

FOUR MARKS PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Open Spaces Committee
Held on 6th May 2026 commencing at Benians Pavilion at 6pm**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Cllrs Davies, Gebbett, Medhurst and M Pullen
IN ATTENDANCE: Jo Tsigarides, Clerk
APOLOGIES: One - Cllr Coulson

26.44 OS APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Coulson had sent apologies and declined to publicly share the reason. The apologies were duly accepted by the Committee.

24.45 OS OPEN SESSION – PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Clerk noted correspondence from Culligan Services to advise that there would be a fuel surcharge applied to future maintenance visits of £2.10.

An email had been received by a resident in Lapwing Way requesting a response to an enquiry on the 4th March 2026 about some overgrown trees on a ransom strip near their property. The Clerk had contacted the owner of the ransom strip and will endeavour to resolve the issue.

The Allotment Committee had made contact regarding a bulk compost delivery which had been arranged for Friday 8th May 2026 and asked for permission to quordon off the two parking spaces next to the tennis courts. The Clerk had agreed this and advised Councillors for information purposes.

The Clerk had received an email from Four Marks Cubs to ask permission to have s'mores over a firepit on Monday 11th May 2026 to celebrate one hundred and ten years of the organisation. They had completed the relevant risk assessments internally.

With no further items raised, the Open Session ended at 6.03pm.

26.46 OS DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

26.47 OS COMMITTEE MINUTES.

There was some discussion about the length of the Open Session in the last meeting, but Councillors concluded that the Minutes were accurate. On the proposal of Cllr Medhurst, which was seconded by Cllr M Pullen, and with all Councillors in agreement, it was:

RESOLVED to approve the Minutes of the Open Spaces Committee meeting held on the 1st April 2026.

26.48 OS ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

26.48.1 To appoint a Contractor to install an artificial cricket pitch.

The Clerk and Cllr M Pullen had met with two of the contractors to discuss the installation of the artificial cricket pitch in preparation for the meeting. The second contractor raised that planning permission, or a lawful development certificate might be required and also asked whether the Council had considered the biodiversity net gain implications. The Clerk contacted Chloe Davanna at EHDC for some advice.

The Council had been strongly advised to commission a feasibility study of the area. This differs from a 'needs analysis' and reviews the area specifically. It would assess the suitability of the proposed location for the artificial surface, identify potential concerns and outline maintenance requirements. It would also look at the ball strike distance and calculate the ideal placement. The company would also review how the various sports (football,

cricket and archery) can work alongside each other. The Clerk had asked whether the absence of this report would have an impact on potential funding applications and it was advised that most organisations would want to see a feasibility study to ensure that the due diligence had been undertaken.

The recommended company from EHDC were contacted to commission a feasibility study. The price for a desktop survey was £2200, and a physical survey was £2500. Two other companies had also been approached, but prices had not yet been received.

On the proposal of Cllr M Pullen, which was seconded by Cllr Davies, and will all Councillors in agreement, it was: **RESOLVED that the Clerk would have delegated authority to commission an appropriate physical feasibility study with the amount not exceeding £2500 (excl VAT).**

Cllr Gebbett asked the Clerk to inform the various contractors that this study would delay the decision making regarding the quotes.

26.49 OS ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

26.49.1 Request from Friends of Four Marks School (FOFM) to hold firework event

The previous Chair of FOFM had resigned and two Co-Chairs were now in place. They requested to hold a firework event at the Recreation Ground in November 2026. They had also asked that if permission is given, a financial contribution to the Council would be agreed in advance.

The Committee discussed the request, suggesting that it is referred to the Full Council in May 2026 so that it can be confirmed that there are no conflicts with the space/objections. The Committee would recommend that the event is given permission, with a suggested contribution of £750 and that Cllrs M Pullen and Medhurst would act as representatives of the Council. Assuming that the Council agree, the Councillors would like to schedule a meeting with the new Co-Chairs for the 21st or 22nd May 2026.

Cllr Medhurst did request that the Benians Committee would be given clear instructions not to tape of areas for their members at the next event.

26.49.2 To receive an update on Japanese Knotweed issue

The Committee was informed that Japanese Knotweed had been identified at the Recreation Ground and that the Locum Clerk had commissioned a survey (attached in supporting documents). The Committee reviewed the treatment plan and agreed to support the Locum Clerk's recommendation that the ten-year remedial plan should be agreed at the Full Council meeting in May 2026.

26.49.3 To consider and finalise strategy for memorial opportunities

The Clerk asked for some direction regarding the memorial strategy for the cemetery. The Committee requested that some quotations were sought for a large horseshoe shaped bench or benches that could form a horseshoe for the centre 'u' section of the Cemetery.

26.49.4 To consider a bench review in order to prioritise new bench placement

The Clerk suggested that a review of all of the Council owned benches should take place in order to create a list of benches that needed to be replaced (creating potential memorial opportunities). Councillors discussed that a bench policy should be created in tandem to ensure that there was some uniformity of bench style and fixing and also that any memorial benches would have a ten-year tenure.

Cllrs M Pullen and Gebbett agreed to create a list of Council owned benches (and any others that were obviously in disrepair in the village).

26.50 OS AREA UPDATE AND REPORTS

26.50.1 To receive oral update from Clerk along with supporting document.

The Clerk advised that the area update would be amended as appropriate. The tree works at the allotment had not been fully completed due to a failure with the chipper. The contractor would be on site on the 13th May 2026 to complete the works.

The sleeper by Tesco was booked in for the 11th May 2026 and the Locum Clerk was progressing the insurance claim. Tesco had been informed of the works. The final paperwork could not be completed until the job was finished and the materials invoiced for. The Clerk also noted that the contractor that was due to complete the works at Swelling Hill Pond was no longer able to do the job and so an alternative was being researched.

The various grants were in progress. The RFO had been asked to invoice HCC for the bus shelter grant, and the Clerk was following up on the grass pitch maintenance application in readiness for verti draining.

26.50.2 To receive an update regarding the excavation of Swelling Hill Pond

A representative from the Ropley historical society had been due to attend to provide an update but sent their apologies. Councillors received a written report and asked that the group were invited to have a stand at the village picnic.

26.50.3 To receive an update from the playground working party.

The playground working party had not convened since the last meeting. A follow up had been sent to Ava recreation regarding the 2D model and also some emails had been forwarded onto members of the working group.

26.51 OS EVENTS

26.51.1 Village Picnic – Update

Cllr M Pullen requested that the Council had the Four Marks flags on their stand and the Clerk advised that they were in the Benians Pavilion loft. Cllr Gebbett had agreed that the local estate agent, Warren Powell-Richards would be placing banners around the Recreation Ground in exchange for sponsoring the zorbing.

It was agreed to ask if anyone would like to do a crockery smash and also to ask if Fight for Four Marks/SMASH would like a stall.

26.52 OS NEXT MEETING – 3rd June 2026

26.53 OS Meeting Closed at 6.47pm