November or December each year.
- Children and Young People:** To recognise the needs and requirements for both children and young people of Petersfield

This Policy is subject to the Town Council's Financial Strategy.

Grounds Committee

Further to the discussion at Committee, the following is a summary of the discussion on potential projects for inclusion in the 2016/17 first draft budget.

Budget Items 2016/17	Category	
Play Area Equipment	£15,000 regularly put away towards various projects. Borough Road in urgent need of replacement with Penns Farm and Heath older childrens equipment still to be done. Developers contributions often fund much of this work.	£15K Must
Heath Pond Banks	Total of £70,000 currently in reserves for this project. Total cost estimated £500-750K with other grants available. Suggest further £10K?	£20K Must
Heath Toilets	£20,000 placed in fund last year. Total cost of Approx. £100K but grants may be available. Suggest further £20K contribution.	£20K Must
Heath Road car park	Currently £3,000 in Earmarked Reserves but recent quote for £12,000 to re-surface in rolled gravel type surface. Needs £9,000 more to do it	£9K Should
Heath Management Plan	New Plan being worked on with South Downs. Unclear if funds will be required from PTC but it may be sensible to make a provision	No
Heath Bollards/Gate	Currently £4,000 in Earmarked Reserves to replace present bollards at junction of Heath Road and Heath Road West to provide more secure and attractive entrance to the Heath. Is this enough?	£4K Should
Love Lane Toilets	Item removed from budget last year - £10,000 contribution originally suggested. Question over need for toilets given the plans to build new youth facility.	No
Love Lane	In past years members proposed replacing the metal fencing along Moggs Mead. Is this something members want to consider?	No
Rams Walk CCTV	Item removed from budget last year - £2,500 suggested. PTC owns and maintains 1 camera in Rams Walk which is coming towards the end of its serviceable life. Last year Council argued it was not a good use of public money as the responsibility should be borne by the security firm yet we have a legal responsibility re crime prevention.	No
Avenue Playing Fields	Item removed last year - £15,000 for a kick wall Questioned whether it would reduce/prevent number of balls being kicked onto Pavilion roof damaging tiles	No
Paddock Way	One half of the recreation ground has been drained. The other gets very wet and needs draining. £10,000 in Earmarked Reserves at present but estimate need further £5,000 to complete work	£5K Should

Borough Road path	Path is in poor condition and quite overgrown. There is £2,000 in Earmarked Reserves for improvements. Need to talk to Senior Groundsman on how to tackle works and level of resources that may be required.	No
Penns Farm Field 'B'	Plans to bring this field into sporting use. Will require some form of professional advice/guidance for works plus architects re new Pavilion/changing facility. Say £5,000?	£12K Must
Merritts Meadow	Plans are moving forward to transfer this land to PTC ownership. Should we make provision for renovation costs of say £5,000?	No
Petersfield Ranger	Members will hear tonight of possible plans to fund this position from Developers Contributions which members also want to use for play equipment. Is it worth considering putting something away towards contributing to the proposal?	No
Equipment Purchase	Depending on the decision made earlier in this meeting there may be a need to purchase additional equipment for the purposes of our grounds maintenance.	No
Dog/Litter Bins	Plan to phase out dog bins only in favour of mixed bins to eventually eliminate dog bin collection contract	£5K Should
Signage on open spaces	Plan to introduce standardisation of signage across all open spaces and form a 'corporate style' of signage	£15K Must

Notes of the Heath Pond Working Party meeting held in Council Chamber 31st July 2015

Present: Cllr J Deane (PTC)
 Cllr Mrs L Farrow (PTC)
 Cllr J Matthews (PTC)
 Cllr P Strawbridge (PTC)
 Mr N Hitch (PTC)
 Mr R Warton (Friends of Petersfield Heath)
 Ms J Edwards (East Hampshire District Council)

Apologies: Mr D Doe (Heath Pond Association)
 Mr D Chambers (Heath Pond Association)

Summary of issues discussed:

- Heath Pond Association had contributed their comments on the proposed Improvement Works Plans submitted by the 3 companies which favoured the Nicospan method produced by Salix.
- The idea of creating additional islands from the silt removed from the Pond was greeted very favourably
- Use of Gabions had a mixed response. It was acknowledged that their use got round erosion problems and stopped potential undermining of the banks but those present were in favour of the 'softest approach' possible to retain the natural appearance of the Pond and Heath
- The idea of Gabion baskets was not uniformly wanted - it would be used as a last resort only when protecting areas from erosion and probably only adjacent to the childrens play area where a hard edge was wanted although their possible use wasn't discounted where swims were placed on the eastern and Sussex Road banks.
- The preferred approach was that taken by Aquamaintain although it was questioned whether the use of hazel as proposed would be as effective as gabions.
- The need for a 5-year rotation for the cutting back and coppicing of the willow was emphasised and it was acknowledged that this would also be dealt with in the new Heath Management Plan currently being formulated.
- The need to encourage greater reed growth was agreed.
- The ideas for soft planting was preferred with the use of coir rolls
- The need to identify precisely where the fishing swims would be located along all appropriate banks was agreed as the current plans were a little vague on this at present.
- The replacement boardwalk in recycled plastic was agreed as probably the best approach due to its longevity and reduced maintenance costs
- The replacement boardwalk would not have rails - it was liked as it was at the moment although it was suggested that it could be a bit wider than the current boardwalk with the potential for a couple of 'passing places' to be created

Actions:

- Arrange visits to both Buriton and Midhurst ponds in order to visualise ideas with visits to be arranged through Bruce Middleton of the South Downs
- Following visits, arrange further meeting of working party to progress ideas