

IVYBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

The Minutes of the Parks and Open Spaces Committee held in the Town Hall on Tuesday 24 August at 7pm

Present: Cllr A Spencer (Chair)
Cllr A Rea
Cllr L Rea

In attendance: Mr J Parsons (Town Clerk)
Mrs J Gilbert (Assistant Town Clerk)

There was no public participation session.

AGENDA

PA21/014 **APOLOGIES:** Apologies were received from Cllrs R Wilson and T Lannin.

PA21/015 **INTERESTS TO BE DECLARED:** Cllr Rea declared an interest in Item PA21/019 as a member of the Allotment Association, however it was considered that as he had no personal or pecuniary interest that he could take part in the discussion.

PA21/016 **RIVER ERME IN LONGTIMBER WOOD:** A report was considered on the river usage (copy previously circulated).

Cllr Spencer stated that he had struggled with this decision more than any other resolution he has ever had to make in a Parks Committee meeting. The Town Clerk advised that he had undertaken a great deal of research on the subject, and although it was a tragic incident, the committee are reminded that it is a single incident and once life rings are implemented they must remain there in perpetuity and the longitude of their decision has to be of major consideration.

He accepted the popularity of wild swimming but queried whether the committee go down the route of education. Dartmoor National Park and Devon County Council are not in favour of life saving equipment where there are natural features. He was also concerned about the budgetary implications of life rings. There are no sharp drops in Longtimber Woods therefore the public choose to enter the river. Young people should be able to explore, but risks should be educated risks.

Cllr Lannin was absent from the meeting however the Chair read out a statement from her. She wished to inform the meeting that she would be unable to support the committee being against swimming in the river as she does this herself. However, she did advise that people do need to make their own risk assessments when using the woods, and that

parents need to help their children practice these skills for when they may use the woods on their own.

Cllr L Rea stated that this was a very emotive subject and at the risk of being reactive they could pre-empt the inquest which may reveal that a life ring may not have helped in this scenario. She was not in favour of signage as she did not consider this was a good investment of public money, but was of the opinion that parents need to take responsibility to educate children to treat water with respect.

The Town Clerk confirmed that initially a petition for life saving equipment had been proposed by a family member of the deceased, however there have not been any further calls from the public for this, and he was unaware of any campaign.

The Committee **RESOLVED** that there would be no implementation of signage or life-saving equipment at the current time, and their preferred course of action would be to email schools to ask if they provide education on water safety. However, they would monitor the situation keeping it under constant review.

PA21/017 **FILHAM PARK BRIDLEWAY:** The consultation was considered on the Filham Park bridleway diversion and a response agreed (copy previously circulated).

The route detailed agrees with the Council's preferred route and so it was **RESOLVED** that a supportive reply is submitted in response to the consultation.

PA21/018 **WOODLANDS CEMETERY:** The report was considered regarding memorial trees and benches, and the enforcement of graveside policies (copy previously circulated).

The Town Clerk advised of the current situation regarding benches which fail with opportunity of replacements offered to the families before reverting to the waiting list, and of the need for a clear policy for the purchase of future memorial benches in the cemetery. Guidance was also sought on the situation regarding the bench in the cemetery that has failed and may have been purchased in memory of a past Councillor.

It was **RESOLVED** that Members agree that a policy is required for the purchase of future Memorial Benches in the Cemetery and elsewhere. It was further agreed that this policy enables families to contribute towards the costs of the bench, plaque and any fittings, the Council pay for the delivery, installation and VAT with an arrangement that the Council maintains the bench for a minimum of ten years. If after this time a bench is damaged or needed replacing, the family would be approached in the first instance to replace the bench. If the family decline, the memorial plaque would then be offered back to them and the opportunity is offered to others on the waiting list.

It was **RESOLVED** that the family of the Councillor named on the bench that needs replacing be offered the opportunity to purchase a new bench as per the above policy. If they do not wish to purchase this, as above, the opportunity would then be offered to others on the waiting list and the memorial plaque is then offered back to the councillor's family.

Memorial Trees

Members considered the approach for memorial trees and stakes with a plaque to remember loved ones.

The families pay a small donation to cover the cost of the wood and plaque. Two of the trees now need replacing and Members were asked to consider if they would like families to purchase the actual tree. The family would make a donation of the cost of the tree and any plaque and stake and the Council would pay for the delivery etc, the same as the memorial benches.

Members were in favour of adopting the same approach for memorial trees as is to be used for benches. It was proposed that smaller fruit trees giving a nice blossom in Spring would be appropriate and would be a good strategy to support biodiversity. Cllr A Rea also suggested that recycled plastic stakes are used similar to memorial benches.

It was **RESOLVED** that this Committee adopts the above approach for memorial trees and that fruit trees are purchased, and stake plaques, and again the memorial plaque is offered back to the family should they no longer wish to replace the tree in the future. The Town Clerk would also explore whether recycled plastic stakes could be used in place of wooden ones.

Memorials and decorations

Members considered the situation regarding families having adorned trees and grave plots with tributes to loved ones.

