

WADHURST PARISH COUNCIL

THE MINUTES OF THE AMENITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD REMOTELY VIA ZOOM ON THURSDAY 11th FEBRUARY 2021 AT 7.30PM

Present: Cllr Crawford, Cllr Anderson, Cllr Tincombe, Cllr Griffin, Cllr Gadd, Cllr Morris and Cllr Niell

Also in attendance: Claudine Feltham (Acting Clerk) and 5 members of the public

MINUTES

1. To receive apologies and reasons for absence.
Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Maggs (as she is a key worker).
2. To receive declarations of personal, prejudicial and disclosable pecuniary interests on items on the agenda and updates to members' register of interests.

Cllr Gadd declared a personal interest in respect of any items relating to the Wadhurst Institute Hall and Field Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) as she is a Trustee.

Cllr Tincombe declared a personal interest in respect of any items relating to the Wadhurst Institute Hall and Field Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) as she is a Trustee.

Cllr Niell declared a personal interest in respect of any items relating to the Wadhurst Institute Hall and Field Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) as she is the parish council representative.

Cllr Crawford (retrospectively) declared a personal interest in respect of any items relating to Wadhurst Tennis Club.

3. Public Forum – time limit 15 minutes.

The members of public present spoke with regards to their interests, and some concerns, for agenda item 8.2 (Draft contract for the maintenance of the Jardin d'Aubers).

The members of public commented:

Jardin d'Aubers is a very important area in Wadhurst

Approval of the way that Jardin d'Aubers is currently maintained

Concerns over the safety of wildlife species, particularly the great crested newt

Wishes for the wildflower areas to be retained

Cllr Niell advised the members of the public that the parish council are very aware of the wildlife, including the great crested newts, and the importance of their protection. Cllr Niell reminded those present that whilst there is a wildflower element to Jardin d'Aubers, which is very much enjoyed by many, the garden is a memorial garden.

*Cllr Morris asked for the Chair to bring agenda item 8.2 forward to the beginning of the meeting due to the members of public present and being interested in this agenda item. **Resolved:** Cllr Crawford agreed to consider agenda item 8.2 at the beginning of the meeting (after agenda item 4).*

4. To consider, and approve if appropriate, which agenda items are sufficiently confidential as to warrant exclusion of members of the press and public under the provisions of the Public Bodies (admissions to meetings) Act 1960.

None.

Agenda item 8.2 (Draft contract for the maintenance of the Jardin d'Aubers) was considered at this part of the meeting.

Cllr Griffin confirmed that this is a memorial garden as well as wildlife area, an area which the parish council wish to enhance.

Cllr Griffin proposed that we accept the paper circulated to the parish council members.

Cllr Morris commented that he fundamentally disagreed with the vision that had been put forward to the council, that the response from the parishioners about wildlife issues should be considered, and how the current proposal was dismissive of the brambles. He wished for the parish council to work alongside Wild Wadhurst and utilise their experience and knowledge, and considered the use of information boards.

Cllr Griffin responded that some of the brambles needed to be cleared because the fence behind was damaged and in a poor state of repair, and this could only be achieved with the removal of some brambles in this particular location.

Other areas of brambles did need to be tidied and cut back, as per previous guidance from Cllr Morris who advised that the brambles should be cut back by a third to encourage new growth and wildlife.

Cllr Gadd commented that the fence was also there to prevent people from falling into the pond and requested that the fence/posts are checked for safety measures. **Action:** Clerk to arrange a safety inspection of the fence and posts.

Cllr Griffin added that this first and foremost Jardin d'Aubers is a memorial garden which we must respect. However, he had also considered the wildlife and flowers and had large areas for this too. For example, one of the ponds is currently not within the maintenance schedule and is devoid of life. Cllr Griffin has discussed the proposal at length with the current contractor, who agrees that one of the ponds is not currently maintained. Cllr Griffin wishes to address these issues and really enhance both ponds as wildlife areas – and this is within the paper he has put forward.

