

## OPEN SPACES & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the **OPEN SPACES AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE** meeting held on **Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023 at 7.00 p.m.** at the Southborough Civic Centre, 137 London Road Southborough, KENT TN4 0NA.

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Cllrs Lewis (Chair), Kinghorn (Deputy Chair), Elliott, Figgitt, Hill and Stewart.

**Cllr Mrs O Kinghorn has kindly given her seat on this committee to Cllr Spickett.**

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Carolyn Ripley (Deputy Town Clerk)

### 1. APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Opara – Another Commitment  
Cllr Wharton – Ill Health

### 2. DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY AND OTHER SIGNIFICANT INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

### 3. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

Steph Dowling of KHWP was present in reference to item 6. One member of the public was present in reference to item 8. No members of the press were present.

### 4. MINUTES

Council Members **NOTED** that the minutes of the meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023 were **APPROVED** at Full Council on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

### 5. INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

Council Members **NOTED** that there were no income and expenditure reports relating to Open Spaces to review when this agenda was sent out. Accounts are generally one month in arrears and November's will not be available until the next Open Spaces Committee.

### 6. KENT HIGH WEALD PROJECT – SOUTHBOROUGH COMMON

Council Members thanked Steph Dowling of the KHWP who attended to discuss the Common Management Plan and wider conservation proposals/ideas. Council Members **AGREED** to bring back any proposals, when more developed, for further discussion of financial support from the Town Council.

### 7. SOUTHBOROUGH CEMETERY – FLORA & FAUNA

Council Members **NOTED** that the Town Council's Ground Staff Team are already aware of wild orchids and mindful when maintaining the cemetery. Council Members **AGREED** to investigate conducting wildlife surveys in the cemetery.

## 8. KING CHARLES III CORONATION COMMEMORATION REQUEST

Council Members **AGREED** to initially investigate replacing the existing cherry tree located on Common Land opposite the Hand & Sceptre that is in a poor condition/dying, and that was planted to commemorate the coronation of Elizabeth II, with a view to a new plaque and double commemoration for both Elizabeth II and Charles III.

## 9. KCC KENT HIGHWAYS – FOOTPATH CONSULTATION

KCC Highways Public Rights of Way Footpath Diversion consultation listed as WS18 Southborough (REF: PROW/WS15/1701). Council Members **AGREED** to respond to the consultation questions accordingly:

- a) The proposed diversion is in the landowner's interest. **We AGREE but:**

With the caveat that we do not agree that the landowner's interests, which are to develop the site with four properties, are a sufficient reason to divert the footpath.

- b) The proposed diversion is not substantially less convenient to the public. **We DO NOT AGREE because:**

The proposed diversion route appears to be constrained by a 6ft high fence on one side and a row of trees on the other, that do not appear to accommodate the proposed 2m pathway. Moreover, the existing narrow pathway on the diversion is at an angle, so would be challenging terrain for differently abled people.

- c) The proposed diversion would not negatively impact upon the public enjoyment of the route. **We DO NOT AGREE because:**

The current pathway is flat, wider, on a gentler slope and is not constrained by trees and a fence.

- d) The new point of termination will not be substantially less convenient to the public. **We AGREE because:**

The point of termination is the same.

### **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:**

The standard questions are basic and do not permit full feedback. For information, the landowner appears to have blocked off the current public right of way already and restricted it to his property in advance of any decision about the diversion. We question the legality of this, and question the proposed dense development of the land that is the cause of this diversion consultation, although we acknowledge that this was a TWBC planning decision and we were a consultee only.

## 10. SOUTHBOROUGH COMMON BYELAWS

Council Members **NOTED** the previously supplied report and information from the Deputy Town Clerk.

## 11. WEST KENT RURAL GRANTS

Council Members **NOTED** the previously supplied information from West Kent Rural Grants about their funding programme and will consider any potential projects for application. Council

Members **FURTHER NOTED** that the qualifying rural area only includes funding for projects on Southborough Common.

**There being no further business, the Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 8.08 p.m.**

**Miss Carolyn Ripley  
Deputy Town Clerk  
6<sup>th</sup> December 2023**