

Minutes of a meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT** Committee held on Thursday 24th March 2022 at the Bodle Street Green Village Hall

PRESENT: Councillors Andy Long, Chris Wells, Roy Iremonger and Caroline Thompson

Also present: Jackie Cottrell – Parish Clerk
Cllr Charlie Saunders
4 members of the public

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Karen Cook – Family commitments

00483 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - NONE

ELECTION OF AN ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Cllr Caroline Thompson was nominated to be the new Environment Chairman.

00484 RESOLVED to elect Cllr Caroline Thompson as the chairman of the Environment Committee

MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment Committee meeting held on the 25th November 2021 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

00485 RESOLVED to adopt the minutes of the Environment Committee held on the 25th November 2021

MATTERS ARISING

None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A member of the Wild About Warbleton group spoke to support the importance of working closely with Orchard Landscapes and to take a pragmatic view regarding mowing decisions. She was pleased the Tom Beckworth bank had not been mowed and asked Members to note that area in front of the village hall was too small to be of any significant value to WAW. She thanked the PC for their grant and further updates would follow in due course.

Cllr Long confirmed initial discussions had already taken place with Orchard Landscapes who were aware of the environmental obligations. Cllr Long would ensure all parties liaised when it was appropriate to do so. The Chairman of Environment asked Members to note there had been no change to the Council's mowing policy last year as a result of discussions with WAW. The mowing regime had been decided by the PC and Orchard Landscapes. WAW were not responsible for any ragwort

which had started to grow. Cllr Wells expressed strong concerns that ragwort outbreaks had occurred as a result of a relaxed mowing regime and the Parish Council had a civic responsibility to prohibit ragwort growing on its land.

Another member of the public expressed concerns that for the previous 8 years the land in front of Shepard's Cottage had been mowed regularly. However, last year it had only been mown on a few occasions and now ragwort had run wild.

Another member of public also had similar issues with thistles and ragwort growing outside their house for the first time. They reported there had been sightline problems for cars as a result of the Tom Beckworth bank not being mowed. They were in support of the idea in principle but believed the wrong areas had been chosen.

ENVIRONMENT TERMS OF REFERENCE AND GUIDANCE

6.1. To note the amended changes to the Terms of Reference

Noted

6.2. To consider and agree any further changes

It was agreed the Environment Terms of Reference were now adequate but they would be added to a future agenda for review in due course as a matter of good practice.

SLR

7.1. Update on the SLR meeting

The Clerk clarified it was her responsibility to chase the progress of outstanding items from the SLR meeting which would include the overhanging hedges that Cllr Long had reported.

The Clerk was waiting for Ian Johnson from East Sussex Highways to confirm the accuracy of her notes from the site visit.

7.2. To review the traffic survey report – Cllr Smythe

Cllr Long confirmed the traffic survey statistics were at an acceptable level.

Cllr Iremonger expressed disappointment that North Road at Bodle Street Green was not the road that had been monitored.

Ian Johnson had suggested roundels were a possibility and the option could be an item on a future council agenda.

Cllr Wells suggested the speed watch cameras might be better positioned outside the Dunn Village Hall, which was the location printed on any speeding tickets, as it is more in the heart of the village and where speeding traffic could cause an accident.

Another option would be the introduction of mobile speed indication devices at a cost of £2,395 but not all councillors were in agreement.

The Chairman of the Environment Committee hoped that some action would be taken as a result of the speed surveys which had come at a considerable cost to the Parish Council.

7.3. To consider and agree a new process for reporting Highways issues to improve effectiveness of SLR meetings

The Committee noted that several councillors had spent considerable time preparing for the SLR meeting and the Chairman asked the Committee to review this process. Cllr Long stated that Highways had suggested a more continual approach to reporting issues might be more effective although this raised accountability issues. The Clerk to investigate if Councillors were given higher priority than members of the public when reporting issues to Highways. It was **AGREED** Cllr Long and Cllr Williamson would complete a round robin of the parish highlighting any areas of concern ahead of an SLR meeting and the Clerk to keep a log of SLR issues raised by councillors and reviewed at every Environment Committee. The Clerk to endeavour to submit the SLR agenda two weeks ahead of the meeting date.

