

## Report of the Parks and Open Spaces Working Party for 2020-2021

The parish council's open spaces have been a great asset to residents during the coronavirus lockdowns of the past year. In spite of restrictions, regular grass and hedge cutting have been continued as usual and regular maintenance carried out on bus shelters, litter bins, village signs and benches in the 3 villages. First of all then, many thanks are due therefore to our groundsmen Ralph Thomason and Mick Holt for all their hard work over the past year and especially to Julie for co-ordinating everything so efficiently from home.

The working party has met 3 times over the past year. A socially distanced meeting in Ramsden Heath in June 2020 was held to discuss measures to safely open playgrounds on July 4<sup>th</sup>. Notices reminding residents of Covid 19 restrictions were agreed on and put on the entrances to both recreation grounds and also on the play area gates. Our recreation grounds and play areas are very popular with residents and again received awards from the Essex Playing Fields Association: a gold award for Ramsden Heath and a merit for South Hanningfield. They have been in constant use during lockdown.

Two further Zoom meetings were held in November 2020 and March 2021. Before each meeting members of the working party walked round areas of the 3 villages in pairs and made a note of any work that needed to be done. Our findings were then passed on to Julie to be actioned. Apart from the costs of day to day maintenance, a major expense this year was the removal of 50 metres of hedge along the south side of the recreation ground and the erection of a new fence next to the footpath.

The working party also has continued with a programme of remedial works recommended for some of our trees and has asked Luke Harlow, a local tree surgeon, to undertake an annual tree

survey. In autumn 2021 (possibly with the support of the Woodland Trust) the working party also intends to carry out more tree planting in the parish, initially at the bottom of the large field in Dowsetts Ride.

Finally, the working party continues to investigate different possibilities for extending and renovating the basketball area in Ramsden Heath recreation ground. Members of the working party are currently looking at various play areas recommended by contacts at Chelmsford City Council.

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Sue Walker

April 2021