

OTFORD	Parish Clerk:	The School House
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COUNCIL	Email: clerk@otfordpc.co.uk	Kent TN14 5PG

MINUTES of a MEETING of OPC RECREATION & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

at The School House on Monday 5 September 2016 from 7:30pm

Present: Cllr M Evans (in the Chair)
Cllrs P Clucas, N Fothergill, and I Roy
Cllr N Rushby (until 8:45pm)

Also Present: Mr M Richards (OAA) (until 8:00pm)

Clerk: Mrs S Palmer

Public Forum: No items were raised.

1. Apologies for Absence – Cllr J Lawrey and Mrs E Ward
2. Declarations of Interest – None.
3. Minutes – The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 June 2016 were signed as an accurate record of the meeting.
4. Matters arising from the previous meeting not covered elsewhere on the agenda.
 - a. It was agreed that the Clerk will ask SDC for a quote to put in a new dog poo bin on the footpath running between Bubblestone Road and the Church close to the noticeboard. A quote will also be sought for a litterbin to be installed near the Eric Dilley Pavilion. 50/16 BT Continuing
 - b. Scout Hut Fence. Some of the fence has been painted outside the Scout Hut. The Clerk will ask the Scouts if they would be prepared to paint the remainder of the fence to make it blend into the area. The Parish Council will be willing to help with the cost of the paint. 64/16 Clerk
 - c. Cricket Club. The door to the Cricket Club storage unit is being replaced. The sight screen remains in a very inconvenient position on the Recreation Ground. The Cricket Club will be asked to remove it if it is not going to be used. They will also be asked to tidy up the area. The Cricket Club will also be asked to tidy up the area behind the cricket nets and to strim it back. 65/16 Clerk
5. Allotments
 - a. A written report was received from the Allotments Association.
 - b. There is one vacant plot and three people have given notice that they will not be renewing their tenancy at the renewal date.
 - c. Six plots are in poor condition and the holders have been approach regarding clearing them up.

The issue of unkempt and unlet plots has been discussed by the OAA Committee. It was suggested at the Recreation & Environment meeting that a proposal for dealing with this is made by the OAA Committee and passed to the PC for consideration. 66/16 OAA
 - d. Grass mowing. Arrangements are being made to mow the main paths monthly between March and October in advance of the OAA work parties. 67/16 OAA/BT
 - e. Allotment Track Repairs. It is anticipated this work will be done in September. Completed
 - f. The allotments Open Morning held on Saturday 16th July was successful.
 - g. Review of Allotment Rents. It was agreed that no increase will be made.
6. OSA
 - a. A written report was received from the Otford Sports Association. Minutes of the OSA Meeting held on 26 July 2016 have also been received. In response to the minute from the OSA, Cllr Nick Rushby noted that David Hobson's recollection of the negotiations was faulty. Fortunately, he and Cllr Jon Verrall had kept careful records, an email trail, and ensured that at least two Councillors were present at key meetings.

Having been asked by F&GP to look into the matter of the lease, OUFC was first approached in February 2016, long before F&GP started talking to OUJFC. It was David Hobson himself who in February suggested May as the date to agree the new lease. Repeated emails from April referred to a May deadline. Oxford Parish Council was keen to resolve the matter and Cllrs Rushby and Verrall were asked to complete it by mid-May.

The original lease from 2006 gave OUFC the use of the Pavilion rent free for a period of 10 years in recognition of their help in obtaining the grant from the FA and other investments. This is confirmed in the Council minutes, other documents and conversations with Doug Cracknell. OUFC was the preferred candidate to become the lessee and it was only when emails from David Hobson in early May indicated that the Club would be unwilling to take up the lease, that serious negotiations with OUJFC were started.

Cllr Rushby was also asked by the Chairman of OPC to investigate other potential lessees (eg Sevenoaks Rugby) in case OUJFC were unable to take up the lease. Although Sevenoaks Rugby were enthusiastic and offered to pay a significant rent to OPC, at no time were they offered the lease.

OUFC were given a draft copy of the lease at a meeting on 14 April (at which Cllr Verrall and Cllr Rushby were present) and said that they would get a solicitor to look at it. However, the Committee was very busy and were unable to find the time to discuss it for several weeks. This, together with delaying emails from David Hobson and the understanding of the precarious financial position of the Club, indicated that OUFC was probably unable to take on the lease. Given the OUFC's finances, entering into a lease would have posed a serious risk to both the Club and OPC.

