

HAYDON WICK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parks & Open Spaces Committee meeting of Haydon Wick Parish Council held on Tuesday 2nd July 2024.

ATTENDANCE

MEMBERS: Councillors R Hailstone (Chair), S Heyes (Vice Chair), E Baker-Walker, J Jackson, A John, V Manro and L Stevenson

OFFICERS: Georgina Morgan-Denn, Chief Officer & RFO
Laura Cutter, Deputy Clerk & Services Manager
Dave Hunt, Head of Parks & Open Spaces Manager
Andy Nickols, Deputy Parks & Open Spaces Manager

POS 017 APOLOGIES

Councillor J Ali (Personal Commitments). No apologies were received from Councillor O Munagala.

POS 018 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

POS 019 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was one Member of the Public present who advised towards at the last meeting there was mention of electric bikes speeding down the public footpaths and wondered if there were any updates on this? Members advised that North Swindon Police recently attended Planning & Highways Committee about similar issues that were being reported and reminded that intelligence needs to be reported to North Swindon Police. The Member of Public requested that the grass is in Old Blunsdon Road.

POS 020 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were none.

POS 021 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Members reviewed the minutes of the Parks and Opens Spaces Committee meeting held on Tuesday 14th May 2024 as a true record.

Proposed: Councillor A John

Seconded: Councillor E Baker Walker

Vote: Agreed with two abstentions.

RESOLVED: Members confirmed as a true record the minutes held on Tuesday 14th May 2024 and they were signed by the Chairman.

POS 022 SEVEN FIELDS

Councillor E Baker Walker gave an update on matters arising at Seven Fields:

- Requested the Parish Council makes contact to expedite Swindon Borough Council (SBC) about the maintenance and cutting of the meadow as everything has flowered earlier this year. This will also require the Conservation Group to provide SBC with clear instruction of areas to cut which will allow them to reclaim some of the areas which are terribly overgrown.
- There will be a guided walk at the Seven Fields in line with the 20-day event programme. The dates are being finalised to accommodate the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust walk at Mouldon Hill Country Park.
- There is a large branch obstructing Half Moon Field which needs to be removed.
- Excellent feedback for the Grass Team that the paths have been cut well and this has been gratefully received by Parkrun as makes the track easier for participants. This will be relayed to the team and thanks given.
- Request for CCTV in Pond Street to assess anti-social behaviour to allow action to be taken against perpetrators.

- The Council's Marketing and Events Co Ordinator has kindly offered to do a logo to suit the magazine and bring a couple of designs for the Conservation Group to look over.

Members also noted that Orchid Close pathway was still shut for 600m improvements to the cycle track, this was scheduled to take place in August / September however it looks like this has commenced earlier than expected. Also, damage on the Sunningdale Road gate, which has been reported to SBC previously, still appears to be in the same condition.

POS 023

HEAD OF PARKS & OPEN SPACES REPORT

Members noted the report from the Head of Parks & Open Spaces, in particular the work scheduling, team objectives and seasonal commitments such as watering hanging baskets and planters, and watering newly planted semi-mature trees at the Pocket Forest in Grace Walk. Species of tree at Tadpole Lane were chosen to accommodate natural surroundings and there is no requirement for watering, however, there is money set aside for replacing whips that fail.

Members also noted that there is a large hole at Mouldon Hill which is dangerously close to the riverbank and could be flooded, this has been reported to SBC.

Leisure Garden Competition will take place on 30th July 2024, judges to meet at 12pm at the Parish Council Offices, the community bus can be available to assist with trips to Ventnor Close. Councillors will be invited to be part of the Judging team should they wish to do so.

Members advised that there has been some vandalism on the public litter bins at KGV Play Area and by Morrisons, also could do with a reminder that bulk deposit waste and household rubbish could be classed as fly tipping and will be actioned accordingly. It was noted that in all areas of the Parish there has been a significant rise in Park and Dog bins being used for resident's domestic waste and glass bottles.

