



EMERSONS GREEN
TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Open Spaces Committee

1 September 2020

Held via Skype due to Covid-19 restrictions

Present – Councillors: S Bassett, S Budd, S Hill, C Johnson, P Morgan, M Palmer & D Somers (Chairman).

Attendees – Richard Hull - Committee Clerk.

139. Apologies for absence –

Apologies were received from Councillor Wilkins.
Councillor R Nichols was absent from the meeting.

140. Declarations of Interest under the Localism Act 2011

No interests were declared at this time.

141. Public participation (not to exceed 5 minutes)

No members of the public joined the Skype meeting.

142. Minutes 7 July 2020

It was agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2020 are a true and accurate record of the meeting and these will be signed by the Chairman at the next opportunity.

143. Outstanding Items from these Minutes

134. Signs that refer to MRPC; The Committee Clerk explained he had an action to assess which signs refer to MRPC. He will progress this and if necessary agree a timescale for the assessment with the Town Clerk in the light of other priorities.

144. Quotes for an ecologist's report for three trees at Rodway Common

Two quotes were received. It was **Resolved** to accept the quote of £200 + VAT from Wessex Ecological Consultancy and the **Committee Clerk** will instruct the company.

145. Quote to cut back trees that are blocking the path in Green Lane

Two quotes were requested but only one was received from Bristol Tree Services for £110 + VAT. It was **Resolved** to accept the quote and the **Committee Clerk** will instruct the company.

146. Quotes to prune trees overhanging residential properties from Green Lane

Three quotes were requested but only one was received from Bristol Tree Services for £4100 + VAT. It was **Resolved** to accept the quote and the **Committee Clerk** will instruct Bristol Tree Services and seek their thoughts on the appropriate time of year for the work to be done.

147. An email from a naturalist recommending that wildflowers are not sown at Emersons Green common. Quotes to seed the common in the light of this. A quote to have the common cut.

When the naturalist visited the common in July he was amazed by the quantity of native wildflowers which he suspects have been there for hundreds of years. He recommends that the common is cut once a year and the cuttings collected. Cllr Somers explained that when he met the naturalist at the common last month he recommended that the common is divided into three sections and that a third of the common is left uncut on a rotating basis. In the light of this it was **Resolved** not to progress the quotes / enquiries to seed the common with wildflowers and that the **Committee Clerk** will ask the naturalist if he is able to recommend which third of the common to leave uncut this year. It was **Resolved** to accept the quote of £570 + VAT to cut the common and collect the cuttings and the **Committee Clerk** will instruct contractor, preferably following comments from the naturalist.

148. Quotes to have part of the roundabout by the Shell garage sown with wildflowers

Three quotes were requested but only one was received from SGC for £660 + VAT and £86 + VAT for an annual maintenance cut. It was **Resolved** to accept the quote and the **Committee Clerk** will instruct SGC.

149. Dibden Lane allotments

- a) A resident has asked for the hedge between the allotments and his property to be reduced in height; the hedge was cut in August 2019 and October 2016. It was **Resolved** to consider having the hedge cut in two years time and the **Committee Clerk** will inform the resident.
- b) Quotes for daily cleaning of the allotment gate; the committee clerk explained that to reduce the risk of the spread of coronavirus he had attached a sanitiser dispenser to the inside and the outside of the allotment gate. Prior to the meeting the committee clerk had distributed the government advice on cleaning in a non-healthcare setting. It was **Resolved** that having the sanitiser dispensers is sufficient mitigating action and that it is not necessary to also have the allotment gate cleaned daily. The **Clerk's Assistant** will inform the companies that provided quotes that we will not require their services.
- c) Members noted that three skips have been hired this year and all have been filled very quickly. It was **Resolved** to hire an 8-yard skip at a cost of £240 + VAT from Batemans, the **Committee Clerk** will arrange delivery.
- d) A tenant has stated that items other than plant matter had been put in the most recent skip; It was **Resolved** that the **Committee Clerk** will inform the tenants that only the right material is to be put in the skip and let the tenant know of this action.
- e) Following theft of produce from several plots some tenants have asked that the gate is kept closed; prior to the meeting the committee clerk had distributed National Allotment Society guidance which states that allotment gates should be closed and, if possible locked when not in use. Now that sanitiser is available on the gate it was **Resolved** that the **Committee Clerk** will inform the tenants that they should revert to the previous procedure of keeping the gate closed except when passing through it.
- f) An email from a tenant about the condition of nearby plots; prior to the meeting the committee clerk had distributed NAS guidance stating that plot inspections can take place subject to complying with government guidelines and not penalising plot holders who have been ill, shielding or are clinically vulnerable. It was **Resolved** that;