David Hobson contacted the Parish Clerk and demanded several sets of keys. The Clerk told him that it had been agreed by F&GP that, as is customary, the lessee (OUJFC) should be responsible for the keys and should issue them at their discretion.

There is a fundamental problem here that OUFC, having procrastinated at length about negotiating the lease (for which they were the preferred lessee), cannot accept that OPC has signed a lease with OUJFC and that they have to talk to OUJFC about use of the Pavilion, keys etc. Councillors have repeatedly reminded OUFC of this over the past two months.

The statement that OPC has no regard for football on the Recreation Ground is clearly absurd. The Council used its best endeavours to negotiate a lease with OUFC and focused on working with an Oxford-based football club. David Hobson is aware of the investment made by the Council in replacing the doors to the tractor garage, the plans to improve the air handling in the Eric Dille Pavilion, and the plans to improve the drainage on the floodlit pitch.

Cllr Rushby noted that he had come sympathy with the plight of the Club Committee. As David Hobson notes, they have served the Club for over 30 years. It appears that the Club is in a difficult financial situation and should, under the OSA Constitution (5(e)), have reported this to the OSA Committee. OPC has been very sympathetic to OUFC's difficulty in paying the recharges for 2015-16. It has accepted a part payment (approximately 50% of the amount) and deferred payment of the balance until December 2016. It is now being discussed whether part of this amount can be offset against the purchase of the garage and other equipment installed by OUFC in the Pavilion.

There are some lessons to be learned from this experience and can be applied to future matters such as the renewal of the lease on the Hale Lane facilities.

Members will recall that the matter of the Eric Dille Pavilion Lease was initially discussed by the Recreation Committee and was then transferred to F&GP. While this was the appropriate course of action, it broke an important formal link to the OSA. Although Kay Drake was kept in touch with progress, there was no formal reporting mechanism and so the OSA felt that they were kept out of the loop.

Secondly, Council should be more open about the leasing process and who it is talking to. It is suggested that when the lease on Hale Lane comes up for renewal in 2017, the Council

could publish a document describing the process it intends to follow, and ensure the expressions of interest for the lease are invited from all potential lessees.

68/16
Council to
consider

Cllr Roy suggested that formal documents and communications (for example the lease, requests for information and expressions of interest) should be issued by the Clerk.

It is RECOMMENDED that the renewal of the lease for facilities at Hale Lane should be handled by F&GP.

7. High Street Recreation Ground
- a A report was received from Brian Thomas.
- b The notice board on the Parish Council tennis court has been replaced. Completed
- c Mr Thomas has laid mesh and oak chippings around the entrance to the Recreation Ground from the car park. This will be extended to help the muddy area drain better. 61/16 BT Continuing
- d The car park fencing has been damaged recently between the parking meter and the playground. A number of posts have been broken. Repairs will be carried out this autumn. 69/16 BT
- e Safeplay have replaced the defective handrail on the Eibe multi play at no cost to the Parish Council.
- f A meeting is being held with Safeplay to discuss the size of structure that would be suitable to replace the Eibe multi play. 70/16 BT
- g OUJFC have started working on the condition of the big lower pitch.
- h A spare bench from The Green is being transferred to the Play Area. 71/16 BT
8. Chalk Pit
- a A request has been made by the Cub Scouts to install bat boxes in this area. Mr Thomas will advise on where they should be placed as various Ash trees are scheduled to be removed. 63/16 BT Continuing
- b There are several low hanging branches that hinder mowing in this area. Brian Thomas will remove them and leave them for the Scouts. 72/16 BT
9. Hale Lane Recreation Ground/Pavilion/Telston Park
- a A number of vans have been parking overnight in this area. Community Warden Paul Robertson will be asked to inform the owners that they should not block access to the area. 54/16 PR Completed
- b Mr Thomas has reported that the fence on the right hand side is leaning over the path and is in a bad state of decay. This needs to be scheduled for replacement. 57/16 BT Continuing
- c There appears to be a fault with one of the new pieces of play equipment. Sutcliffes will be attending to inspect this. 73/16 BT
- d The new hedge is scheduled for a trim. A contractor with a tractor mounted flail will be required to cut the top. Mr Thomas will schedule this work for the autumn. 74/16 BT
- e Two posts supporting the earth bank have rotted. Sutcliffes will be asked to inspect these at the same time they inspect the faulty play equipment. 75/16 BT
- f The ash trees will be inspected at Telston Park later in September by Tree Ability. 76/16 BT
10. Oxenhill Wood
- a There is a very muddy area at the top end near the entrance to Kemsing Recreation Ground. It will be very expensive to improve this area and would require a membrane and a considerable amount of road stone. A similar problem in the lower south-western corner needs the same treatment. 56/16 Continuing
- SDC is looking at a number of grant opportunities to cover the cost of this work. Kent County Councillor Nick Chard is being approached regarding a contribution from his Members Fund.
- b Cllr Evans has asked Mr Froud if the paths can be cut as soon as the area dries out.
- c A meeting of the Oxenhill Shaw Management Committee will take place on Wednesday 21 September (including a site visit).
- d The bund is very overgrown. SDC has been asked to clear it but they have reported problems with access to this area. A large hole has appeared on the track leading to the area.
11. Village Green, Pond and Palace Field
- a Simon's bench has now been installed. Completed
- b Reeds have been thinned from the pond. More will be removed shortly. 77/16 BT Continuing
- b New reflective triangles will be installed on the wooden posts. 40/16 BT Continuing