Cllr Niell agreed with Cllr Griffin, and explained that the brambles should be cut back once per year, to prevent them from becoming overrun and messy – and that primarily this was a memorial garden. It should be a place of peace and tranquility for the parishioners to enjoy. Improvements to the appearance are required, and the encouragement of butterflies, bees and other wildlife. The ponds do need work, to prevent them from becoming stagnant and to encourage wildlife, whilst being aware to keep any disruption to an absolute minimum.

The main point of contention is area 6, which is currently not under the maintenance contract. It looks untidy. The aim in the first instance is to carry out some maintenance for area 6, so that the area would be ready for further work next year, when they can also apply to Lund Fund for financial assistance for the project. Cllr Griffin is aware that the garden needs to serve as a memorial garden with wildlife alongside. The paper put forward is to satisfy both.

Cllr Gadd added that she felt some 'wires had been crossed' about this project, but as the lease holders of the land we had the obligation to keep it maintained as well as review our tenders on a regular basis.

The purpose of the paper is so that we have official documentation for the tender process. Once quotes have been reviewed and decisions made about who will carry out the contract then we can work out the finer details.

Resolved: Cllr Griffin proposed this paper to be accepted and published as the tender document. Cllr Tincombe seconded this. 6 Cllrs voted in favour of this, one Cllr voted against. **Action:** Clerk to add the tender document to the parish council website, and also notify the current contractor.

5. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 26th November 2020.
Resolved: a unanimous decision was reached to approve the minutes.

6. To determine matters arising from the previous minutes for updating and noting.

None

7. Items for decision and allocation of resources, if necessary.

7.1 Village planters; summary and recommendations – Cllr Griffin

Resolved: Cllr Griffin proposed that we proceeded with ordering 5 of design number 3, the square legged planter with wooden top. This was seconded by Cllr Niell and reached a unanimous approval. **Action:** Clerk to contact those who quoted for the planters and advise if successful or not.

7.2 Sparrows Green Recreation Ground

Members of the Amenities Committee discussed, at length, the re-opening of the play area at Sparrows Green.

The parish council had instructed a professional risk assessor to carry out an assessment of the play area, whose response was that the play area could not be opened safely.

Cllr Anderson then undertook a further assessment of the play area, and one of the items missing was that the professional had not considered that employees were clinically vulnerable. There were also items recommended that were not practically achievable.

Cllr Anderson then further considered what measures could practically be put into place to minimise risk. This included cleaning regimes, signage, sanitizer, bins, removal of the gate latch, restricted opening times, ongoing monitoring of the situation.

Resolved: Cllr Griffin proposed that the play area is opened once sufficient safety measures are put into place. This was seconded by Cllr Anderson. 4 Cllrs voted in favour, 3 voted against the proposal.

Cllr Niell advised that the reason she voted against this was because she could not see how the rules would be adhered to, not that she didn't want the play area opened. Cllr Tincombe added her vote against was also purely for safety reasons.

Cllr Anderson commented that when he attended the recreation ground it was exceptionally wet and asked about a path to go around the ground, and possibly a wild flower area too. **Action:** Cllr Anderson to look into this. Cllr Tincombe to discuss with Cllr Anderson some ideas too.

7.3 Installation of the donated memorial bench at Jardin d'Aubers – Cllr Griffin

Resolved: for Graham Thorpe to carry out the installation works for the memorial bench already donated by the French family.

7.4 Painting of the bollards at Jardin d'Aubers – Cllr Gadd

The bollards would need to be painted on a sunny day, ideally when the school is closed and no parents attending the primary school are parked. **Deferred:** this item to be added to the Highways, Lighting, Transport Committee.

7.5 Pavilion rebuild costs – Cllr Gadd

Gadd advised that we have not had a survey carried out since the Pavilion was built.

Cllr Anderson advised that an average of £1800 x each square meter would be a good indication of the costs to rebuild.