- The **Committee Clerk** will arrange a date for councillors to do the inspections which will proceed provided two or more councillors are available.
 - In accordance with NAS guidance if a plot is not satisfactory the tenant will be informed that a quarter of the plot must be cultivated within three months and the whole plot within one year.
 - The **Committee Clerk** will inform the tenant who raised the concern of the agreed actions.
- g) Emails from a member of the allotment tenants committee with various issues that have been raised by the tenants; it was **Resolved** that the **Committee Clerk** will agree a response with Cllr Somers.
- h) The formation of an Independent Allotment Association by the allotment tenants; The Town Clerk has offered to draft a survey to go to the tenants asking if they would like to form an association, it was **Resolved** that the **Town Clerk** should proceed with this.
- i) Requests from some tenants to have CCTV at the site; members felt that this was not practical, and it was **Resolved** to decline the request and the **Committee Clerk** will inform the tenants.
- j) A request from a tenant for signs to be erected about not leaving rubbish; the tenancy agreement states that non-compostable rubbish must be removed from the plot and taken away from the site. It was **Resolved** to decline the request and the **Committee Clerk** will inform the tenant.
- k) Allotments evening; Cllr Budd asked if there will be awards for best kept plots – as there has not been any plot judging this year there will not be any awards. Members noted that councillors cannot hold face to face meetings because of the coronavirus restrictions. Members considered that it would be impractical / contrary to government guidelines to hold a face to face meeting with multiple householders. Although reluctantly it was **Resolved** not to hold an allotments evening this year.
- l) A request from a tenant for his wife to take on a plot that the tenant thinks is about to become available; It was **Resolved** to decline the request but that his wife can be added to the waiting list, the **Committee Clerk** will inform the tenant.

150. Install planters by Blackhorse Road and installation of no parking signs by Elmtree Avenue

Members are concerned about safety at the crossroads where Elmtree Avenue and Dibden Lane meet Blackhorse Road as vehicles parking on an area of grasscrete next to Blackhorse Road are restricting visibility for vehicles coming out of Elmtree Avenue and there have been two incidents where cyclists have been knocked off their bikes. When the members considered the matter at the meeting in November 2019 they decided they would like to install planters to prevent or deter vehicles parking, however no decision had been made to install the planters as the cost was not known at that stage and it was subject to being granted a planting licence by SGC. Members were concerned that they could not go back on their initial wish to install the planters; the committee clerk explained that as 6 months had elapsed the members could reconsider the matter. It was **Resolved** that the **Committee Clerk** will inform Chris Harris, SGC, that this is a highways matter and ask what action SGC propose to take.

(Cllr Bassett left the meeting at 20.10)

Elmtree Avenue; a local resident is concerned that the grass is being churned up by vehicles parking there; some of the area is unregistered land and some is owned by SGC. It was **Resolved** that this is not the Town Council's responsibility and the **Committee Clerk** will ask Chris Harris to consider what action SGC will take.

Both issues were raised some time ago with Cllr R Hunt by a local resident. It was **Resolved** that the **Committee Clerk** will inform Cllr R Hunt of the members' decisions.

