

PARISH MAINTENANCE WORKING PARTY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 5 JUNE 2017 AT 12PM

Present: Cllrs Gatward, Hales, Norman, Sherwen, Siva and Travis and the Warden, Keith Rudge

Apologies for Absence: Tim Stebbings (Litter Picker)

1. **Election of Chair.** John Travis (proposed by Cllr Siva; seconded by Cllr Hales; unanimous) was elected.
2. **Election of Vice Chair.** Jose Hales (proposed by Cllr Siva; seconded by Mr Rudge; unanimous) was elected.
3. **Agreement of Note-taker.** Cllr Norman volunteered. All agreed.
4. **Working Party Procedures.** These are set out in Annex 1. The following actions were agreed:
 - Re-draft the Terms of Reference for discussion at the next meeting
(Action: JT)
 - Advertise again for public volunteers to sit on the WP once its role is clearer. The use of the public to carry out work will be considered once advice has been sought on the insurance position¹
5. **Precept for Maintenance.** Cllr Norman explained that following discussions during preparation of the Management Balance Sheet, it is now clear that what is called 'Earmarked reserves – maintenance' in the Precept should actually be 'Village maintenance – Hard'. The amount budgeted for is £3,500 [*Post meeting note: this includes maintenance of the Hub, Littlehands and the Pavilion. Finance and Good Governance Committee to be asked to consider whether/how to divide this budget heading*].

It was agreed that the WP will recommend that budgets for miscellaneous work in the 3 cemeteries should be combined to one for 'Cemeteries' of £4000. **Action: The Clerk to take to F&GG and thence to Council.**

6. **Agreement of Councillors' Road Allocations and Associated Duties.** It was agreed to get the process of Cllrs regularly their road allocations and taking action re-instated asap. The following paperwork needs to be updated/prepared:

¹ This advice is already available as to whether a volunteer is covered (see litter picking risk assessment which arose from the insurance company's advice). The question remains as to whether the insurance covers any adverse effect of work carried out by volunteers).

- Allocation of roads. **Action: JH to update as necessary and bring to the next meeting.**
- Checklist of actions. This needs to include at a minimum: what to do, frequency of checks, method of reporting. **Action: MS to prepare draft list and circulate for comment asap. JT to prepare document for discussion at next meeting.**
- Letters requesting householder action. **Action: JN to obtain 2 extant letters from Clerk and draft a 'Thank you for doing what we asked' letter.**

Information is needed on the heights/clearances needed for footpaths and roads.
Action: JH to ask County Highways.

At the next meeting, members will review the documentation and consider the overall process. The whole package will then be presented to Council as a recommendation (July provisionally) for agreement.

7. **Review of Cemetery Regulations.** Cllr Sherwen explained that: All Saints Churchyard is a closed cemetery but the Council has responsibility for its maintenance²; and Orchard Road Cemetery is only used for burials if a plot has been previously purchased.

There is one amendment to the Rules and Regulations (Section 6(b)) which has arisen as a result of a burial. The revised R&Rs need to be agreed by the Council. **Action: MS to liaise with the Clerk to put the R&Rs on the agenda for 26 June PC meeting. At the same time to check that the Clerk has signed copies of the necessary Terms of Agreement forms in case of any disagreement subsequently.**

8. **Review of the Herts and Cambs Grounds Maintenance Contract after 1 year.**

The WP agreed that the following changes should be made to the contract:

- Appendix B. The Old Recreation Ground. Mowing – it should be made clear to the contractor that 'mowing' refers to the whole area not just the grass. This is needed to keep the nettles in check on the cleared areas around the perimeter. If the mower cannot be used on some areas, the contractor needs to identify the areas and explain why not. If an alternative control method will be needed, the contractor to define work and give a price.

² Power to maintain a closed churchyard in the council's area if requested to do so by a parochial church council (Local Government Act 1972 s 215). I assume the PC has been asked in the past so it is now accepted practice.

