

FOUR MARKS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Open Spaces Committee Held on 5th August 2026 commencing at Benians Pavilion at 7.10pm

MEMBERS PRESENT:	Cllrs Thomson, Coulson, Gebbett, Medhurst and M Pullen
IN ATTENDANCE:	Victoria Ursulean, Assistant Clerk
APOLOGIES:	No members of public
	None

26.76 OS APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

26.77 OS OPEN SESSION – PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

An email had been received regarding the bench request for the area in front of the ashes plots on the right side of the cemetery. The resident had requested a bench in memory of two relatives whose ashes are interred there. She had emailed for an update on that request.

End of public session: 7.12pm

26.78 OS DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

26.79 OS COMMITTEE MINUTES

On the proposal of Cllr M Pullen, which was seconded by Cllr Medhurst, and with all Councillors in agreement, it was: **RESOLVED to approve the Minutes of the Open Spaces Committee meeting held on the 1st July 2026** with one amendment to minute 26.74.2.

26.80 OS ITEMS FOR REVIEW

26.80.1 To review the Climate, Nature and Biodiversity Policy

A new policy had been devised to include biodiversity. Cllr Thomson advised that the policy should be referred to when making decisions and Cllr M Pullen mentioned the policy should note that for every tree that needs to be felled, two more should be planted. Cllrs agreed that this policy should be approved at Full Council.

26.81 OS ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

26.81.1 To consider a bench strategy

Cllr Thomson felt that there should be more benches on the football field for spectators. However, was advised that this is not possible due to the ball strike distance. It was considered that should a bench application be made, that the bench could be placed in an area useful for the community. It was felt that the current bench policy is reasonable and doesn't require any alterations.

Cllrs also discussed creating a group called 'Friends of Swelling Hill Pond' to look after that area. A few of the benches there are in need of work and one has been removed, the Assistant Clerk will gain quotes for repairs. It was considered that benches within the parish that had fallen into disrepair, could be reconditioned and placed at the pond.

Cllrs discussed a horseshoe shaped bench in the cemetery and the Assistant Clerk had been quoted £9000 to have this made. Cllrs felt that more investigation could be made into grants for this and a request made to the Men's Shed.

On the proposal of Cllr M Pullen, which was seconded by Cllr Thomson, and with all Councillors in agreement, it was: **RESOLVED to approve the installation of a bench in the cemetery in front of Block E.**

26.81.2 To consider tree work along the football field

A resident had requested that trees along the football field and the side of his property be cut back due to the lack of light getting into his property. Cllrs looked at the photos provided and discussed the tree policy in relation to this which is highlighted below:

- *The Parish Council has no obligation to carry out the following tree works:*
 1. *Cut back branches overhanging private property*
 2. *'Top' trees or remove branches to increase daylight or decrease height in relation to property.*
 3. *Remove branches or trees affecting views or interfering with TV reception.*
 4. *Remove branches or trees to prevent falling leaves, honeydew from aphids or other minor debris.*
 5. *Remove roots from drains or repair root damage to structures, where the tree has not been clearly demonstrated to be the principal cause.*
 6. *Remove branches or trees to prevent potential root damage to structures.*
 7. *Remove branches nearly touching buildings, walls, roofs, fences etc.*
 8. *Remove branches or trees to prevent access to squirrels or birds.*
- *The Parish Council will consider any complaints regarding trees on Council owned property, taking into consideration its tree management policy and/or advice from a qualified arborist or tree surgeon, as appropriate.*

Cllrs noted that the resident could cut back any branches overhanging his property and 'top' the trees at his own cost. A quotation had been requested from an Arborist and would be relayed to the resident.

26.81.3 To consider applying for a grant to cover bus shelters in need of refurbishment

The Council were made aware that Hampshire County Council have a new grant available for the repair or installation of bus shelters. The Assistant Clerk had been in touch with HCC regarding two bus stops without shelters. They had confirmed that the space available was not sufficient to install shelters.

As a resident had sent an email request for somewhere to sit at the bus stop opposite the Travelodge, the Assistant Clerk agreed to investigate narrow benches for this stop.

