Report of ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE meeting 4th MARCH 2014 at 8.30 a.m.
in School House, High Street, Otford.

Present: Jane Lawrey, Charmian Marsh, Elizabeth Ward (Chair).

Apologies: Mary Evans.

Approval of minutes of last meeting.

There were no declarations of interest.

Oxenhill Woods – The weather has been exceptionally wet, therefore it has been impossible to remove the stacks of timber. Hopefully they will be cleared in the next couple of months and the damaged rides reinstated. On 9th Feb it was reported that a group of youths were in the area with air rifles. Police were called, no report has been received as to whether the youths had been spoken to. This is the second time the youths have been seen with air rifles. It is not acceptable in this area. The next meeting of the Oxenhill Management Group will be on Weds. 12th March at 10 a.m. in School House.

Chalkpit Area – a report has been received from Brian Thomas (OPC Tree Warden), there are signs that a number of small trees have been felled or broken due to the weight of ivy in them. None of these need removing as they are out of the way of the public area. It is hoped that the NWKCV will be able to sever ivy on trees south of the Oast complex when they come in April.
There is a large Ash tree at the rear of Mr Sterling’s vacant plot (on chalkpit land) that appears to be dead, could its condition be checked?
One house in Tudor Drive is still throwing garden rubbish cuttings into the area. A further letter is required.

Litter picking - is still continuing in Station Road from Pilgrims’ Way East to ‘Gullivers’ along the footpath to Tudor Drive including the chalkpit, up Tudor Drive and back along Pilgrims’ Way East to Shoreham Road. A notice has been displayed at the top of the steps from the station on the down side, in the hopes that it will encourage folk to find a bin for their rubbish or take it home. (There is a plastic sack available on the platforms for rubbish). Railtrack have not yet been contacted about a more permanent bin being provided at the top of the steps.
It is noted that a new Telephone Junction Box has been installed at the end of the footway at the Pilgrims’ Way East.

Duck House – Following ‘High Jinks’ this has now been refloated but it is noted that work will be required, particularly to replace the roofing felt. This is in hand with BT and NC.

Pond – It has been suggested that a bench be installed by the willow tree opposite the Pharmacy. This was discussed, but it was felt that this could be a dangerous position as traffic from Station Road could be a problem. Young children could run out into the road. Its position could also be a distraction to drivers. Also ask the opinions of the rest of councillors.

Graveyard Maintenance – It was felt by those present that in view of the stringent budgetary conditions under which OPC is forced to operate, there is insufficient funding at present to take on the maintenance of graves and trees. The grass cutting should still continue as it is already a part of OPC expenditure.
Long Border in Palace Approach – This need a Community working party the date of 17th March has been arranged starting at 9.30 a.m. weather permitting. Posters will be displayed in the village requesting help with this project.

Recreation Ground – There will be a ‘Flag that Poo’ on 1st April starting at 8 a.m. Dog fouling is still a problem. If the count is excessive, all dogs will have to be kept on leads on the rec., which will be a great shame for responsible dog owners.

Palace Park Wood – The whole area is very wet and muddy. Contact is to be made with the Steward of Woodland Trust to see if the ditches can be cleared before the autumn and winter.

Telston Park – Tree work has been done by a resident of a property in Telston Lane, adjoining the area without prior permission of OPC and the debris has been left in the Park. A letter has been sent by OPC and a reply is awaited.

While the Park was being checked by a member of the Committee following the above she was shocked to find that a resident in Darnets Field had also used the park to deposit a considerable amount of sawn timber and branches from a large conifer which formed part of the boundary of the property abutting Telston Park. It was noted that the tops of the remaining conifers had also been cut and branches added to the heap. In addition a sawn trunk of Elder with a large head of Ivy, left in the centre of a grassed area, appears to have come from the same property.

The 6ft chain link fence has been damaged in this operation. Photographs were taken and given to the Parish Office. A letter has been sent to the resident pointing out that this is an OPC-owned amenity area and asking that the debris be removed without burning or bringing a vehicle on to the site.

(The access path is extremely muddy due to the heavy rainfall over the past couple of months and the footpath through the Park is used by many residents of the surrounding roads).

Hale Lane Rec. – The tree that was overhanging the old swings has been removed.

Planters – A letter is to be written to the Shops in the Sevenoaks Road asking that it would be lovely if the planters could be identical when planted up for the summer and thanking them for their interest in enhancing the area.

Nature Event 22nd June – Preparations for the Treasure Hunt clues have started, and some prizes have been collected.

Correspondence -
Information from SDC – Free service ‘Breathe Easy with the New Air Alert Service’
Tree Inspection Report – Winter2013/4. Some work has already been completed. There is concern over the Christmas tree on the village green. It may have to be removed. Discussion should take place regarding possible replacement with a new permanent tree or the purchase of an annual tree?
Email (3/2/14) re The Darent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme. His application for HLF was not successful this time round. There was a positive response towards a resubmission in May2014. fingers crossed!
Email from KCC (5/2/14) re Footpath SR51 Pickmoss Lane to Soaks Road will be closed during half term for resurfacing work. Now completed.
Email from Nick Scott KCC (19/2/14) re trees on the verge of Station Road near junction with Pilgrims’ Way East one tree marked ‘marked’ with orange paint showing basal decay, not immediately hazardous. 1month work order to have tree felled, and sever the ivy on the other trees.
Email from a resident (21/2/14) re. The Duck House on the Pond. Querying damage and repair.
Email from resident 23/2/14 re Aircraft increase and noise.
Copy of OPC letter sent to resident in Darnets Field 27/2/14 re. Depositing of cut timber.
Email from resident 2/3/14 reply to the above.
Report on the meeting of the Darent Catchment Improvement Group 28/2/14 at South Darent.

Community Working Party 17th March 9.30a.m at the long border abutting Pond House.
A Dog fouling check of the main rec. Tuesday 1st April, starting at 8a.m.!

Date of next meeting Tuesday 1st April in School House immediately following the ‘flagging’ on the rec.

Cllr. Elizabeth Ward. (Chairman) 5/3/14