



## FAIR OAK & HORTON HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

• 2 Knowle Park Lane, Fair Oak, Eastleigh, SO50 7GL ☎ (023) 8069 2403

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### SUMMONS

30 May 2023

Dear Member

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the **ASSET COMMITTEE** held on Monday, 5 June 2023 at 2.00 pm. at the Parish Office, 2 Knowle Park Lane, Fair Oak.

*Melanie Stephens*

Melanie Stephens, Parish Clerk

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** This meeting is open to members of the public. If you wish to speak at the meeting, you should submit a request by email to [clerk@fairoak-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@fairoak-pc.gov.uk) by 4 pm on Friday 2 June 2023.

### AGENDA

#### APOLOGIES

#### 1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To note any declarations of interest made by members in connection with an agenda item. The nature of the interest must also be specified.

#### 2. MINUTES (PAPER A, PAGES 3-4)

To note the minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2022.

#### 3. ASSET UPDATE (PRESENTATION)

To receive a presentation from the Operations Manager on site updates.

#### 4. GRASS-CUTTING STANDARDS POLICY (REPORT B) (PAGES 5-12)

To consider and approve the grass-cutting methods, schedules and weed control.

#### 5. PAVILION CLUBHOUSE (PRESENTATION)

As part of the second cricket wicket project, to agree a way forward regarding any possible alterations to the Pavilion Clubhouse.

#### 6. WORK PROGRAMME (REPORT C, PAGE 13)

To approve the work programme and make any amendments as necessary.

**To: Councillors**

Cllr S Anderson

Cllr G Meech

Cllr C Bird

Cllr D Scott (Chairman)

Cllr H Douglas

Cllr M Smith

Cllr K Forfar

Vacancy

**Officers**

Martin Johnson  
(Operations Manager)

Ms M Stephens (Clerk)



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**Minutes of the ASSET Committee Meeting**  
**held on Tuesday 7 June 2022 at 2.00 pm**  
**Parish Offices, Fair Oak**

P = present, Ab = absent, Ap = apologies

### Committee:

|    |                           |    |                       |
|----|---------------------------|----|-----------------------|
|    | Vacancy                   | Ap | Cllr Forfar           |
| Ab | Cllr Anderson             | P  | Cllr Meech            |
| P  | Cllr Bird (Vice Chairman) | P  | Cllr Scott (Chairman) |
| P  | Cllr Douglas              | Ab | Cllr M Smith          |

### Officers in Attendance:

Mr M Johnson, Operations Manager

### 1. PUBLIC SESSION

There were no members of the public present.

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were raised.

### 3. MINUTES (PAPER A)

#### RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Asset Committee meeting held on 12 January 2021 be noted.

### 4. ASSET UPDATE (PRESENTATION)

Members received a verbal presentation from the Operations Manager on site updates, attached in Appendix 1.

During the discussion, the following issues were raised: -

With regards to the new defibrillator donated by members of the public. Members requested that a formal letter of thanks be sent via the Deputy Clerk.

The library planting had been completed successfully and would be maintained by the Parish Council's operations team. The responsibility for weed spraying on the pavement and roads sat with the Borough. However, it was agreed that the Parish weed sprays immediately outside the library to enhance its appearance.

The tender process and evaluation had been completed with officers submitting a recommendation on the preferred contractor at the 20 June Council meeting. The current boardwalk was now rotten,

being approximately 12 years old. Members sought reassurance regarding the longevity of the materials used and the anti-slip surface for the replacement. The Operations Manager was more than satisfied with the design and materials suggested and had sought warranty/guarantees on these. Members were keen for work to start as soon as possible for the safety of residents.

Members requested that the artwork boards in the bus stop be repurposed, suggesting an artwork competition with local schools following the Greening Campaign launch where a current art competition would be showcased.

Members felt that the digital mapping system was a useful tool, particularly in plotting pollinator patches created by residents as part of the Greening Campaign as well as plotting council assets and responding to resident enquiries. Future member access was requested, and this would be investigated by the Operations Manager.

Following the presentation, Members congratulated the Operations staff for all their hard work.

**RESOLVED:**

That the contents of the presentation be noted.