- Appendix C. Millenium Copse. The number of cuts to be reduced to 3, which *will* be carried out in April, end July/August and the beginning of October. The cost is therefore reduced to 3x£40 (£120).
- Appendix C. Golden Jubilee Orchard. The number of cuts to be reduced to 3 which will be carried out in April, end July/August and the beginning of October. The cost is therefore reduced to 3 x £70 (£210)

Action: The Clerk to write to Herts and Cambs. *[Post meeting note: if the adjustments to the contract do not result in an increase in the overall price, can the changes be made as Clerk's action? If the cost were to rise, will need to be agreed at Council].*

Others points which arose from the discussion were:

- The contract currently with MD Landscapes needs to be tendered in Autumn 2017. It will need to include 2 cuts of Stockbridge Meadows which are currently carried out on an ad hoc basis.
- The length of that contract should be until end March 2019 (when the current Herts and Cambs one runs out) so that the Council can consider whether to keep to 2 contracts and review what work is included in the contracts.
- The Council needs to become better at monitoring the work carried out by contractors to ensure it is getting value for money.

9. List of Outstanding Jobs. Some tasks on the list have been completed.

Comments on others:

- Discussion of allotments to be on a future agenda.
- Village sign – to be actioned by KR. Will be done at cost of paint.
- Railing in Armingford Crescent – does not belong to the Council. JH has asked County Highways to deal with it.
- Worcester Way – the fence is to be removed as the hedge is established.
Action: KR to check if he can carry out the work.
- All Saints Churchyard – tree work to await end of nesting season. Cllr Gatward commented that not all of the work set out in the letter from Mr Farr is necessary nor desirable. **Action: RG to write a clear statement of what the Council should agree to do and then KR to see what he can action.**
- Stockbridge Meadows – **Action: KR to list the work that needs to be done and the WP will then decide on priorities and make a recommendation to Council.**

[Post meeting note: We though the Clerk had given the go-ahead for spraying hedges in New Road but I cannot find this recorded in Council minutes. We did agree that this is a job that needs to be done so can we ask her to go ahead?]

Other agreed actions are:

- The Clerk to be asked to make sure that when people report jobs, they give enough details of location and what the problem is. Photos to be encouraged.
- KR will then check on what is needed and decide if can carry out the work himself as he is out and about in the village.

10. Future Work Programme. Deferred to the next meeting.

11. Date of Next Meeting: Monday 26 June 12-2pm. We agreed to meet frequently in the early stages of the WP's work to catch up on the backlog.

ANNEX 1

WORKING PARTY

The Working Party can be whatever its members want to be so long as the PC agrees.

The Terms of Reference agreed by the PC were as follows:

Parish Maintenance – to include up to 5 members of the public.

To engage the public to get involved in both reporting work that needs to be done and also in volunteering to carry out work themselves.

To identify the work which needs to be undertaken on a regular basis around the parish (and not covered by the 3 contracts)

To draw up a schedule for the identified maintenance making it clear what can be done by volunteers and what will need to be carried out by contractors

To draw up a specification for a Framework agreement for the contracted work to be tendered.

Things have moved on a lot since then. we have the Drainage action group and the Highways volunteer group which tie in with this WP. Following the decision not to have the committees. That work also needs to be added. So a thorough overhaul of the Terms of Reference seems in order once the WP has had a couple of meetings and decided what it thinks it should be doing. This will enable new ideas to be introduced.

It is for the WP to elect its own Chair and Vice Chair and record its decisions/actions. I am happy to volunteer to do the recording. It will report back to the main PC when it has some recommendations. A WP does not have an allocated budget so the recommendations of the WP will be subject to a vote at Full Council.

The frequency of meetings is for the WP to decide.

Members of the public were invited to join the WP at the beginning but no-one put themselves forward. When the WP has got a better idea of what it wants to achieve, another call for participation could be made.

If other Cllrs wish to come along, they can.