The Council's booklet states no chippings, kerbings or other variation and mention no plastic flowers. This ensures that grass cutting can take place safely and to a good standard. It also ensures the appearance of the cemetery is preserved. However, many of the graves now have additional ornaments, solar lights and plastic guards with chippings etc.

The proposal in the report was to write to deed holders with regard to any plots with items on graves other than an agreed Memorial and vase requesting that they remove items that do not comply with the Council's guidance, or after a suitable deadline the Parks team would remove the items.

Cllr L Rea stated that she was not comfortable in asking families to remove items from loved one's graves, and from memory a lot were children's graves. Although she recognised that stone chippings could

be a health and safety issue, she did not feel that ornaments and lights were a hazard.

The committee considered it a fair compromise to request removal of plastic guards, chippings and gravel. A site visit was proposed, with a view to revisiting this as an agenda item in 12 months' time.

It was **RESOLVED** that deed holders are written to with regard to any plots with stone chippings, gravel and plastic guards on or around graves, but that additional ornaments and solar lights in position will be allowed to remain currently. They will be given a suitable deadline, and one reminder to remove the items that do not comply, after which the Parks team will remove these items. The Council will perform a site visit and revisit this as an agenda item in 12 months' time.

PA21/019 **ALLOTMENTS:** Item PA21/006 was considered deferred from the last meeting of this committee, along with further information (copy previously circulated)

The Clerk of Ugborough Parish Council has confirmed that the allotments for the parish are provided by Hillhead Farm. They in turn confirmed that they tend to limit allotments to residents of Ugborough Village, Bittaford, Wrangaton and Moorhaven, and they currently have a waiting list anyway. It is a privately owned site, and not run by the Parish Council.

Cllr L Rea had struggled with this issue previously, and felt strongly that people who have purchased houses in Lucerne Fields under the assumption that they are in Ivybridge should not be penalised. If residents have to travel 2.3 miles this is not good for climate change, although she did appreciate that Ivybridge residents pay taxes towards the allotments. She suggested as a compromise that the Council pushes ahead with the boundary issue.

The Town Clerk advised that Ugborough Parish Council has a legal obligation to provide allotments, and 6 parishioners can request this. The Allotments Association feel strongly that priority is given to Ivybridge residents, and Ugborough residents should be advised to take up the issue with Ugborough parish as it needs the residents' influence.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Ivybridge Allotment Association determine their waiting list with a view to prioritising Ivybridge residents if they prefer, and advise Ugborough residents who apply to approach Ugborough Parish Council for allotments provision.

PA21/020 **SITE VISITS:** A time to conduct visits of Town Council sites was considered.

It was **RESOLVED** that walking around collectively would be more advantageous, and to combine the cemetery, Orchid Avenue, Holman Way and Filham Park commencing at 9am on Saturday 11 September,

and Victoria Park, Longtimber Woods and Station Road on the morning of Saturday 25 September.

PA21/021 **UPDATES AND INFORMATION:** Updates and information were received (copy previously circulated).

Parks Ranger Update

The Town Clerk acknowledged that the Bio Blitz had not been a Parks agreed event, however it had been a success although would need more time allowed in future for to organise this. He paid credit to the Parks Rangers, the Assistant Town Clerk and Admin Officer for their help with the event.

There were some successes from the day. For example the bats, some good finds in the pond dipping, much was learned about moths and lots of people speaking to the hedgehog rescue expert. The shuttle bus had been praised by a family from the Woodlands end who attended and had said it was too far to walk. Unfortunately the rain had resulted in a lack of butterflies and few birds.

The event had contributed over 120 hours of volunteer time.

Cllr Rea fully supported this event being held again in the future. The Town Clerk advised that funding amounting to £1000 was pledged from the four District Councillors, and they have been publically thanked.

Filham Fishing Club

The relationship with the Fishing Club is positive and a very successful meeting was recently held with regular management meetings planned going forward.

Victoria Park Wall gap to access Crescent Road

The Town Clerk has sought pre-application advice from SHDC Development Management to ensure that any change to this wall would not contravene the Planning Conservation Area, and has been informed that permission will be needed should the wall measure over 1m tall.

Filham Park Projects

The Phase 1 Filham Master Plan S106 application has now been submitted for consideration by SHDC. The Donkey Sanctuary have agreed a decent contribution towards the access track.

Erme Playing Fields Project

This project to support the Football Club in a new club house extension has been put on hold while the club discuss undertaking a new build club house.

Cemetery Maintenance

The items agreed at the June meeting have had orders placed and dates arranged for the works commencing in September 2021.

Cllr L Rea raised the issue of the cemetery buildings being underused, and had been in contact with District Cllr Victor Abbot. He has confirmed that South Hams would be open to the change of use for the mortuary building, and to check the terms of the lease so a proposal could be made to use it for other purposes other than storage. She suggested that this could be discussed at the site meeting. The Town Clerk remarked that any ideas would need to look at a business case as there are currently no toilets or heating.

It was **RESOLVED** to receive and note the above information and to discuss the use of the cemetery buildings during the site visit.

Meeting ended at 8.00pm

Signed.....

Date: 20 September 2021