Signed ..... Chairman

## ASSET COMMITTEE – 5 JUNE 2023

### GRASS-CUTTING STANDARDS POLICY/SCHEDULE

#### 1. RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1. That the Committee notes the contents of the report.
- 1.2. That the grass-cutting standards which include cut frequency, at Appendix 1 be approved; and
- 1.3. That the 'list of areas allowed flourish' identified for the 2024 season, as part of the adoption of 'No Mow May' as set out in Appendix 2 be approved.

#### 2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1. To seek views in relation to the suggested grass-cutting standards and maintenance regimes for areas of open space maintained by the Council and proposals to enhance and promote biodiversity in the Parish.

#### 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. Members will be aware that during the Covid lockdown the local environment, particularly parks and open spaces, became a greater source of appreciation to residents, benefitting their physical and mental wellbeing.
- 3.2. The Council's two parish-wide surveys undertaken in 2021 and 2022/23 showed that greater numbers of residents place the environment, open spaces, and climate change as priority areas. Indeed, many requested more wildflowers, planters, and trees and support the Council's greening efforts via its Greening Campaign.
- 3.3. Residents appear to be aligned with the national thinking and the Government's strengthening of environmental duties in recent legislation via the Environment Act 2021.
- 3.4. This has strengthened the Council's 'biodiversity duty' and as a public authority, the Council must conserve and enhance biodiversity and set and deliver policies to achieve this. The Council must 'complete your first consideration of what action to take for biodiversity' by 1 January 2024.
- 3.5. This report is only a small step towards meeting this new statutory duty and meeting our Corporate Plan 'Planet' priority to assist in our response to climate change. By making a small change to the Council's grass-cutting regime, we are allowing the creation of habitats for wildlife and 'nature corridors' that connect existing habitats. This allows species to move between habitats, maintain or increase populations and be more resilient to climate change.

#### 4. PROPOSALS

- 4.1. It is proposed that the Committee consider the proposed grass-cutting standards and maintenance regimes for areas of open space maintained by the Council as set out in Appendix 1.

- 4.2. In order to ensure that the Council is actioning its biodiversity duties, it is proposed that the identified areas listed at Appendix 2 be allowed to flourish as part of a 'nurture nature' campaign.
- 4.3. In order to assist essential pollinators during the start of the summer season to thrive, the Council supports the 'No Mow May' campaign from the 2024 growing season.

## **5. NEW GRASS-CUTTING REGIME/NO-MOW MAY**

- 5.1. The current maintenance regimes and frequency for grass-cutting vary depending on several factors: -
  - a) The purpose of the open space
  - b) The location of the open space
  - c) The condition of the open space
  - d) Weather conditions; and
  - e) On land owned by the Parish, the surrounding housing & road/path infrastructure (which is usually the responsibility of Hampshire County Council/Eastleigh Borough Council).
- 5.2. The grass-cutting regimes were in the past frequency based which specifies the number of cuts per season e.g., fifteen. However, with changes to the Council's viewpoint on the protection of nature, it is therefore suggested that the grass-cutting regimes be changed where applicable to performance-based which are less prescriptive and specify a standard (minimum – maximum length of grass) that has to be maintained rather than a number of cuts required. e.g., "Grass-cutting shall take place between March and October using appropriate approved machinery to achieve an even height of cut. The standard shall maintain the grass between a minimum height of 20mm and a maximum height of 75mm." The adoption of this approach will provide greater flexibility with grass-cutting operations. Additional grass cuts can be implemented within reason to maintain the standard or to react to the growth conditions.
- 5.3. The grass-cutting season is from 1 April to 31 October. Hedgerow cutting must not be carried out during bird nesting season (March–August).
- 5.4. The new suggested standards applied to grass-cutting in the Parish are set out in Appendix 1.
- 5.5. In order to ensure more resilient habits and ecosystems in the parish and meet our new biodiversity duties, it is suggested that the Council, join other local authorities in the 'No Mow May' campaign. The campaign encourages members of the public, local authorities and key stakeholders to help bees, butterflies, and other wildlife by letting wildflowers grow on lawns and green spaces throughout May instead of mowing them. The proposed areas left to flourish during May, as part of the campaign are set out in Appendix 2. Areas that are left to grow will need to be cut and collected at the end of the summer to create a perfect environment for wildflowers to flourish in the following season.
- 5.6. It is intended that grass-cutting will continue outside of these areas in order to maintain formal parks, sports grounds and the cemetery.

