

Minutes of the meeting of Sonning Common Parish Council on Monday 18 December 2017 in the Village Hall.

Present: Mrs Lewis (Chairman); Mrs Diwell; Mr Fort; Mr Greenwood; Mr Howe; Mr Kedge; Mr Rawlins; Mr Rinta-Suksi; Mr Rust and Mr Stoves. Also: Mr Collings (Parish Clerk) and Mrs Varnes (Deputy Parish Clerk).

Also present: Cllr D Bartholomew; Cllr P Harrison; Mr C McLoughlin Henley Standard; Ms A Burns and PC Taylor plus eight members of the public.

- 18/110 Apologies for absence:, Mr Jones and Mrs Phillips-Tilbury. No declarations of interests.
- 18/111 Public Question Time. Seven residents were present to register complaints about the new bus shelter provided at Brinds Copse which they said is too small and without adequate protection. The background to its being there was discussed and it was agreed that quotes for a better replacement should be sought and presented to the next meeting. Mr Negus raised concerns about how the youth club ClubSC is being managed. It was agreed that a meeting with him should be convened as soon as practicable.
- 18/112 Amber Burns of Florence House residential home gave a short briefing on the home's work, activities and situation a year after opening. An invitation to Members to visit was extended.
- 18/113 Police Report – circulated by email. PC Barb Taylor added comments that the main current issue is traffic management.
- 18/114 Minutes of previous meetings:
 - 114.01 Finance Committee held on 6 December 2017 were presented and approved.
 - 114.02 Planning Committee held on 6 November 2017 were presented and approved.
 - 114.03 Parish Council meeting held on 20 November 2017 were presented and approved.
- 18/115 County Councillor's Report. In addition to his emailed report Cllr Bartholomew reported on progress by Chiltern Edge including that the OCC Cabinet recognises and supports the leadership of the new headteacher and the wonderful job that parents have done for the children at the school; that the lack of broadband in the centre of Sonning Common is being addressed; that the surface in Appletree Close will be addressed and that he will attend the multi-parish meeting on the 3rd Bridge on 18 January.
- 18/116 District Councillor's Report. In addition to his emailed report Cllr Harrison supported concerns about the bus shelter; reminded that there are new data protection regulations coming into force on 25 May and confirmed that SODC Planning will not be put into 'special measures'.
- 18/117 Parish Clerk's Report - the extra workload from ClubSC and the Hall was noted.
- 18/118 Memorial Hall Field Working Party (MHFWP) – it was reported verbally that completion of the land transfer is progressing slowly.
- 18/119 Village Centre Working Party (VCWP) –Mr Howe commented on the BH-B report and asked that it be posted on the website and that a copy be sent to Cllr Bartholomew. It was noted that a complete set of title maps for the village centre will be essential – parish office to obtain.

- 18/120 Environment Working Party. Mr Rust reported progress on a number of fronts covering Widmore Pond, tree planting in play areas, clearing holly underbrush from the woodland and establishing its boundary with Woodland Trust
- 18/121 Play areas works. The meeting considered proposals to renew worn out surfaces in play areas as set out in the attachment. After discussion it was resolved to proceed with Baskerville Road to start with using Tiger Mulch and seeking as much grant funding as possible.
- 18/122 Budget and Precept. The meeting was briefed on a draft budget and precept and the options open for setting the precept. After discussion it was resolved to set the precept for 2018/19 at £123,847.00.
- 18/123 Matters for future agendas – no specific suggestions.
- 18/124 Under the 10 o'clock by Mr Rawlins proposed a motion "That Sonning Common Parish Council, using its general power of competence, will support Eye + Dunsden Parish Council and CAGE (the association of local parishes and Reading residents' associations) in opposing the Gladman/Phillimore application P16-S3630 for 245 new homes to be built to the north of Emmer Green at Appeal or indeed Recovery by the Secretary of State. SCPC will support rule 6 status at appeal or other expenditure on expert evidence and witnesses up to a limit of £4,000. Such support shall be conditional on other parties pledging to provide at least twice as much funding and will be further limited by this ratio."
- The sentiment of the motion was generally supported and it was agreed that the sentiment should be shared with CAGE but the motion should be tabled in January for formal ratification

The meeting closed at 21.52.

Next meeting: Monday 19 February 2018 at 20.00.

Chairman:

Dated:

Attachment A - Resurfacing of Village Play Areas

Baskerville Road, Lea Road, Churchill Crescent

Background

The grassed surfaces of all three Parish Council-owned and managed play areas at Baskerville Road, Lea Road and Churchill Crescent are showing signs of wear and tear. In some places the grass has worn away from the top of the grass tiles/mats which have been placed beneath the individual pieces of play equipment to reduce the impact of falls. The play area surfaces generally are uneven in places – particularly at Baskerville Road – which increases the risk of children falling when running around. Consequently, the impact absorbing material at the foot of much of the play equipment needs to be replaced and the play area surfaces generally levelled with new topsoil and re-turfed/re-seeded as necessary.

The recommendation to re-surface the play areas was made following the last annual play area inspection. It is estimated by the council's play area inspector that most of our play equipment has an expectancy of 8-10 years of further use.

Tendering Process

The Parish Office obtained three quotes between July 2016 and October 2017 for resurfacing the play areas.

The companies asked to submit quotes were ARD Playgrounds, of Lambourn Woodlands, Berkshire, Sovereign Play Equipment, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, and Star Rubber Environmental Ltd., of Langport, Somerset.

Both ARD Playgrounds and Sovereign Play Equipment submitted quotes for replacing the rubber grass tiles around the play equipment. ARD Playgrounds proposed to install the new surfacing material on top of the old; Sovereign proposed to remove the old material prior to the laying of the new. Both companies quoted for levelling out uneven surfaces in the play areas generally by laying topsoil and re-turfing/re-seeding as necessary.

Star Rubber Environmental Ltd. quoted for installing a rubberised surface – coloured Tiger Mulch or wetpour – beneath and around the play equipment to reduce the impact of falls. This would involve removing the grass tile material, digging out and laying suitable foundations for the rubber. The company did not quote for the levelling out of play surfaces generally.

Price Comparison

	Baskerville Road	
<u>ARD Playgrounds</u>	<u>Sovereign Play</u>	<u>Star Rubber</u>
£7,278	£16,078	£21,771 (Tiger Mulch) £23,569 (wetpour)
	Lea Road	
£5,643	£11,256	£30,358 (Tiger Mulch) £33,516 (wetpour)
	Churchill Crescent	
n/a	£4,938	£12,670 (Tiger Mulch) £13,726 (wetpour)

Recommendation

It is recommended that Tiger Mulch, manufactured and installed by Star Rubber Environmental Ltd., is used to replace the worn impact-absorbing surfaces at all three play areas on a phased basis, starting with Baskerville Road first during 2018. A total of £25K has been budgeted for play area equipment which should include surfaces 2018/19. It is recommended that the Parish Office attempts to boost this budget by applying for grants.

Tiger Mulch v grass tiles

Tiger Mulch has superior impact-absorbing qualities over grass tiles, is colourful and is guaranteed for five years. It meets all relevant European safety standards. Provided it is well-maintained by occasional cleaning/removal of leaf litter it could last up to 15 years. If play equipment is replaced the Tiger Mulch can be repaired to fit the shape of the new equipment. It has a critical fall height of 1.4m to 3m (depending on the depth of the surface laid) - meaning it is effective in reducing the impact of falls from these heights.

When grass tiles are submerged under grass they lose their impact-absorbing qualities and offer no greater protection than a fall onto grass. Lush grass has a critical fall height of only 1.2m. Consequently, manufacturers recommend that grass tiles are lifted and re-positioned every few weeks to maintain their impact-absorbing qualities.

Conclusion

It is felt the maintenance requirements of grass tiles would outweigh any benefits to be gained from their cheaper installation costs. Tiger Mulch surfacing would be safer, easier to maintain and would last into the foreseeable future.

Consequently, it is recommended that this council phases in the installation of Tiger Mulch around the equipment at all three play areas with the required levelling of the play areas generally to be costed and completed by a landscape contractor thereafter.

Ros Varnes, Deputy Parish Clerk, December 2017