151. “No Parking” signage on Vinney Green common and an email from a resident about cars parking there

Prior to the meeting the committee clerk had distributed wording for the signage which is almost identical to that used in an SGC sign on the common land by Windsor Place. The committee clerk explained that a member of the DEFRA Casework Team had confirmed that “small” signs are permitted without seeking consent from DEFRA. It was **Resolved** that the **Committee Clerk** will order three signs a similar size to the SGC sign and in line with the costings provided by Whitehall Printing for the signs at Rodway Common (see item 156). The **Committee Clerk** will inform the resident about the proposed signs.

156. Quotes for signage at Rodway common

The Chairman agreed to bring this item forward to be discussed in conjunction with item 151.

Two quotes were received for eight signs, four of these are bye law signs and four are warning signs about the uneven ground. It was **Resolved** to accept the quote of £469 + VAT from Whitehall Printing for eight A4 signs with metal rails, clips and posts and the **Committee Clerk** will place the order.

Two quotes were requested to install the signs and posts. Only one quote was received which was from S Bracey General Building Ltd for £85 per post and it was **Resolved** to accept the quote and the **Committee Clerk** will instruct the company.

The **Committee Clerk** will arrange a site visit for councillors to agree the location of the eight signs and this will proceed as long as at least two councillors can attend.

152. A report from a resident of Home Field Close that a wall between the close and Emersons Green common is crumbling very badly in places

The committee clerk explained that a boundary search from the Land Registry costs £169.90, this includes common land. Whilst it is not known if the search will show who is responsible for the wall it was **Resolved** that the **Committee Clerk** will obtain the search for the property in question in the hope that it will determine ownership of the wall.

153. A request from a resident to lay a path across Emersons Green common

It was **Resolved** to decline the request and the **Committee Clerk** will inform the resident.

154. Maintenance of our three bus shelters

Cllrs Somers and Budd recently inspected the bus shelters. One of the stoppers at the end of the seat is missing from one of the shelters, the committee clerk is obtaining a quote to replace this. Cllr Johnson proposed and Cllr Somers seconded that we contact SGC to see if they will take on responsibility for the bus shelters as this could unify them across the area; It was **Resolved** that the **Committee Clerk** will contact SGC.

155. A quote to clear Vinney Green pond and wording for a sign to show that we maintain the pond

It was **Resolved** to accept the quote from Aquaflora Landscapes for £400 and the **Committee Clerk** will instruct the contractor.

The **Committee Clerk** will carry forward the question of a sign for the pond to the next Open Spaces meeting.

157. Installing a dual-purpose bin in the basketball court / play area near to the Park & Ride

Two residents had asked Cllr R Hunt for a bin to be installed in this area as they were concerned about the amount of litter. The committee clerk explained that the previous bin we asked SGC to install cost £448. It was **Resolved** that the **Committee Clerk** will instruct SGC to install a bin in this area and also a bin on Acorn Drive which is a one of the locations that the Lyde Green Open Space group have identified as needing a bin, this was confirmed by a

representative of the group in a site visit with Cllr Somers and the committee clerk earlier this year. The **Committee Clerk** will ask for the bins to have signs on them with the Town Council's name.

Cllr Palmer stated that three bins have been removed from the Lyde Green area.

158. Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

159. Items from Members to report

- Cllr Hill reported that some low branches on the cycle path along the edge of Rodway Common are a safety hazard particularly for cyclists. It was **Resolved** that the crowns of the trees need to be lifted to three meters and the **Committee Clerk** will request quotes and proceed with the work provided the cost does not exceed £1,000. Cllr Hill can meet the contractor on site if needed.
- Cllr Palmer stated he has raised the issue of whether the Open Spaces committee should meet more frequently and this will be on the Full Council agenda on 10 September. Cllr Johnson suggested that a separate meeting is held for the allotments.

160. Next Meeting

3 November 2020 at 19.00 via Skype or in the Council Chamber of Emersons Green Town Council

The chairman closed the meeting at 21.00