5.7. Members will be aware of the Council's commitment to be a net zero carbon authority by 2030. This proposed approach to grass-cutting and wildflower management will contribute to this. Any reduction in the frequency of mowing will reduce the use of diesel and the carbon emissions associated with them. In addition, to allow specific areas in our Parish to flourish will not only enhance the local environment but will assist in fulfilling our statutory biodiversity duty and assist in our response to climate change.

## **6. COMMUNICATION**

6.1. The Council has developed several tools including our 'wheel of services' to assist residents in identifying the areas of responsibility between the tiers of local government. However, it is clear, particularly where grounds maintenance is concerned, that more could be done to help. The Council will improve its grass-cutting webpage, including signposting to the parish interactive map which clearly shows what areas of land are under the Parish Council's responsibility. An extract from the mapping showing grounds maintained by the Council is attached at Appendix 3.

6.2. Officer will also produce a document with photos, detailing grass maintenance standards on a site-by-site basis. It is intended that this document also be published on the Council's website to give individuals a reference point and greater understanding of grounds maintenance standards the Council works too.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. Grass-cutting costs would increase if areas were to have increased maintenance and the additional costs would have to be funded by identifying savings elsewhere in the annual budget. Likewise, if the Council wished to extend its wildflower areas, a budget allocation, in the 2024/25 budget, would need to be made to support this.

## **8. CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

8.1. There is current (Section 40<sup>1</sup> of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006) and new legislation (Environment Act 2021) placing pressure on Local Authorities to reduce grass-cutting frequencies to support biodiversity through appropriate maintenance regimes.

<sup>1</sup> Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places the following biodiversity duty on all public bodies:

"Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity".

The duty applies to all local authorities, including parish and town councils. Its purpose is to raise the profile of biodiversity and make it a natural and integral part of policy and decision-making.

- 8.2. To ensure that the Council can meet our biodiversity duties effectively, the Council, as part of next year's budget, may wish to allocate funds for an external provider to undertake a biodiversity audit so that a local nature action plan can be developed.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

- 9.1. Given the historic changes to the grass-cutting regime, the growth in a number of areas now under the Parish's responsibility as well as new biodiversity duties, it seems a prudent time to review current maintenance regimes.



## **APPENDIX 1**

### **General Amenity–Standard 1- (Cuttings Flown)**

Grass-cutting shall take place between March and October using appropriate approved machinery to achieve an even height of cut. The standard shall be to maintain grass between a minimum height of 20-25mm and a maximum height of 75mm. To achieve this standard, it is anticipated that between 14 and 17 cuts shall be required during the growing season.

Generally applied to sites/areas such as communal residential amenities, allotments, open spaces & parks

### **Low Amenity-Standard 1- (Cuttings Flown)**

Grass-cutting shall take place between May and September using appropriate approved machinery to achieve an even height of cut. The standard shall be to maintain grass between a minimum height of 75mm and a maximum height of 350mm. To achieve this standard, it is anticipated that between 2 and 4 cuts shall be required during the growing season.

Generally applied to sites/areas such as uncultivated ground, low maintenance areas of parks, areas maintained to support biodiversity, community orchard & closed burial grounds.

### **High Amenity-Standard 1- (Cuttings Flown)**

Grass-cutting shall take place between March and October using appropriate approved machinery to achieve an even height of cut. The standard shall be to maintain grass between a minimum height of 15mm and a maximum height of 50mm. To achieve this standard, it is anticipated that between 24 and 28 cuts shall be required during the growing season.

Generally applied to sites/areas such as sports pitches, play areas & civic green spaces (Parish Office).

### **High Amenity-Standard 2- (Cuttings Collected)**

Grass-cutting shall take place between March and October using appropriate approved machinery to achieve an even height of cut. The standard shall be to maintain grass between a minimum height of 15mm and a maximum height of 50mm. All cuttings require to be boxed. To achieve this standard, it is anticipated that between 24 and 28 cuts shall be required during the growing season.

Generally applied to sites/areas such as sports pitches

### **Conservation Amenity-Standard 1- (Cuttings Flown)**

Grass-cutting shall take place once per year, during August or September using appropriate approved machinery. The standard shall be to achieve an even height of cut of 75mm.

Generally applied to sites/areas such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest & areas maintained to support biodiversity.

### **Wildflower Area- (Cuttings Flown/Collected)**

Grass-cutting shall take place once during April using an appropriate approved mower. A second cut shall take place during October using an appropriate approved rotary drum mower. The standard shall be to achieve an even height of cut of 75-100mm on both cuts. Grass at the base of obstructions and all mowing edges shall be cut within two working days of the

main area being cut. Grass arisings from the 2<sup>nd</sup> cut shall be turned after seven days and left for a further seven days before collection.

Generally applied to sites/areas such as wildflower meadows

#### **Burial Grounds- (Cuttings Flown)**

Grass-cutting shall take place between March and October using appropriate approved machinery to achieve an even height of cut. The standard shall be to maintain grass between a minimum height of 20-25mm and a maximum height of 65mm. To achieve this standard, it is anticipated that between 15 and 18 cuts shall be required during the growing season.

Generally applied to sites/areas such as burial grounds, cemeteries, and churchyards.

#### **General Amenity Bulb Areas- (Cuttings Collected)**

Grass-cutting shall take place once during June – July approx. 6 weeks after the last flowering, using an appropriately approved mower. The standard shall be to achieve an even grass height to the surrounding level.

Generally applied to sites/areas where naturalised crocus, daffodil, and narcissi bulbs have been planted including some verges and areas maintained to support biodiversity.

## **APPENDIX 2**

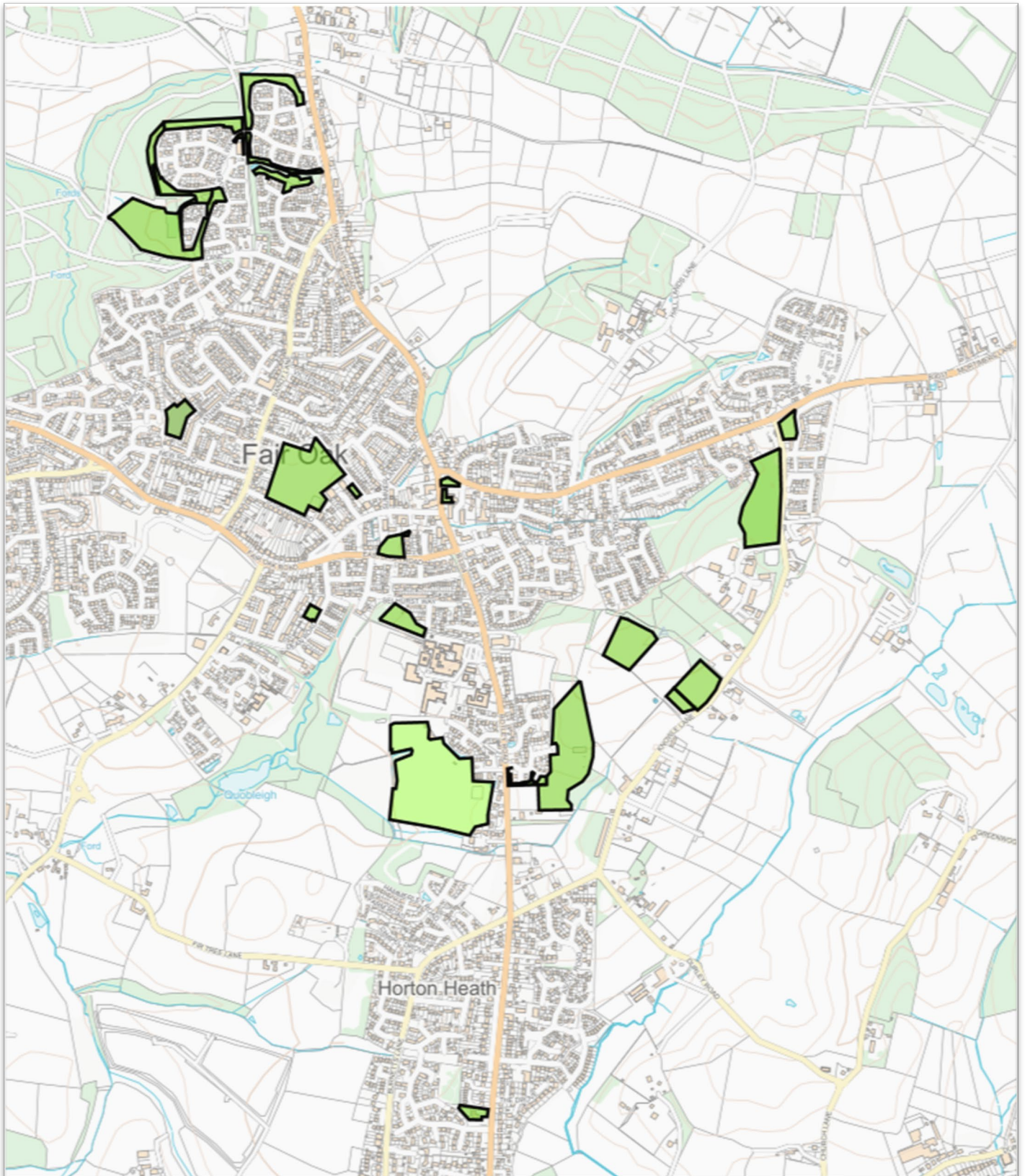
### **LIST OF AREAS IDENTIFIED TO FLOURISH DURING THE 2024 GROWING SEASON**

Within the selected areas listed, we aim to mow a swathe along footpaths maintaining safety for pedestrians and clear site lines. Additionally, in larger areas, we aim to mow swathes throughout the areas creating desired lines/paths and where appropriate maintain larger areas for recreational use.

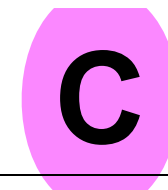
- Daisy Dip
- Community Orchard
- Crowdhill Green
- Horton Heath Community Centre
- Knowle Park
- New Century Park
- Lapstone Playing Filed
- Oak Walk
- Twynham's Field

## APPENDIX 3

AN EXTRACT FROM THE [ONLINE PARISH MAP](#) SHOWING GROUNDS MAINTAINED BY THE COUNCIL



## ASSET COMMITTEE – WORK PROGRAMME (2023/2024)



| ITEM                                       | OBJECTIVE  | METHOD                  | LEAD OFFICER                    |
|--|--|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>4 SEPTEMBER 2023</b>                    |  |                         |                                 |
| Sustainable Asset Management Policy        | To review and adopt a sustainable asset management policy  | Report                  | <b>Deputy Clerk/Clerk</b>       |
| Knowle Park Green Flag                     | To discuss steps needed to improve facilities at Knowle Park for Green Flag status                             | Report                  | <b>Clerk</b>                    |
| Second Cricket Wicket & Pavilion Clubhouse | To receive an update on the second cricket wicket project and consider any alterations to the clubhouse.       | Report                  | <b>Clerk/Operations Manager</b> |
| Twynams Field & Community Orchard          | To review the Twynams Field Spaces for Nature Project and steps for a similar project at the Community Orchard | Presentation            | <b>Clerk</b>                    |
| Tree Planting Schedule 2023/24             | To review the tree planting schedule for 2023/24   | Report                  | <b>Clerk/Operations Manager</b> |
| <b>8 JANUARY 2024</b>                      |  |                         |                                 |
| Benches/Memorial                           | General policy review  | Report                  | <b>Operations Manager</b>       |
| Dean Road Public Open Space                | Review use of this land  | Report                  | <b>Clerk</b>                    |
| Community Café                             | To review the Café build project and Phase 2 of the development of the site                                    | Presentation/<br>Report | <b>Clerk</b>                    |
| Play Area review                           | To review the condition of the Council's Play Areas and approve a Play Area Strategy                           | Report to<br>Committee  | <b>Clerk</b>                    |