



**DRAFT Minutes of the Open Spaces Committee**  
**Held on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2023 at 7.30pm in The Parish Office**

Present: Cllr T Simkin (in the Chair), Cllr K Ingram, Cllr L Pearson, Mr R Greatres, Mr D Clarke (for part of meeting) and Jayne Cooper

**Public Open Forum** - no members of the public were in attendance.

**1. To receive apologies and record absences**

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr G Symons, Cllr A Mills and Cllr G Gregory. It was noted Cllr G Buckless had resigned from the Parish Council.

**2. To record any declarations of interest.**

As a professional dog groomer, working in Gnosall, Cllr Pearson declared an interest in discussions about the dog exercise area.

**3. To receive and confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2023**

The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.

**4. To consider any matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda**

There were no matters arising.

**7. To discuss Best Kept Village**

Agenda item 7 was taken earlier to allow Mr D Clarke, BKV Team Leader, to leave for another commitment.

Dave Clarke was thanked for his efforts over the past 17 years in leading the BKV team so successfully and winning the large category completion once again in 2023.

Mr Clarke gave a brief verbal presentation to councillors on how he plans to manage the work of the BKV team in the future, spreading the responsibilities amongst willing members. He explained that he would continue with managing the finances, along with the Parish Clerk, and would continue to produce the BKV calendar which is a significant fundraiser for village causes. He would continue with completing paperwork for the annual BKV competition and would take care of some planters at Wharf Road end of the village. Other jobs, such as hanging bunting, 50+ hanging baskets, maintaining several flower beds etc would be delegated. Open Spaces Committee, on behalf of the Parish Council, agreed to take back responsibility for maintaining parish council owned benches, notice boards and interpretation boards. A BKV celebration evening was planned for 19<sup>th</sup> October at which it is hoped, remaining jobs would be allocated.

**5. To discuss maintenance requirements**

**a) Allotments**

- Regular meetings are held with the Secretary of GAGA and an inspection of plots had been carried out together. Further meetings are planned. Tenants not managing plots would be notified and given time to tidy plots or given notice to terminate their allotment agreement.
- Numbering of plots is needed as soon as possible to assist with inspections.
- It had been agreed to renew tenancies earlier in the calendar year to allow new tenants to take on plots at the beginning of the growing season.
- Water needs to be turned off before the winter.
- A quote for work to make repairs to potholes on the allotment track was accepted. The Clerk to contact the appointed contractor to schedule the work as soon as possible.

#### **b) Notice boards**

The previously agreed maintenance programme was discussed. It was reported that the notice board on the High Street is broken beyond repair and requires replacing with an aluminium board. The Clerk to action and liaise with the Handyman to ensure maintenance on other parish noticeboards commences over the winter months.

#### **c) Bus Stops**

Following open spaces decision to remove the remaining Perspex and metal panels from the red bus stop on Brookhouse Road (continual vandalism), complaints had been received along with requests to fit new panels. The bus stop is well used and being "complete" shelters users from rain and wind blowing across The Acres. It was therefore agreed that the shatterproof Perspex and metal panels would be replaced. Cllr Pearson gave details of an art project where local children create pieces of art that are transferred to a suitable material to be transferred onto the bus stops to make them more attractive. She would be happy to arrange this project if council approved. This was supported and it was explained that should she wish to extend this idea to bus stops at the top end of Brookhouse Road, then permission would be required from Staffordshire County Council. Any funding received would have to be specific to either a parish council owned bus shelter or SCC owned shelters. In the meantime, Cllr Pearson and Mr Greatrex to obtain quotes for making suitable repairs to the red bus stop.

#### **d) Play Area**

ROSPA inspections had been carried out. The Handyman would be reviewing the inspection reports and formulating a maintenance schedule if necessary.

Monthly inspections continue to be conducted by Mr Greatrex and a Risk Assessment carried out annually.

It was noted that the zip wire at the Chippy Jumps requires re-tensioning. Gnosall's firefighters to be asked if they could assist in providing a large ladder.

Following a request from a young Gnosall resident, quotes had been obtained to replace the rotting goal posts on The Acres. A funding application had been submitted to the Football Association to cover some of the costs.

#### **e) Village Green**

The Clerk to request JWH Ground Maintenance to replace rotting bollards on the Village Green and also remove the 5-bar gate (not longer serving a purpose) and return it to the Grosvenor Centre site for storage.

It was noted that all tree work, identified from the professional inspection, had been carried out. There had been a request from a neighbouring resident to cut back overhanging branches. A quote had been received for the sum of £775. Although the committee would have liked to help, the budget for tree work had been exceeded and all trees identified as needing to be pruned/felled for health and safety purposes had been dealt with. There were

no surplus funds to carry out work not identified in the professional inspection. The Clerk to respond to the resident accordingly. Residents are in their rights to cut back any overhang which was noted.

**f) Benches**

As agreed previously, the Parish Council would be resuming maintenance work on parish council owned benches.

A resident had offered to replace a bench in front of the lock up. It was agreed a discussion should be held to determine how much the resident is willing to donate to replace the bench.

**g) Tree Tagging**

Cllr Pearson offered to tag trees on The Acres, Burial Ground, Village Green and The Wold in accordance with the inspection list. It was acknowledged this is time consuming task and should be spread over a reasonable amount of time. The Clerk to request the CSO to liaise with Cllr Pearson to review the inspection list, alongside the Tree Maintenance Policy to determine zoning of trees - those requiring more frequent inspections and those requiring 3 yearly inspections.

The Clerk had communicated with a local tree surgeon/arboriculturist regarding a cluster of willow trees on The Acres that had been referred to in an Environmental Report that may, if not kept to their existing size, cause damage to a nearby property. The professional opinion sought was that the trees are 20-50m away from the property and as they are mature trees, they would not grow much more, possibly 0.5m over a 5-year period and therefore advised a 5 yearly inspection is required. The surgeon was happy to send a report to this effect which was agreed was needed to be retained on file. The Clerk to action.

**h) Burial Ground**

A written report following an inspection was noted. The Clerk to liaise with the Handyman to deal with some of the jobs identified (repairs to gate hinge, possible repainting/cleaning of main gates - a spring job). A Burial Ground Committee meeting is to be arranged at which other matters would be discussed.

**6. To consider creating a dog exercise area on The Acres as detailed in the Council's Business Plan.**

Cllr Pearson had obtained an estimate for the creation of 2 side by side fenced exercise areas to be located to the right of the Brookhouse Play area car park. This was discussed in detail. The project was supported and had been included in the Council's recently created Business Plan. However, it was agreed that one fenced area would be more suitable and less expensive than two and should there be a need to separate, then an additional fence could be fitted across the middle. The location to be reviewed further to ensure the ground conditions are suitable and there is adequate room for a tractor to access The Acres. Mr Greatrex offered to assist Cllr Pearson in pegging out a suitably sized area, to obtain further prices for one fenced area and report back to Open Spaces.

**7. To consider Best Kept Village Plans following the retirement of the BKV Team Leader.**

Covered earlier in the meeting.

**8. To consider Health and Safety matters**

- Inspection reports are carried out monthly.
- ROSPA had carried out its annual inspection in August.

**9. To consider any policy or Risk Assessment Reviews**

The Tree Policy is not scheduled for review until 2026. Risk Assessments are carried out annually, unless new equipment is purchased.

**10. To agree the date and time of the next meeting.**

Monday 6<sup>th</sup> November at 10am to discuss 2024/25 budget requirements.

*To exclude the press and public whilst confidential information is discussed.*

**11. To discuss the validation report on The Wold and consider the next steps.**

Council had delegated to Open Spaces, the task of reviewing the valuation report received from Fisher German, the lengthy process in a council selling land as well as appropriate advertising (with costs). It was agreed that Cllr Symons be asked to review all the necessary paperwork and compile a report for a future meeting. It was noted that one resident had contacted the parish office raising concerns that the council is considering selling The Wold.

**12 To consider budget requirements for 2024/25**

As it was 9.30pm, it was agreed to hold another meeting on November 6<sup>th</sup> at 10am to discuss this item.