

Environment Committee
Minutes of a Meeting of the held on 20th October 2011

Present: Mr Gregory (Chairman), Mrs Burgess, Mr Blanch, Mr Salisbury, Mr Page,, Mr Gallagher, Mr Darling

In attendance: Mrs Jones (Clerk), Mrs Sage

170 Apologies for Absence were received from Mrs King

171 Public Question Time: There were no members of the public present

172 Declarations of Interest: Mr Gallagher declared a personal interest in Item 7, the future management of the cemetery. There were no other declarations of interest regarding any items on the agenda.

173 Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting The minutes of the meeting held on 21st July 2011 were taken as read and confirmed as a true record.

174 Matters Arising from the Minutes:

Minute 269/10: Verge Markers: The order had now been placed and the posts should be erected shortly.

175 Financial Statement and Budget for the Forthcoming Financial Year

This had been previously circulated by the clerk. It was noted that additional expenditure had been incurred at the cemetery due to staff sickness and also for mower repairs but otherwise spending was in line with the budget. There was a discussion regarding expenditure for the next financial year and it was agreed that an additional figure of £1,500 be allocated for street furniture for a replacement memorial bench in the cemetery, although it was hoped that this might be funded through the Cuckfield Society or Diamond Jubilee Group. It was agreed that the amounts for the maintenance of the clock be increased to £350, the Observer Field budget be increased to £500 and the partnership maintenance heading be increased to take into account the funding received from the District Council. It was also agreed that an additional cut along the footpaths would be very useful and that this should be included in the budget. The Diamond Jubilee celebrations should be self-funding and not be an expense to the Council.

176 Future Management of Cuckfield Cemetery

A job description for the work of the Cemetery Registrar had been circulated. There were different responsibilities regarding the administration (including legal responsibilities), health and safety of the workplace and the oversight of the cemetery as a whole. It was also considered that the possibility of undertaking an independent, professional, annual inspection of the cemetery, including memorials, should be looked at for the future. After discussion, it was agreed that a working proposal should be taken to the full Parish Council for approval, this would look at the contractual arrangements and define management responsibilities for this work. The specification to be agreed by next April.

177 Matters Regarding the Upkeep of the Cemetery

The Chairman reported that there had been an incident in the cemetery when a memorial cross had been broken due to a child playing in the area. All the memorials had been checked for safety earlier in the year and found sound. It was considered that the child should have been under supervision and not allowed to play in the cemetery. After discussion, it was agreed that warning notices be erected at the entrances to the cemetery pointing out the dangers associated with the memorials. It was also noted that the warning signs for yew berries had been erected and the paths were being swept regularly by the groundsmen.

178 Snow Clearance

The clerk had attended a meeting at MSDC when snow clearance and the purchase of snow blowers had been discussed. This information had been forwarded to members for consideration. The Parish Council was concerned with the conditions of the pavements and how best to overcome the problems caused by the heavy snow experienced over the last two years. However, the disruption caused by the bad weather had to be weighed up against frequency and cost. One possibility was the employment of contractors but concerns were expressed that contractors were unlikely to be available when needed. On the other hand, there was the cost of a snow machine, how large an area could be cleared effectively and whether sufficient volunteers would come forward to help. It was noted that the machine could be used with other attachments for grasscutting, etc. Alternatively, residents could be encouraged to clear the snow using snow shovels and de-icer products. It was agreed to obtain quotations for the clearance of the pavements along the High Street, London Road, London Lane and Ardingly Road and to try to obtain feedback from other parish councils that had experience of using snow blowing equipment.

179 Refurbishment of the Public Toilets

The District Council had confirmed that the refurbishment of the public toilets in the Broad Street car park would be a suitable use of the S106 'community infrastructure' funding from the Chatfield Road development. It was agreed to go ahead to obtain a specification for this work.

180 The Diamond Jubilee and Christmas Festival

The Chairman reported that monthly meetings were taking place and the programme was now coming together for a four-day celebration for the Jubilee. Concerns were expressed regarding the recently published Jubilee Constitution as this had not been considered by the Parish Council. It was agreed that this would go to the next full Council meeting for approval.

The Christmas Festival would take place on 9th December and arrangements were in place for the road closure. Four volunteers had now come forward from the Parish Council to act as marshals and health safety officers for the event. The clerk to contact the festive lighting company to ensure the lights were erected earlier this year.

181 Observer Field and Post

Mrs Burgess had circulated a detailed report regarding the conservation work in the field and the possibility of taking part in a tree planting scheme as part of the Jubilee celebrations. Concerns were expressed that if the field was planted as woodland, this would require a considerable amount of labour and it was recognised that volunteers could not always be relied on to do this work. In this case, the costs would be higher than those incurred with the current regime. At present, the management system was working well and the field was undisturbed grassland that provided a valuable function in improving the biodiversity of the area. It was agreed that no action be taken at present with regard to tree planting.

182 Health & Safety Risk Assessment

The Health & Safety Risk Assessment documentation had been previously circulated. The document covered most aspects of the Environment Committee's responsibilities and it was noted that this should be expanded to cover the Observer Field (the Post had a separate assessment). The Environment Committee's Risk Assessment and the separate grave digging assessment were signed by the Chairman. All the health & safety documentation would be brought before full Council for formal approval

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