

CODICOTE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE held on Thursday 16th July 2015, in the Parish Council Offices, 107a High Street, Codicote which commenced at 7:00pm

PRESENT: Chair, Councillor J Grant with Councillors D Connold, S Sanders
C Tinner and J Warwick

IN ATTENDANCE: Lorraine Ellis (Clerk)

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:**

None received.

2. **TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ACCORDANCE WITH
THE COUNCIL'S CODE OF CONDUCT:**

None.

3. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18th JUNE 2015:**

The minutes of the above meeting were taken as read and duly noted.

4. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES:**

E002 Highways Streetscape: The Clerk reported that District Councillor Jane Gray had advised that, subject to the details of any scheme which is required being acceptable and of a capital nature, consideration would be given by NHDC to release S106 funding of which at the present time there being a limited fund of £2,600 available in the sustainable transport contributions.

E017 Farriers Close: Councillor Grant asked for clarification on the Committee's decision at the June meeting to change the earlier decision from planting the area to block paving it. Councillor Connold stated that the Committee had considered the quotations received and decided to change the specification. The Clerk to advise Codicote in Bloom of the decision.

Councillor Warwick advised that the area has been weed sprayed in preparation for block paving. The Committee considered the samples provided and agreed that the anticipated overall cost, including materials and labour would be c£1,000. It was agreed that Councillor Warwick should prepare a detailed specification and drawing prior to obtaining quotations.

It was agreed that the Clerk should contact County Councillor Richard Thake to request he consider awarding a grant from his Locality Budget towards the project with a proposed start date of September/October.

Update on Codicote Quarry: The Clerk reported that County Councillor Thake had recently reported that the Environment Agency licence allows almost unrestricted lorry movements and the ability to apply controls on the highway that impact upon a legally registered business are minimal if they exist at all. Any action in this regard would have to be absolutely watertight or legal challenges would likely follow.

It was noted that Stephen McPartland, MP had previously assisted the Council on this subject, it was therefore agreed that Councillor Connold and the Clerk should draft a letter to the MP requesting his help. The letter should also be copied to HCC Officers

Brian Owen, Rob Egan and Sharon Threlfall, in addition to District Councillor Jane Gray and County Councillor Richard Thake.

Consideration should also be given to undertaking another vehicle survey in order for the data to be compared with the log maintained by the Quarry operators. It was agreed that the Clerk should request a copy of the recent HCC visitor log sheets.

E016 Benches & seats – repair & maintenance programme: Councillor Sanders reported that in conjunction with Councillor Warwick he had produced a summary and photographs of the 17 benches and seats. A map showing where they are sited and their wood type has also been included.

Three of the benches are in need of urgent attention and the balance can be included in the 2016 maintenance schedule. Different skill bases are required for the three benches:-

- Circular seat at the pump – Councillor Sanders agreed to remove the bench and to approach the family to discuss the re-siting of the memorial.
- Circular bench on The Green – The bench to have the slats replaced with the work deferred until a review of the walnut tree has been carried out.
- Seat at the PMH – to be refurbished by rubbing down and staining.

It was agreed that quotations for the work should be obtained and the work carried out in September.

E026 Sewer problems in The Birches and Lower High Street: The Committee agreed that the response received from Stephen McPartland, MP had provided an excellent outcome. The Chief Executive Officer at Thames Water having agreed to investigate if it would be feasible to install pumps to return sewage from the storm tank to the foul sewerage network. Thames Water have promised to update the MP by 31st July 2015 on their progress. The Clerk to follow up.

E027 Fly tipping issues: It was agreed that the NHDC Officer, David Furr be invited to attend an Environment Committee meeting later in the year.

5. VILLAGE TREE:

E032 Councillor Grant reported that a complaint had been received from a resident regarding the height and root growth of the walnut tree on The Green. It was noted that the tree hadn't been neglected but had been pruned in 2013. It had been hoped to reduce it by 20% but as it is in a Conservation area it was only permissible to reduce it all round by 15%.

The Committee agreed that professional advice was required prior to any work being undertaken on the tree or roots. Councillors Grant and Sanders to meet initially with a local HCC Officer. The Clerk to set-up the meeting as soon as possible. It is envisaged that a professional recommendation will be required.

6. NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH:

E033 Councillor Grant reported that more information on the local Neighbourhood Watch Scheme would be useful. It is currently unclear which streets in Codicote are covered by the scheme and the names of the local co-ordinators. It was agreed that the Clerk should invite members of Hitchin Police Station to a Full Council meeting to provide Councillors with an update.

7. TO CONSIDER APPLYING FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT GRANT FROM NHDC:

E034

The Committee agreed to apply to NHDC for a £1,000 grant for litter picking. The Clerk to complete the application form by the due deadline of Friday 2nd October 2015.

8. UPDATE ON THE STATUS OF THE OPENING:

E035

The Clerk reported that County Councillor Richard Thake had provided a description of the status of The Opening:-

The public have a right of access throughout its length on foot, cycle, horseback and horse and carriage. There are no rights for the public using motor vehicles. Private visitors and those with implied permission (post, refuse collection, deliveries, police etc) is permitted.

It was noted that whilst it was a public highway of that status, it was not maintainable at public expense, the landowners and residents are responsible for its upkeep and permission was not granted for them to install gates.

9. ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE'S OUTSTANDING ITEMS:

E036

Councillor Sanders reported that he is currently supdating the database, once this has been completed he will meet with the Clerk to transfer the data. Councillor Connold reported that the 'unsuitable for motor vehicles' sign has been erected in Dark Lane. It is hoped that this will alleviate some of the traffic issues in this area.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

E037

Thursday 17th September 2015

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8:34pm

Signed..... Vice Chair of Environment

Date..... 2015