

## METHWOLD PARISH COUNCIL

### OPEN SPACES POLICY and PROCEDURE

#### **Methwold Parish Council is responsible for the following Open Spaces**

St George's Churchyard Methwold contains many mature trees and is surrounded by an old chalk wall.

Fair Hill and Lower Green – located in Globe Street Methwold, there are trees and litter bins on Fair Hill.

Cemetery, which is on Stoke Road Methwold, includes many graves and headstones, seating, some mature trees and hedges.

Queen Elizabeth II Recreation Ground which has several pieces of professionally built and maintained play equipment.

The Pound small building adjacent to the recreation ground car park, used for storage.

In addition, the Parish Council is responsible for the maintenance of some streetlights in the parish, dog waste bins, notice boards and waste bins.

#### **Definitions**

**Risk Management** is the systematic application of management policies, procedures and practices to the tasks of identifying, analysing, assessing, treating and monitoring risks

**Open Spaces** for the purpose of this policy, Open Spaces incorporates the entire areas described and includes other facilities such as fencing, landscaping, signage, bins, pathways and other structures within the amenities.

#### **Tree Inspections**

These will be organised for all of the open spaces, by the Parish Clerk and performed by a qualified arboriculturist/tree surgeon on a regular every 3 year basis. A full report will be presented to the Parish Council. Last completed in 2021, the High priority tree work was completed in 2021 with medium priority work expected to be completed in 2022.

Recommendations will be implemented as appropriate (to ensure public safety), after discussion at the next available Parish Council meeting.

## **Reactive Inspections**

These will be undertaken based on complaints, requests, or notification of dangerous situations, reported to the Parish Clerk for action as needed.

These inspections will be undertaken by the Parish Clerk and 1 or more representatives of the Council, or a qualified contractor if necessary.

In exceptional circumstances, e.g. Dangerous tree, the Parish Clerk is empowered to organise immediate action to ensure the safety of the site.

## **Maintenance and response times**

The inspections will highlight the degree of severity of any issues reported. Many issues will be straightforward to resolve or be dealt with by planned maintenance agreed by the Parish Council. Others will need to be referred to a contractor, in which case, the normal tendering process will be implemented.

The Parish Clerk or Chairman has the authority to close any of the open spaces in the event of damage or a dangerous situation, until the problem has been rectified.

### **Insurance**

The Parish Council has public liability insurance to the value of £10,000,000

#### **1. Objective**

To create and maintain an attractive and safe environment for residents and their visitors by providing:

1.1 Open Spaces to include all Open Spaces and Open Space assets and external assets.

1.2 Approved Maintenance Standards and Inspection Regime

2. Areas of Open Spaces covered under the Policy

2.1 Children's Play Areas

2.2 Methwold Cemetery

2.4 St George's Churchyard

2.5 Other open spaces will be added by agreement

3. Management Procedure

The Open Spaces are managed through the Open Spaces Working Group with the day-to-day management of the amenities devolved to the Parish Clerk.

4. General Rights and Powers for all areas of Open Spaces covered under the policy (see Item 2)

4.1 The overall management and maintenance of all open spaces owned or leased by this Council and all related facilities including the trees on Council land, street furniture, play equipment and any other item which may properly be considered to come within the remit of the Working group, by virtue of being on or within an open space

4.2 To repair or replace any such item within the agreed budget, to include making such provision for their upkeep and improvement as is deemed necessary by the Working Group. This function will be devolved to Clerk of the Council

4.3 To remove any such items that are deemed unsafe for use by persons

4.4 To determine and define any policies appertaining to the open spaces, their care, use and maintenance within known Council guidelines

4.5 To recommend adequate budget provision for all open spaces and facilities within the care of the Working Group. Such budgets will be recommended to the full Council for approval.

4.6 To deal with any complaints or requests related to open spaces and associated facilities within known Council policies

4.7 To consider and make recommendations related to Health and Safety issues where they are relevant to the role of this Working Group, and to ensure, as far as possible, that all legal requirements are met.

4.8 To deal with any urgent items that arise appertaining to any open space or related facilities. In the case of an emergency, power to act will be devolved to the Clerk of the Council (if necessary/possible) in consultation with the Chairman of the Council. Any such action taken must be reported to all Working Group members immediately by e-mail and at the next Parish Council meeting.

4.9 In pursuance of the above, to spend up to the maximum on any previously agreed and allocated budget item without further reference to the full Council. Any spending that has not been previously agreed during the budget cycle will be sent for approval at the next appropriate full Council meeting.

4.10 The Clerk has delegated authority to approve minor expenditure up to £500 on any one item within the annual budget

4.11 To agree what to include in annual maintenance contracts for areas within their remit and recommend these for approval by full Council

4.12 To obtain at least 3 written quotes for maintenance contracts and approve contractors, this is currently on a 3 year contract, due to end November 2022.

4.13 To oversee the maintenance contract(s) to ensure value for money and quality control.

#### 4.14 Inspections

The inspection programme identifies all the known risks associated with these areas and generally takes one of the following forms:

- Routine (visual) Inspections
- Proactive Annual/Bi-annual Inspections
- Reactive Inspections

##### Routine (visual) Inspections

A Parish Council representative will conduct a weekly, visual inspection of the recreation ground and play equipment.

The routine visual inspection is required to identify obvious hazards that may result from vandalism (e.g. broken bottles), use, or weather conditions (e.g. dangerous surfaces). A report will be completed (along with the Play Area report) and submitted to the Parish Clerk after inspection.

Any defaults identified as a result of these inspections should be reported immediately to the Parish Clerk. Reports must be retained for 21 years.

##### Proactive Annual/Bi-annual Inspections

The Churchyard, Recreation Ground and Cemetery will be inspected by at least 2 members of the Open Spaces working group, recorded on the inspection sheets and submitted to the Parish Clerk, with recommendations for remediation(s) where appropriate.

These reports will be retained for 21 years.

4.15 To consider and make recommendations to full Council for Capital expenditure. To purchase and install any equipment within a realistic replacement programme.

4.16 To ensure that the litter bins and dog waste bins in the village maintained by the Parish Council are emptied on a regular basis by the appointed contractor.

4.17 To inform users of the dog fouling order in the village through appropriate signage

This Policy will be reviewed Annually?

Date of Approval

Review Date

