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Minutes of the Meeting of the Open Space Committee held at Benians Pavilion on Wednesday 7th October 2026 at 6.03pm.

MEMBERS PRESENT: **Chairman Cllr Thomson, Cllr Coulson, Cllr Medhurst, Cllr M Pullen, Cllr Gebbett.**

IN ATTENDANCE: **Victoria Ursulean (Assistant Clerk), One member of public, Jo Tsigarides (Clerk at 6.40pm)**

26.96 OS APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
None noted.

26.97 OS OPEN SESSION – PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
Resident One spoke on behalf of the Ropley History Network regarding the archaeological dig that took place in the Spring at Swelling Hill pond. He provided various items that were found during the dig, including; a brick dating back to the 17th/18th century when there was a brick works situated there, flint dating back to -9,500/-8,000 BCE, and an arrowhead. He has requested carrying out another dig on the West side of the pond which will go to Full Council for approval.

26.98 OS DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS
None noted.

26.99 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 Space Committee meeting held on the 2nd September 2026.**

26.100 OS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

26.100.1 To discuss the budget for Open Spaces 2027 – 2028.
Cllr Thomson requested that each member of the committee look at the current expenditure and send their ideas on the budget to the Assistant Clerk. Cllr Gebbett mentioned that there should be a contingency in place due to inflation and asked for a projection of the year ahead to be made available.

26.100.2 To discuss allotments
Cllr Thomson gave an update regarding talks with the Allotment Association about the development on Barn Lane and LtO discussions.
Clerk Jo Tsigarides joined the meeting at 6.40pm.
The Clerk had suggested that they go to the National Allotment Society to get some guidance on the LtO. There will be a meeting with them to finalise the agreement.
It was also noted that fence work had been carried out to mend any broken sections.

26.101 OS ITEMS FOR REVIEW

26.101.1 To review and approve the Swelling Hill Pond policy
Cllrs discussed the hot weather clause for the policy but had currently not received guidance from any organisations on this. Therefore, it was considered to maintain the policy as it stands and make amendments when information is given regarding hot weather and archaeology.
The meeting was closed at 6.42pm to allow Resident One to comment that he had noticed a lot of fishing lines and debris around the pond which should be removed.

Signed: Date:

Standing orders were resumed at 6.43pm

26.102 OS ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

26.102.1 To approve a 7v7 pitch

There was a lengthy discussion regarding the costs endured in maintaining a football pitch which includes line marking at a cost of £150 per month. The fee for a youth team is currently £300 per year. It was suggested that the 7v7 could be marked over the 9v9 in a different colour. Cllrs were concerned about the amount of use this pitch would have and requested a blended schedule for both teams, suggesting they take it in turns to use it on Saturdays. It was also considered that the new team use the Council's line marker to mark the pitch themselves. The Assistant Clerk agreed to contact them.

26.102.2 To approve work to sleeper wall behind Oak Green Parade

An email had been received from EHDC regarding the sleeper wall behind Oak Green Parade as they have ownership of the laurel hedge and fence behind it. They have already reduced the bush and stated that should we wish, we can remove the fence and maintain that side of the hedge ourselves. They agreed that work to the wall could take place and that the roots of the hedge could be cut into vertically, but the stems should not be touched.

On the proposal of Cllr Gebbett which was seconded by Cllr Thomson, and with all Cllrs in agreement, it was **RESOLVED** to approve work to the sleeper wall behind Oak Green Parade and to start the tender process.

26.102.3 To approve the purchase of a grounds maintenance course for the Open Space contractor to then carry out a schedule of works.

The Council have acquired a grant to raise the standard of football pitches. As part of this, a grounds maintenance contractor needs to create a costed schedule of works to ensure the work is carried out correctly and according to the seasons. Our Open Space contractors have experience maintaining sports grounds, but the Council felt they would benefit from the training offered by The Grounds Management Association. This is a cost of £80 plus the contractor's time.

On the proposal of Cllr Thomson which was seconded by Cllr Gebbett and with all Cllrs in agreement, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the cost of a grounds maintenance course for the Open Space contractors.

26.103 OS AREA UPDATE AND REPORTS

The Arboriculturist had mentioned that the (beech) hedges surrounding the cemetery would need to be cut back soon which would be a cost of £1400. The hedges either side of the entrance to Uplands Lane have now been cut back along with tree and hedge work next to the Scout hut, near to the men's football pitch and to the entrance of the badger run. The graffiti was cleaned by Externiture who do twice yearly cleaning of our bus stops. The potholes at Oak Green Parade have been filled with scalpings prior to the final works taking place, and work to the benches at Swelling Hill Pond have also taken place.

The grant application to carry out improvements to the bus stops has been approved by HCC at a cost of £26,877. Four Marks News have also approved a grant to purchase the pre-approved picnic bench at Swelling Hill pond.

A WhatsApp group has been created for Friends of Swelling Hill Pond to organise the tasks that need to be carried out there.

A tree survey of Council owned trees at Badger Close has also been arranged for 12th October. A grant offered by Persimmon had been applied for the Bowls Club fence, awaiting approval.

LOCATION	ACTION REQUIRED	STATUS	NOTES
Badger Close	Badger Orchard	Ongoing	Cllr to install nature cameras
	Badger run upkeep	In progress	schedule of works to be created by arb.

Signed: Date:

Cemetery	Inspection	Ongoing	Annual inspection to take place August 2026
		Ongoing	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	Agenda	Out to tender
	Groundsman	Ongoing	New groundsman starting 01/09/26
	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	Ongoing	Next service due 01/01/27
	Artificial cricket pitch	Ongoing	Feasibility study received
	Allotment water meter	Ongoing	Quote to install smart meter?
Swelling Hill Pond	Car park remedial works	Complete	
	Steps	Complete	
	Pathway	Complete	
	Well	Ongoing	Angling Society investigating
	Benches	Complete	Bench work complete, new picnic bench to be installed
Kingswood Copse	Ongoing maintenance for nature and wildlife	Ongoing	
Climate change mitigation	Parish trees	In progress	Tree survey at Badger Cl to take place
	Bus stop maintenance	Ongoing	New grant application accepted
	Bus stop solar lights	Complete	Completed September 2026

26.103.1 Play area

A meeting had taken place earlier in the day to discuss what equipment was needed. New equipment was desired, but the budget currently doesn't allow for this. It was still being decided whether to carry out work to the play area before or after the extension to the Pavilion.

26.103.2 Social media

Cllr Thomson would like the area update details to be made available on social media.

26.104 OS EVENTS

26.104.1 Christmas Carols – to approve a date of 12th December.

Cllrs Gebbett and Coulson agreed to help with this event if a suitable date could be established. The Assistant Clerk said she would ask if the 5th December was appropriate for other interested parties and would ask local shops for any donations of mince pies and mulled wine.

26.105 OS NEXT MEETING: 4th November 2026

26.106 OS MEETING CLOSED AT 7.24pm

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

In accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the Council have the right to exclude the public and press from a meeting in respect of confidential or sensitive information which is prejudicial to the public interest and may pass a resolution, without notice, to do so.

Signed: Date: