PUBLIC NOTICE
Minutes of Open Spaces Committee

held on 17th October 2022 at 7.30pm in The Parish Office

Present: Cllr R Greatrex (in the chair), Cllr K Ingram, Cllr D Webb, Cllr G Gregory, Cllr K Johnstone, Cllr G Symons, Cllr G Williams

Apologies: Cllr T Simkin, Cllr M Holmes, Cllr A Mills, Cllr J Tomkinson (leave of absence) Jayne Cooper Clerk/RFO

Public Open Forum – none present

1. **To receive apologies and record absences**
   Apologies from Cllrs Mills, Holmes, Tomkinson (leave of absence) and the Clerk.

2. **To record any declarations of interest.**
   Cllr Greatrex recorded knowledge of one of the quotes for work.

3. **To receive and confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 4th July 2022**
   The minutes were approved as a true an accurate record, though it was noted that there was no time given for close of meeting.

4. **To consider any matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda**
   There were none.

5. **To consider any maintenance on any of the parish council's open spaces (The Acres, Allotments, Village Green, Wold, Chippy Jumps & Burial Ground)**

   The Acres work on the brook has been completed according to the schedule agreed with the Environment Agency from the Northern boundary to the ditch boundary with Western Power and from there down to the road, WP has looked after that while contractors have been on site. WP will desilt the two pipes on their land before the winter. It was noted that a ductwork from WP land under the A518 towards the Boat (thought to be Staffordshire CC responsibility) is heavily silted and this may cause problems when we have rainfall.

   Action – inform SCC of this and request clearing ASAP

   On the Acres, grasses have not been cut for several years and this is dangerous as the edge of the brook is unclear, leading to possible accidents. We have £1250 left from the allocated funds from the brook work, which came under budget, so we obtained quotes to top the Acres grasses properly. One contractor said it was too much work for him, another gave a quote of £25 ph x 8 hours, which the committee felt unrealistically low and insufficiently thorough. A third, who does this kind of work often, gave a detailed quote based on close

inspection, with a cost of £475 exc of VAT. After discussion, committee felt that this last quotation should be accepted.

It was noted that streetlights between the bottom roundabout and the MUGA were not working. Cllr Symons has already reported this to SBC Ref MREP-339423/7767. He was asked to chase this up as it is a health and safety issue as well as an anti-social behaviour matter.

Allotments

A parishioner has suggested that a mixed hedge be planted along the boundary between the allotment access road and the substation and is willing to organise it with BKV. The first part of this boundary is in the possession of Western Power and they have plans in hand for improving the boundary fence. The second part of this boundary and the responsibility for it are the subject of an ongoing legal dispute between the Parish Council and another body claiming ownership. Therefore members felt that no approval could be given for works alongside a boundary whose ownership is at present unclear. The Clerk was to be asked to make the parishioner aware that we could not give an opinion at this time.

Village Green

The number of replacement bollards has been given by Cllr Greatrex, ready for John Hall to fit.

Several parishioners had shown concern about trees being felled and the Clerk had explained to each of them how the inspections had been carried out and the work had to be done. Questions were asked about replacement trees and she conveyed Council's decision not to plant any more trees in the present circumstances as we could not afford to service the maintenance which went with them. However, one parishioner requested that any of the BKV trees that failed due to drought ought to be replaced (by BKV) and this was agreed. The parishioner will await Spring to see whether any have failed and then work with BKV to replace if necessary, like for like.

It was agreed last time that a meeting with the BKV Leader should take place regarding trimming around/between the trees planted. This has not yet taken place. We do feel that the planting looks untidy and needs tidying. It was suggested that GPC consider using some of its BKV funding to enable both this and tidying the wildflower meadow. Ask Clerk to contact BKV to discuss whether they would prefer to do the work themselves or for us to arrange.

It was noted that the age of BKV volunteers is steadily rising and that the organisation received little support from younger members of the community. Perhaps a publicity campaign might be useful?

Chippy Jumps

The Parish Council owns various trees around the perimeter which are overhanging other properties. It was agreed that we should obtain a quotation for cutting these back, in line with other works which had been completed. Similarly, it was felt appropriate that a quotation for trimming back the trees around the mobile phone mast should be obtained. The Clerk was to be asked to contact RK, the specialist tree surgeon who had done so much work for the parish, on whose standards we can rely and who is highly qualified and equipped to undertake such potentially dangerous work. In light of the

specialised nature of this work, we were unclear whether three quotations needed to be sought but the Clerk will make us aware.

Burial Ground — There are no issues that we are aware of.

6. To consider the sale of The Wold

There had been a request to purchase this land some years ago but the parishioner moved away. Now the person who had purchased that property had made the same request.

Committee members felt that the Wold, although designated Public Open Space in the Neighbourhood Plan, was in fact of little value as an amenity to the village. It cost the Parish Council to keep it tidy and yet very little use was ever made of it as it was too small and enclosed to be very useful. Therefore, in principle, the councillors present supported the principle of selling it in order to raise funds which could be spent on community facilities which are much more used – such as allotments, The Acres or possibly even an allotments extension. It was recalled that a valuation had been obtained from a local Estate Agent as the District Valuer had declined to value land for sale. The exact sum was not known and probably needed updating.

Members were aware that it was not appropriate to simply sell it to the person who had made the request. We felt we should have to follow the example of Stafford Borough and place an advertisement in the Newsletter to say that an offer had been received for The Wold and that further expressions of interest were invited, then decide whether an appropriate sum had been offered.

However, as it was a Designated POS in the Neighbourhood Plan, we first had to revise the NP and remove that designation before any steps could be taken.

Therefore we would ask the Clerk to arrange a meeting of the Planning sub-committee to consider the review of the NP and to make Full Council aware of our thinking on this issue.

7. To consider registering Hen & Chicken Lane with The Land Registry

Following recent events regarding the registration of land and the consequences of not doing so, the councillors present were in full agreement that this should be done as soon as possible It was recognised that it would incur a cost.

8. To consider any Health and Safety matters

The failed street lighting mentioned earlier was recognised as a Health and Safety issue for anyone walking alongside this area at night.

The annual RoSPA inspection of Play equipment had been completed and a report received. Councillors noted that it was much more lengthy than previous reports though the overwhelming majority of issues raised were in the range designated of low significance. Nonetheless, it was agreed that action should be taken to rectify; some matters were suitable to be done by the Handyman, others would require more specialist input (eg dampeners on outdoor gym equipment.)

It was agreed that Cllrs Greatrex and Ingram would complete a visual check of each issue reported on Wednesday 19th and report back to the next meeting how they suggested each job be completed and by whom. This was accepted with thanks.

9. To consider any Policy or Risk Assessment reviews

Cllr Greatrex agreed to bring to the next meeting completed Play Parks Risk Assessments.

10. To consider any correspondence received including:

Request for memorial bench, a memorial plaque and additional trees & hedge planting. The hedge planting had been considered earlier, as had the request for replacement trees.

Unfortunately, members present had no knowledge of the memorial bench and plaque request so this was deferred until the next meeting.

11. To agree the date and time of the next meeting

It was agreed that momentum must be maintained on the many jobs still outstanding and that the next meeting should be Monday 24th October in the Parish Office at **7.00pm**. Cllr Gregory will minute should the Clerk still be indisposed.

To exclude members of the press and public whilst confidential information is discussed

12 To consider budget requirements and projects for 2023/24

Unfortunately, due to the indisposition of the Clerk, the necessary papers were not present so this item was deferred until the next meeting.

Meeting closed 8.55pm