7.4. Update on outstanding issues reported to Highways

The Clerk confirmed a drainage engineer had carried out an investigation of the Iwood Dip on the 17th March. East Sussex Highways were now in the process of compiling their findings to determine the next course of action. The Clerk to include ESCC Bob Bowdler in all correspondence.

7.5. Removal of signage after work on the highway has been completed

Cllr Long reported he now had a contact from ESCC who he could speak directly to regarding any concerns with the above. Cllr Long would be monitoring the signage removal in the parish and reporting any findings to ESCC and the PC.

7.6. To consider and agree new items for the next SLR meeting

The Chairman confirmed this item had been covered under 7.3. The Clerk confirmed she would ensure all councillors would be reminded of the date of the next SLR meeting and encouraged to put forward agenda items with photographic documentation and invited to the meeting.

ASSET REGISTER

8.1. To agree a prospective date for an asset register check

Cllr Long would organise an asset register check with Cllr Wells, Cllr Thompson and the Clerk in the next couple of weeks.

8.2. To review the asset register items and agree any items in need of further investigation

It was confirmed the Warbleton Church notice board did not belong to the Parish Council. The condition of the assets would be reviewed during the upcoming asset register check.

INFRASTRUCTURE BUDGET

9.1. To review and agree any infrastructure repair quotes

The Clerk confirmed £1,140 was available to spend from the infrastructure budget. There would be a further £2000 available from the 1st April 2022.

Rushlake Green notice board – rotten legs

The Clerk summarised the quotes she had received from several contractors and advised the committee there were two options: to make good or to replace with a brand-new notice board.

The idea of metal rather than wooden legs was proposed. It was suggested the legs would be more durable, possibly cost less and could be painted the colour of the notice board to look natural.

It was **AGREED** the item would be deferred. The Clerk was instructed to obtain new quotes for refurbishing the existing wooden notice board and replacing the rotten wooden legs with metal ones and obtaining photos of metal legs if possible.

Rushlake Green Village Sign

The Chairman invited comments on the quotes circulated.

Cllr Wells informed Members the sign was originally made for the PC by a member of the Warbleton Charity. Cllr Wells had previously re-painted the sign himself and was happy to do so again free of charge.

It was agreed the oak post should NOT be re-set in concrete as quoted by one contractor. It was necessary to reset sandstone around the base.

It was **AGREED** the Clerk would liaise with Agrifactors to amend the quote as follows taking into account the following:

Cllr Wells to remove the existing village sign and post. Cllr Wells to repaint the sign free of charge and provide the stainless-steel bolts that go through the sign to attach to the new post.

Agrifactors to provide the new post and then attach the sign to the new post and install into its original position.

The new quote would be taken to the next Full Council meeting as a recommendation for approval.

Osborne House Car Park

The item was deferred as the Clerk was still waiting for further quotes.

OSBOURNE HOUSE CLOCK UPDATE

10.1. To review and consider the quotation options for the Osbourne House clock to be serviced

Cllr Wells clarified the clocks historical significance.

The Chairman stated the clock was working and was in good order at the present time.

The Committee **AGREED** the Clerk would obtain 3 quotes from companies listed on the BHI website who provide a list of accredited turret clock repairers for a service but NOT quotes for a full refurbishment.

BODLE STREET GREEN WAR MEMORIAL UPDATE

The Clerk had not had time to investigate a possible grant for the refurbishment work. It was agreed the works suggested in the health check report were not urgent. It was **AGREED** that the war memorial would be monitored on an annual basis when the asset register check was completed.

TO AGREE THE SPECIES OF TREE TO BE PLANTED FOR THE QUEENS GREEN CANOPY

The Chairman referred Members to correspondence from the Chairman of CIL advising the location suggested was not ideal for a tree.

