



Battle Town Council



MINUTES of a Meeting of the ESTATES COMMITTEE held on Tuesday, 9 October 2012 at 7.30pm at The Almonry, High Street, Battle

Present: Cllr Ms M L Neill - Chairman
Cllrs J Boryer, J Carter, R Harris, R Jessop, Mrs S Pry and D Wilson.

John Harmer, Footpaths Advisor was also present, mainly for item 5 and Bev Marks and Sue Burton were present for item 7. Tony Perkins presented his proposals for a tennis rebound wall under item 8.

1. **Apologies for Absence** – Cllrs Bye, Mrs Farr and Mrs Fisher.
2. **Disclosure of Interest** – None.
3. **Minutes of the Meeting held on 26 June 2012.** Cllr Jessop proposed approval of the minutes, seconded by Cllr Harris. This was agreed and they were duly signed.

4. **Matters Arising from Previous Meetings**

Regarding the **condition of trees**, the Clerk said that Services Committee had asked him to establish the cost of contracting out a survey. An hourly rate of £20 plus the cost of producing any report had been offered by the contractor who currently undertakes tree surgery work in behalf of the Council. Cllr Carter reminded the Committee that he had previously undertaken a detailed survey, albeit as long ago as 2005, and that he would be happy to update this in the spring. The Committee agreed to this course of action.

5. **Correspondence & Communications**

The Clerk reported a letter from the agents acting for the Block family informing the Council that they had sold Little Park Farm but also querying why **no rent** had been paid in respect of the **overflow car park**, which forms part of the estate. The Clerk had replied pointing out that no rent demands had been received, in accordance with the spirit in which the lease had been entered into. No response to this has been received.

6. **Footpath Matters**

The Clerk drew attention to a matter raised at a recent meeting of the **Rother Transport Action Group**. This concerned the **replacement of stiles with gates** and confirmed the **County Rights of Way policy** to identify and prioritise paths that would most benefit from gate installation. Where stiles are no longer necessary for land management reasons these are being removed to make a whole length of path more accessible.

John Harmer drew attention to the 'swampy' condition of the ground on **footpath 38** just beyond the walkway. Improved drainage, or even an extension of the walkway, would be desirable not least because this is one of the recommended 'Walks around Battle'. On **footpath 37** at the junction with footpath 36 there is still a sign missing pointing back towards the Church Hall. The condition of **footpath 30** was also mentioned. The change of ownership of Little Park Farm might be an opportunity to progress this. On a more positive note, the **tumbledown stile** has finally been installed.

John Harmer then gave a resume of the proceedings at the **Uckham lane/Coarsebarn Farm bridleway and footpath public inquiry**. In the absence of any objectors being present the main focus had been on points of detail, such as footpath widths, and procedural matters and John Harmer therefore assumed that the relevant Order would be confirmed.

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7. Battle Schools Greenway Project

Bev Marks and Sue Burton were welcomed to the meeting. Details of their project to provide a traffic free route between Claverham Community College and Battle Abbey had been circulated to all Committee Members. In introducing the project Bev Marks confirmed that the main motivation behind it is to benefit school children to enable them to safely cycle to school. If implemented, however, the scheme would benefit many other groups, including push-chair users and less able people, and would encourage sustainable and healthy lifestyles by improving safe walking access between homes, schools and the various facilities in the town centre. Sue Burton said that it would open up opportunities for direct links between the High Street and the existing footpaths in George Meadow which could possibly be exploited for commercial development. Anticipating questions about the risks associated with use by both walkers and cyclists she said that there are numerous precedents where these had successfully been overcome. She confirmed that the next formal step would be to submit the project to County Highways for consideration against their priority ranking scoring system. Committee Members welcomed the proposals but drew attention to a number of issues which would need to be addressed. In general terms it would be important to be able to demonstrate that the project has the support of the community and not just the Town Council. The landowners involved would also need to be consulted. In terms of practicalities and cost the proposed bridge to replace the steps and cross the stream by the entrance to Mansers Shaw would be a major challenge and existing footpaths, both permissive and rights of way, would need to be widened. These points were fully acknowledged but not perceived as being impossible to overcome, particularly if the Town Council could be seen, at this stage, as supportive of the overall concept. **Cllr Harris therefore proposed that Council be invited to give its support in principle and, in doing so, note the need for a small part of George Meadow to be used to enable the route to depart from the existing footpath behind the pumping station. This was seconded by Cllr Jessop and agreed unanimously.** Cllr Jessop will also alert the Rother Local Strategic Partnership to the scheme.

8. Recreation Ground

The Clerk confirmed that:

- the **Jubilee Oak** has now been planted, with protective guard;
- the **Tennis court resurfacing** has been completed;
- the **cycle stands** have been installed with the 1066 Cycle Club meeting the cost of the stands themselves;
- the old **fencing** around the **children's play area** has been removed and the new fencing will be erected, beginning on 15 October.

The Clerk also reported the contents of the report following the **annual inspection of the play areas**. The need to replace the post and wire fencing had been the main item of concern.

Tony Perkins explained his plans to incorporate a **rebound facility within the tennis courts**. He emphasised that this would be at no cost to the Council. It would be in the form of a 9m wide rigid mesh fence rather than a solid wall. As such it would simply be attached to a part of the existing fence. Although available for all to use, he hoped it would particularly encourage young people to take an interest in tennis. He was sure that it would not compromise the use of the courts for their principal purpose. The Committee felt that it would be useful to get the tennis club views on this, which Tony Perkins will do prior to further consideration by the Council.

9. George Meadow

The Committee noted the **completion of the drainage work in George Meadow** and that it appeared to have cured the flooding problem. The current muddy conditions are purely the

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result of the recent very heavy rain.

As already reported to F&GP, and endorsed by Council, a revised rent relating to the **farm tenancy** has been agreed. This takes effect from 25 September and will run for 3 years.

10. Roundabout

The future of the **cordylines** was again discussed. The constraint relating to bird nesting appeared to no longer exist so the remaining issues concern aesthetics and horticultural practice. The main problem with the latter is that, although the cordylines can happily survive in poor, dry conditions the other plants need water and nutrients which, when applied, are quickly taken up by the cordylines. Notwithstanding this, **Cllr Jessop proposed that they be retained. This was seconded by Cllr Boryer but lost on a majority vote. Cllr Ms Neill therefore proposed that they be removed and replaced with bedding plants. This was carried by a majority and is therefore recommended to Council.**

11. Budget Report 2012-13

In presenting the attached report the Clerk drew attention to a number of changes to the forecast figures presented to the previous meeting. In particular, the addition of the **George Meadow drainage work** and the transfer of the **tennis court resurfacing** cost from the general maintenance heading at the recreation ground to the games budget heading.

12. Budget 2013-14 and 3 Year Forward Plan

As requested by F&GP the Clerk had circulated actual income and expenditure figures since 2008-9. These highlighted one-off costs as distinct from recurring day to day items.

Looking ahead, the Committee felt that the cost of providing **toilets at the recreation ground**, estimated at £75,000 would be prohibitive but that the regularly deferred **replacement swing at Telham** must be included in next year's budget. The need to convert the seasonal **groundsman post** into a permanent one was discussed. Although an understanding has been reached with Beautiful Battle about the amount of Council staff time allocated to support the group, discussions about next year's planting regime are yet to take place. Pending this it was agreed to defer any decision about creating a permanent post.

The main challenge for the future is to anticipate the need for any major repairs or replacements. The Clerk mentioned the play equipment at North Trade Road. He will discuss other potential items with Cllr Jessop.

13. Matters for Information/Future Agenda Items – None.

14. Date of Next Meeting: provisionally, Tuesday, 5 February 2013

The meeting closed at 9.40pm.

Ms M L NEILL
Chairman