POS 024

DEPUTY CLERK AND SERVICES MANAGERS REPORT

Nothing to report.

POS 025

COUNCILLOR REPORTS

Councillor S Heyes: Advised Committee that many residents are reporting the weeds in the area but will cover this more in the exempt session of the meeting.

Councillor R Worman: Resident with tree issue at Sunningdale Road, has now escalated to SBC Cabinet for the attention of the Chief Executive on 12th June – still no response. Parish Council should contact SBC to ask for an update.

Councillor J Jackson: Elstree Way roundabout update, still receiving enquiries from the residents. Deputy Clerk & Services Manager advised that she will be shortly putting out a grounds statement to update residents on future plans of planting a hedge to act as a barrier from the roundabout and leaving the rest grass, for easier maintenance for the area. Works cannot be done until the autumn, due to resourcing and it will allow time for any growth to regenerate. Good hedge cutting in Abbey Meads and has been well received by residents.

Councillor R Ross: Nothing to report.

Councillor E Baker-Walker: Recently attended the Community Litter Pick which was well attended by seven (7) people. Participants litter picked the whole of Trent Road and Seven Fields were completed – Pond Street was clear of litter. Would like to see more Councillors committing their time to these projects. Attended the school fete at Greenmeadow Primary School, the activity was a football penalty shootout for charity which was really well received. Haydon Wick looks neat and tidy.

Councillor A John: None.

Councillor V Manro: Some fence posts have been thrown in bushes. It was also noticed that some bins in Thursday Street and Mazurek Way have been turned upside down and Mazeruk Way needs a cut.

Councillor L Stevenson: Nothing to report.

Councillor R Hailstone: Bowls Green open space, a lot of anti-social behaviour. Youths are also climbing on the roof of the Bowls Club, requested that this is reported to North Swindon Police. There are a lot of trees and hedges which are overgrown and hides the activity therefore this should be cut back and opened to deter these incidents.

POS 026

PARKS & OPEN SPACES MAINTENANCE SCHEDULES

Members received an update on the Grass Cutting schedule and the Shrub Bed Maintenance schedule. It was evident that there has been an impact across both services due to staff sickness, training, annual leave and other factors such as machinery issues and wet weather.

The Shrub Bed Maintenance Team is currently working on high priority areas and general hotspots, this has resulted in some downtime on the schedule, the frequency of these will be documented within the schedule to manage resident expectations. Concerns about the amount of resource going into the grass cutting service, mowing teams should be doing own blowing – so area is tidy prior to driving away. There is a Parish Grounds Managers meeting on 11th July, so will discuss current issues Borough Wide and share experiences/best practice. The Head of Parks & Open Spaces explained that the start of grass cutting season is difficult due to waterlogged grass, long grass, weather – reasons out of our control. Members felt leaving areas more presentable and completed may reduce public enquiries and trialing this now will assist with next spring.

POS 027

PARKS & PROJECTS TEAM UPDATE

Members noted the report and suggested the report includes findings/progress from the RoSPA inspection. The Play Area Working Party suggested meeting again to discuss progress. There are also some items still outstanding, for example, the bus shelters – the materials are in stock it just needs the team to complete the works. The Committee would like to see more succinct deadlines for the ongoing works, as this will aid public enquiries.

POS 028

PARKS & OPEN SPACES GROUNDS MAINTENANCE FACILITY

Members received an update from Councillor V Manro.

The concrete pad is now down, and the steel structure installation is in progress. The two trees at site have been removed, these were in line with planning conditions, to improve access and assist with drainage. The Council is committed to replacing these trees once the building is finalised. The Project Manager is continuing to review the progress and put in requests for payments. Concerns and queries should be passed through to the Project Manager. The next site visit is 23rd July 2024, so Members are welcome to track progress. Soon regular Grounds Maintenance Facility Working Parties will take place for material consideration and reviewing costs.