Cllrs discussed updating the bus shelters with new paint and Perspex.

26.81.4 To discuss the open spaces with reference to EHDC-25-0055-OUT (allocation of new allotment space)

The developers of Barn Lane are in discussions about supplying the allotments with a possible extra 12 plots and some parking on the development to compensate for the path that will need to be installed alongside the allotments. Cllr Thomson had been in contact with the Allotment Society and would like to work in conjunction with them to ensure what is delivered is acceptable to all parties.

26.82 OS ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

26.82.1 To approve pitch maintenance contractor and to receive an update on the cricket feasibility study

The feasibility study had been received, however there was some confusion over the orientation of the wicket. Cllr M Pullen informed the Cllrs that quotes had been obtained and went through the report. No approval was given due to the uncertainty over the orientation of the wicket.

26.82.2 To approve the appointment of a new Groundsman at Oak Green Parade

Following the resignation of the current Groundsman, two interviews had been held with applicants for the role. The Assistant Clerk mentioned that both applicants were happy with the hours required and that insurance would have to be taken out. There was a general discussion to review the health and safety aspects of the tasks involved. It was agreed that the current practice of appointing a contractor should continue, with a three month review period, when a report on performance and feedback from the appointed contractor will be considered by the committee.

On the proposal of Cllr Medhurst which was seconded by Cllr Thomson, and with all Cllrs in agreement it was **RESOLVED** to appoint Candidate SH as the new Groundsman.

LOCATION	ACTION REQUIRED	STATUS	NOTES
Badger Close	Badger Orchard	Ongoing	Cllr to install nature cameras
	Badger run upkeep	Agenda	Tree work to review
Cemetery	Inspection	Ongoing	Annual inspection to take place August 2026
		Agenda	Bench placement/memorial opportunities.
Lymington Bottom Green		In progress	Planting in memorium
Oakgreen Parade	Flower bed maintenance	Ongoing	New gardener started March 2026
	Sleeper wall in car park	Ongoing	Structural Engineer appointed
	Groundsman	Agenda	New groundsman
	Repainting of parking spaces	Ongoing	To review spacing and repainting – future meeting
Recreation Ground	Containers	Ongoing	Removal of items to be decided- Volunteers?
	Football clubs/pitch	Ongoing	Ongoing liaison with clubs
	Water refill point	ACTION	clerk to check service date/agreement for July
	Artificial cricket pitch	IN PROGRESS	Quotes for consideration. Feasibility study being carried out.
	Allotment water meter	Complete	Quote to install smart meter?
Swelling Hill Pond	Car park remedial works	In progress	Contractor accepted
	Steps	Complete	
	Pathway	Complete	
	Well	In progress	Quotes being obtained
Kingswood Copse	Ongoing maintenance for nature and wildlife	Ongoing	
Climate change mitigation			
	Parish trees	Complete	Allotment works finished
	Bus stop maintenance	Ongoing	Clean booked for May 2026.
	Bus stop solar lights	IN PROGRESS	To be completed in August

26.83.1 To receive oral update from Clerk

It was noted that the allotment water meter was raised to allow for easier meter readings to be taken, Alton Ramblers had agreed to carry out maintenance to the footpaths. The price of pay and play on the tennis courts had been lowered as per a decision made at Full Council. The gardener had not been able to plant anything new at Oak Green Parade due to it being too dry but has now weeded and laid new topsoil. The laurel on Uplands Lane and the hedge along Jubilee Green were cut back. A new bench had been installed in the cemetery in block J following approval from this committee in June 2026 and the new steps had been laid at Swelling Hill Pond. A

structural engineer has also been appointed to create a plan for the sleepers behind Oak Green Parade and EHDC had been informed that work to the hedge should be carried out.

Cllr Gebbett left the meeting at 8.28pm.

26.83.2 Social media

We would like to promote that we are actively looking to create a group who will help maintain Swelling Hill Pond. The steps at the pond have also been reconditioned so that they are safer for residents.

26.84 OS NEXT MEETING – 2nd September 2026

26.85 OS Meeting Closed at 8.36pm.