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| c | The pond bollards will be painted when the weather improves. | 41/16 BT
Continuing |
| d | One of the gate posts to the duck enclosure is rotten and needs replacing. | 42/16 BT
Continuing |
| e | Old Duck House. BT/NC will try and refurbish the duck house. If the damage is too bad, a replacement will have to be considered. | 43/16 BT/NC
Continuing |
| f | Mrs Ward (co-opted member) will be preparing an article for the newsletter on plans for the management of this area. | 46/16 Mrs
Ward
Continuing |
| g | Mid Kent Fisheries will be removing the carp from the pond in the near future. | 78/16 BT |
| h | Tree Ability will be removing dead wood from the copper beech tree. | 79/16 BT |
| i | Tree Ability have been asked to survey the trees in the Palace Approach. | 80/16 BT |
| j | The stream will be cleaned out in the autumn. | 81/16 BT |
| 12 | <u>Cemetery/Palace Park Wood</u> | |
| a | A number of fence posts are beginning to rot at the base and are coming loose. Replacement will need to be considered in the autumn. | 48/BT
Continuing |
| b | Consideration needs to be given to the proposed north/south path in the cemetery. The Clerk will check whether planning permission is required. | 58/16 Clerk |
| c | A successful water inspection has been carried out at the Cemetery (and the Allotments). | |
| d | A woodland grave has a stone memorial that has not been agreed by the Parish Council. This is being investigated. | 82/16 |
| e | A grave is currently having new kerbing installed around it, as agreed by the Parish Council. The old kerbing is currently stacked under a nearby hedge. Mr Thomas will check that it is disposed of properly by the owners. | 83/16 |
| f | Ross Robinson has removed all of the dying memorial ash trees as well as two aspen which have been stump killed. | |
| 13. | <u>Youth Activities</u> | |
| 14. | <u>Correspondence</u> | |
| a | A complaint has been received regarding the new semi-permanent dog fouling notices that have been placed in areas that are particularly troubled by this problem. | |
| b | A quote has been received for the fencing to be installed next to the mower shed to provide a secure storage area. It is RECOMMENDED that the quote is accepted. | 84/16 OPC
to consider |
| c | The Clerk will check for planning requirements for the fence. | 85/16 Clerk |
| 15. | <u>Other Matters</u>
<u>Workparties</u> | |
| a | Remove ivy from three Acacia trees in the Recreation Ground. | PC/NF |
| b | Re-stocking planters for the winter. | ME |
| c | Remove vegetation from Palace Stream. Cllr Evans/Mr Thomas to liaise. | ME/BT |
| 16. | <u>Date of Next Meeting</u> – Monday 31 October 2016 at 7:30pm. | |

The meeting closed at 9:45pm.