8. Items for discussion

The Chair accepted Cllr Gadd's request to take agenda items 8.6 and 8.8 before any other items under agenda item 8.

Cllr Gadd left the meeting prior to agenda item 8.1 being considered

8.1 Draft contract for cleaning of the public toilets in the village center.

Cllr Griffin advised that the usual process for tender was interrupted last year due to COVID, however, we now needed to put the tender out to the public.

Cllr Griffin read through the tender document that had previously been circulated to the Amenities Committee. **Resolved:** This was proposed by Cllr Griffin, seconded by Cllr Anderson, and reached

unanimous approval. **Action:** Clerk to add the tender notice to the parish council website, and notify the current contractor.

8.2 Draft contract for the maintenance of the Jardin d'Aubers – Cllr Griffin
Dealt with at beginning of meeting, between agenda items 4 and 5.

8.3 Update on playground discussions with Hall and Field Trust – Cllr Griffin
Cllr Griffin advised that a small working party has been liaising with the Hall and Field Trust to agree a draft lease for a piece of land in Washwell Lane. However, the Trust asked for a much higher rent not a peppercorn rent as agreed and in addition wanted their legal cost and potentially running cost to be covered by the Parish Council. Cllr Griffin did not think this new approach would be passed by the council so rather than bring a proposal to a vote suggested that the Trust should seek another way forward by taking on the project and asking the Parish Council to simply purchase the Playground for them. **Action:** Clerk to look up the rules on possible funding of such equipment, at an off-site location.

8.4 Review of annual charges

The Clerk gave an overview of the current annual charges and offered to write a paper for consideration by both Amenities and Finance & Resources Committees. **Action:** Clerk to submit a paper for consideration to Amenities and Finance & Resources Committees

8.5 Parishioners request to install a memorial bench at Jardin d'Aubers
The parish council had received two further requests for installation of memorial benches and/or memorial trees at Jardin d'Aubers.
The amenities considered the requests. In view of the possible design and maintenance changes at Jardin d'Aubers we would request that the parishioners could wait for the time being, and their requests be considered within any new designs. **Action:** Clerk to write to the parishioners concerned.
It was also mentioned that there are other suitable locations within the village for memorial benches; The Churchyard, near the Churchyard and The Walk.

Cllr Tincombe has been advised that parishioners had been refused the request to put in memorial benches at the church, and wondered if the parish council should write to the Diocese. Cllr Anderson did not feel this was a decision to be made by the Amenities Committee.
Resolved: the letter should be considered by full council. **Action:** Clerk to add this to the next full council agenda.

8.6 KHL agreement – Cllr Gadd
We used to have agreement with a local business (KHL) that they could allow staff members to park at the Pavilion car park, and would make a financial contribution for this.
This agreement has not been in place for quite some time, but appears staff have been parking at there.
Resolved: The Amenities Committee members considered this and unanimously agreed that parking should be solely for users for the recreation ground, Pavilion and play area – and not for a local business. **Action:** Clerk to write to the company and advise of this decision.

8.7 Use of Pavilion as Polling station

Cllr Anderson proposed that the parish council agree, in principle, to allow for the Pavilion to be used as a Polling Station for the May 2021 elections, if WDC agreed to undertake all necessary COVID risk assessments and put into place all COVID related safety measurements for the parishioners and elections staff, along with full cleaning, both before and after the elections. This was seconded by Cllr Morris, and reached a unanimous approval. **Action:** Clerk to inform WDC Elections Team.

8.8 Intruder Alarm – Cllr Gadd (this item was considered prior to agenda item 8.3)

*Cllr Gadd provided an update to the Amenities Committee. **Action:** Cllrs to consider this and this to be an item on the next full council meeting.*

9. Items for noting only

9.1 To note Amenity Committee, spend to date against budget
Noted.

10. Any new amenities issue
None.

11. Urgent issues at the discretion of the Chair for noting or inclusion on future agenda.
None.

Meeting closed at 2138 hours.

DRAFT