POS 029

OPERATIONAL BUDGET MONITORING

Members queried the comment about the Mini Compact Sweeper tax being overspent and under investigation by the Finance Officer. Agreed to report back. There were no other queries.

POS 030

ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

To be passed to the Chief Officer before the next meeting on 3rd September 2024.

20:26 The Member of the Public left the meeting.

POS 031

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC & PRESS

POS 032

GROUNDS MAINTENANCE FACILITY

Grounds Maintenance Facility Working Party meetings will reconvene more frequently to look at variances in the specifications.

POS 033**KERB AND ROADSIDE WEED SPRAYING**

Councillor S Heyes presented a proposal about the Council conducting its own weed spraying regime as SBC has ceased the service. The kerb edges are looking untidy and coupled with overgrown grass can look unsightly. Many of the weeds are also embedded within the block paving. Currently looking at outsourcing the service to assist with the resourcing requirements within the Parks & Open Spaces Team. The service needs to be done twice per year to be effective. Costs are approximately £600.00 per day, there needs to be a scoping exercise about how many days this would take to complete the parish boundary. The proposal includes all footpaths and roadsides and there would also be a requirement for the mini compact sweeper to be deployed once the weeds are dead to avoid spreading. Suggest a budget aspiration for 10 days of weed spraying at £6,000.00 for 2025/2026 and blocking out the mini compact sweeper.

If trailed this financial year it will aid the method and frequency required for future provisions during budget setting. It may be that it is required this year. Current SBC contract does not include many of the Parish Council's requirements, so we would be enhancing this service and would need to be specific in the tendering process calling upon the Contractors knowledge of works required.

20:35 Councillor E Baker Walker left the meeting and returned at 20:37

Members supported the preparation and quotations, ready for budget setting to take place next financial year. Members felt it was too late this year and communications to the public could state that SBC is discontinuing the service, and the Parish Council is investigating options. Conclusion needed by October, as it is likely to cost under £30,000.00 it can be done via requests for quotations, and this could avoid the timescales associated with a public tender process. The Head of Parks & Open Spaces will raise the enquiry with the Parish Grounds Managers on 11th July 2024.

POS 034**STAFFING MATTERS/HR UPDATE**

Members noted the report and acknowledged the request for extending the tractor/side arm and contracts of the seasonal operatives by one month. Members acknowledged that during budget setting last year, it was unknown how much tractor/side arm hire was required, but this will assist with the budget aspiration and plans for 2024/2025.

The extension costs can be covered by the contingency. Considerations for future schedules and the requirement for major reductions and/or removals should be presented during budget setting.

Members acknowledged that there are some options for smarter working and would be working in the background to address these. As a starting point, the Office Team can take more of a lead on room set ups/ community projects to free up the Parks & Project Team, the Grass Cutting Team should carry blowers and leave each area complete. The Head of Parks & Open Spaces explained that new blowers would need to be ordered and brackets for the machines, this may slow down the schedule. The team is currently in Abbey Meads, so the Deputy Clerk & Services Manager proposed change could start from approximately 16th July 2024.

Proposed: Councillor V Manro

Seconded: Councillor J Jackson

Vote: Agreed Unanimously

RESOLVED:

1. To extend the hire of the tractor and flail for one month (until the end of August) at a cost of £1,400.00 + VAT utilising existing budgets.
2. To extend the temporary contracts of the Seasonal workers for one month (until the end of August) using 13 days (£2,809.66 for both) from the existing budget.
3. To recommend to Finance & Policy Committee to vire money from the Aborcultural Works EMR to cover an additional 6 days (£1,214.76) to the end of August.
4. To retain a minimum of £7,000.00 in the Aborcultural Works EMR to cover the

Tree Survey and ad hoc tree works prior to the end of the financial year.

5. To instruct the Grass Cutting Team to commence own blowing from the next cycle and purchase 2 x blowers and brackets using existing budget in 4615/307.

Meeting Closed at: 21.31

Signed by Chairman_____

Initials _____