It was noted the PC had never granted permission for the telephone line located above the potential tree site.

The item was discussed in great detail and it was agreed a Cherry tree was not a good choice due to its short lifespan.

It was **AGREED** a maintenance plan would need to put in place in the future regarding watering and weeding of the tree (1m weed free around the circumference of the tree in the first year)

- 00486** It was **RESOLVED** the Parish Council would plant a Walnut tree at the agreed location.

TO REVIEW THE BIFFA AWARD GRANT LETTER

13.1. To agree the Parish Council will apply for a grant for a particular project

The Clerk clarified this item was not applicable for parish councils.

RUSHLAKE GREEN VILLAGE GREEN GRASS CUTTING

14.1. To review the correspondence from three parishioners regarding cutting around The Green

The Chairman clarified that the parishioners who had written to the PC were all present at the meeting and there had also been one further supporting letter from another resident living on The Green.

The item was debated by the Committee who noted the letters were with merit and the changes made by the PC had not been successful and it was **AGREED** to revert back to the original contract.

The Chairman of the Parish Council thanked Wild About Warbleton for all their hard work.

It was agreed to allow the front slope of the Tom Beckworth bank to flower and seed before cutting.

- 00487** It was **RESOLVED** to re-instate the PC's original mowing regime.

14.2. Wild About Warbleton Update

The Chairman requested the Clerk have a separate agenda item for WAW items although it only needed to feature on a future agenda when there was a specific issue or update.

The Chairman informed Members the signage that WAW had commissioned as a result of their grant award for the wild flower verges were ready and they would be installed in the next few months. There had been a delay as the ESCC ecologist had retired and WAW were establishing contact with the replacement staff member as clarification was required regarding licences for any new posts.

TO CONSIDER SUPPORTING HORAM PARISH COUNCILS LETTER TO EAST SUSSEX HIGHWAYS

15.1. To consider sending a letter to East Sussex Highways regarding services required from their prospective new contractor

The committee fully supported the letter written by Horam Parish Council.

It was noted the licence fees were exorbitant for installing items on land owned by ESCC and disappointingly ESCC self-monitored their work making it difficult for them to be held to account.

- 00488** It was **RESOLVED** the Clerk would write a letter to East Sussex Highways supporting the letter sent from Horam Parish Council

BIKE HOOP UPDATE

It was agreed bike hoops would be an item on a future Environment agenda. It was noted the location of the bike hoops would need careful consideration.

BT POLES/INFRASTRUCTURE ON PARISH COUNCIL LAND

It was agreed to check the number of BT poles on PC land when the asset register check was completed and the Clerk to report the matter to BT.

UPDATE ON THE FIVE WILD FLOWER ROUTES

The Chairman suggested the PC consider taking part in the ESCC wildlife verge trial for 2022, which the PC voted against last year. She stated this would benefit insects and wildlife and create more wildlife corridors.

Some members expressed concern about the consequences of joining in with the scheme. However, the Chairman assured Members that ESCC had been quick to respond to sightline issues and had shown sound management. 12 parishes participated last year.

It was **AGREED** the PC would like to participate in the ESCC rural verges trial. However, the Clerk would confirm that the PC would receive an annual review and there would be a caveat in place to allow the PC to withdraw from the trials the following year.

TO CONSIDER THE SHORT AND LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

A short discussion ensued.

Long term objectives suggested were:

Promoting good stewardship of the countryside & long term bio-diversity.

Short-term objectives were:

Maintaining the PC assets – It was noted there would need to be a rolling replacement programme for benches.

It was suggested there could be a bench where collective plaques could be situated.

It was noted there was a brass plaque resolved at a Full Council meeting several years previously for Brian Whitton who was the long-standing Chairman of the PC. The Environment Committee expressed a desire to arrange a short ceremony once the plaque had been purchased.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To be confirmed

The meeting closed at 8.48pm

