



MINUTES

Committee: Open Spaces Committee
Date: Tuesday 23 February 2026
Time: 6:00pm
Venue: Parish Council Office

Present

Cllr Catherine Fileman-Wright (Chairman)
Cllr Mike Jeffery
Cllr Jan Evans
Cllr Vivienne Hodges

Also Present

Samantha Parkin (Clerk)
One member of the public

PUBLIC SESSION

A representative of the Allotment committee attended in relation to the area of land the Council had created as an additional allotment plot.

The Allotment committee had consulted plot holders on the best use of the land. The general view was that it is not suitable as an additional plot, as it is small and contains significant blackthorn root, which would require substantial work to bring it up to standard. Several plot holders suggested planting fruit trees with communal seating, while others proposed offering part of the area to Trees in Time for use as a tree nursery. Members considered this a positive proposal.

The committee also wishes to construct a sturdy dead hedge framework using fencing posts, providing a place for dead wood material, reducing bonfires, and creating wildlife habitat. Their proposal is to site the dead hedge centrally, with approximately two-thirds of the land above it used for fruit trees (around eight trees, with maintenance undertaken by the Allotment committee, including support from a resident apple expert), and the remaining third below allocated to Trees in Time.

The Clerk queried the presence of blackthorn roots, as the council had understood these were to be removed under the allotment works contract. The Allotment committee representative confirmed that roots remain. Cllr Hodges queried whether contractors should be asked to return to complete the work; however, the Allotment committee indicated a preference to undertake the work themselves.

Cllr Hodges also queried the waiting list, as the council had understood demand to be high and this had informed the creation of the additional plot. The representative confirmed there are currently four

people on the waiting list and noted that it would be a significant undertaking for a new plot holder to take on the land in its current condition.

The Chair stated that the council is keen to create a positive outcome from the recent works and welcomed the proposal in principle. She explained that the committee would make recommendations to Full Council and supported reinstating the annual meeting referenced in the management agreement. Members agreed that a fuller discussion of the proposals would be required.

01/2026 CHAIRMAN

It was proposed by Cllr Jeffery, seconded by Cllr Evans, and **resolved** that Cllr Fileman-Wright chair the meeting in the absence of Cllr Keep.

02/2026 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Austin and Cllr Keep.

03/2026 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS / REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

No declarations of interest or requests for dispensations were received.

04/2026 MINUTES

It was proposed by Cllr Jeffery, seconded by Cllr Hodges, and **resolved** to accept and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 20th May 2025 as a correct record.

05/2026 STANDING ITEM - CLIMATE AND ECOLOGY EMERGENCY

The committee noted the Council's commitment to embed the Climate and Ecology Emergency Declaration across all activities, ensuring environmental impacts are considered in a fully integrated approach to climate change mitigation.

06/2026 ALLOTMENT

The clerk's report had been circulated with the agenda and included key lessons from the recent allotment works, including the importance of clear contract specifications and supervision, early communication with stakeholders, consideration of biodiversity impacts, appropriate seasonal timing of works, and awareness of ongoing maintenance costs in relation to allotment income. The Chair commented that this was a helpful report.

The Chair emphasised that supervision of contractors should be made even clearer and must be undertaken by the Clerk and a named member of the Open Spaces Committee. It should be made explicit to contractors that all communication must go through the Clerk, and that they must contact the Clerk directly if they have any questions. Supervision should take place at the start, during, and at the end of the contract works.

Waste management plans should be agreed and clearly specified with contractors in advance, including provision of any necessary permits to the Clerk where applicable.

The Chair also highlighted the importance of community involvement, encouraging greater awareness of community interest and improved engagement and forward planning.

Positively, the Committee had undertaken a site visit prior to the works, which was noted as good practice.

It was proposed by Cllr Fileman-Wright, seconded by Cllr Evans, and **resolved to recommend** to full council that a site visit should be arranged with the Open Spaces committee, Allotment committee and Trees in Time to agree the best way forward.

It was proposed by Cllr Jeffery, seconded by Cllr Hodges, and resolved to suspend standing orders.

The Chair asked about timescales for the work – the Allotment committee representative noted that it is now late in the tree planting season and planting may need to wait until autumn. Members felt a meeting within the next month would be helpful. Cllr Evans confirmed she is happy to assist with exploring grant funding.

It was proposed by Cllr Fileman-Wright, seconded by Cllr Jeffery, and resolved to reinstate standing orders.

07/2026 DOG FOULING

The clerk's report had been circulated with the agenda. The report noted residents' frustration with dog fouling in the area.

Members noted that some members of the public may be unaware when fouling occurs, particularly if distracted by mobile phones, and that loose dogs can also contribute to the problem. While most dog owners are responsible, a small minority do not clear up after their dogs. Members also noted the issue of dog waste bags being left hanging on fences rather than being disposed of correctly.

The Chair suggested a new awareness campaign promoting practical products to help dog owners clean up after their dogs, such as neoprene waste bag holders that attach to leads, emphasising responsible disposal.

It was proposed by Cllr Fileman-Wright, seconded by Cllr Evans, and **resolved to recommend** to full council to:

1. Continue to raise awareness of dog fouling laws via social media, the website, and community newsletters.
2. Spray pavement markings are needed in persistent problem areas.
3. Encourage residents to report incidents directly to TDC for enforcement.
4. Maintain community engagement, highlighting responsible dog ownership and public health risks.

08/2026 PLAY AREA RISK ASSESSMENT

The draft Play Risk Assessment had been circulated with the agenda. Members were satisfied that risk is adequately controlled.

It was proposed by Cllr Fileman-Wright, seconded by Cllr Jeffery, and **resolved to recommend** to full council to adopt the draft Play Area Risk Assessment.

09/2026 OPEN SPACES CONTRACTS

The open spaces contracts had been circulated with the agenda. The Clerk suggested a couple of amendments to the contracts:

1. **Churchyard contract:** Add an additional cut to Areas A and B in June, following feedback from the contractor and members of the public.
2. **Sentry contract:** Remove clause 2(b) relating to tree, hedge, and bramble management, due to difficulties in arranging the work with the contractor this year. Trees, hedges, and brambles would no longer be specified as an annual cut but managed by the Clerk as required.

Members agreed to arrange a meeting with the Sentry contractor to review performance during the first year of the contract.

It was proposed by Cllr Fileman-Wright, seconded by Cllr Evans, and **resolved to recommend** to full council to add an additional cut to Churchyard Areas A and B in June, remove part 2(b) from the

Sentry contract, and seek a meeting with the Sentry contractor to review performance during the first year of the contract.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 6.31pm.