

NOTES ON A MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT WORKING GROUP (EWG)

10th October 2022 via Teams

Attendees: Cllr John Turner (JT), (Chair), with Dave Pate (DP), Alan Ford (AF), Ken Howes and Lizzie Pannell (LP)

In attendance: Katie Neve (KN) Clerk and Catherine Barrett (CB) Assistant Clerk

Members of Public: There were no members of the public present.

1. Public Open Session

There were no members of the public present.

2. Annual Review of the council's environment policy

JT asked for feedback from members and the following points were made:

- KH asked whether the Planning Committee addressed environmental considerations when looking at planning applications. KN said that committee members did look into environmental impact when considering applications, but she did not think it was recorded anywhere that they were required to do so. DP said that the policy should state that the Planning Committee were required to show due regard for the council's environment policy when considering applications.

It was agreed to set an action point for DP and KH to produce appropriate wording and email it to CB to add to the policy in time for the Full Council meeting on 7th November. The policy would then be passed on to the Planning Committee Clerk to work into the committee's terms of reference.

3. Update on Councillors who have stepped down from the council

JT reported that Ed Langridge had stepped down from the council, which was currently looking to fill two councillor vacancies. New councillors would be encouraged to join the working group to make up numbers.

4. Review of rewilding at Pocket Park

- To update on progress since last meeting and consider any steps to be taken before winter.
- AF reported that Fungi had appeared in the last month. He said that the reduced mowing notices should now be removed and stored, grass be mown and brambles cut back so that the area was tidy for winter.
It was agreed to set an action point for CB to ask the mowing contractor to cut the grass, and look into getting the parish council Groundsman to do the other jobs.
- Since the Laurel bushes - which had spread across the park - did not add any value to its biodiversity, it was agreed that they should be cleared. KN said it was possible that the mowing contractor could undertake this work and **an action point was set for CB to ask him for a meeting at Pocket Park with JT and AF to scope out what was required before he provided a quote.**
- CB had contacted the Woodland Trust asking them if they would provide plants to fill in the gaps in the hedging on the roadside of the park. She had not heard back and would chase.
- The ornamental gateway at the entrance of the public footpath adjoining pocket park turned out to have sentimental/historical value for some family/friends of the residents who had originally had it installed. It was agreed to fill in the hedging and generally tidy up around the entrance to the footpath instead; this would hopefully make official entrance to the footpath more visible. It was agreed to ask for funding to pay the balance of the noticeboard which Ed Langridge had obtained a quote for. Members agreed they were happy to share responsibility for updating the noticeboard regularly. **An action point was set for AF and JT to produce the first update.**
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- DP asked if the rewilding of Pocket Park was being archived as documenting the different species of plant and wildlife was important for future generations. It was agreed that having an official archive was a good idea. AF had been photographing and listing the growth at Pocket Park throughout the summer and CB had saved these on file.

An action point was set for CB to liaise with AF about any outstanding photos and records.

A further action point was set for CB to add the Sussex Lund funding application as an item on the next meeting agenda.

5. Rewilding plans for The Green at Old Groombridge

- To consider a proposal by Cllr Simon Norton that he and Old Groombridge residents should rewild an area of The Green, and any involvement the EWG should have in this.

It was agreed that this project should be undertaken by Cllr Norton and the residents, but that the EWG would partner and advise if needed. An action point was set for KN to talk to the mowing contractor about what needed to be done and for CB to liaise with the Amenities Clerk.

A further action point was set for AF to put together a list of rewilding recommendations so that the EWG could work with residents on an advisory basis.

6. Review of alternatives to Glyphosate

- To update on progress since last meeting and decide next steps.
- JT said that the purpose of this item was to review members' findings since the last meeting and agree on recommendations to go to Full Council.
- JT referred members to the spreadsheet put together by CB, which showed where, how often and how weeds were currently controlled at Langton Green Recreation Ground. It was agreed that weed control was essential for all the areas listed.
- Alternative methods, including strimming and hot foam, were considered. JT asked members to bear in mind that his findings so far all indicated that alternative non-herbicide products were not as effective at weed control as Glyphosate. Anything else would require more effort and more cost.
- KN added that alternative products would either require the Groundsman to do more hours of work, or, in the case of hot foam which required a specific type of applicator, the services of a contractor. CB said that this cost implication would be a significant consideration when Full Council came to vote on the matter.
- The possibility of sharing the costs of a hot foam applicator with other parish councils was discussed. However, it was concluded that the logistics of sharing an applicator in peak growing season would not be viable.
- It was agreed to recommend to Full Council that the use of Rosate 360 as a method of weed control be banned with immediate effect, with the exception of Knotweed which was known to cause expensive damage if left to spread. A recommendation would be made that strimming be used wherever possible, together with other alternative methods, which the working group would research further before the start of the next growing season. LP said that it was important to see the issue of finding alternatives that worked as an evolving process. It was agreed that the priority for now was to make a start.

An action point was set for JT to do further work with CB on producing a list of recommendations and any additional information needed in time for Full Council. KN said that JT could probably attend the full council meeting remotely, but she would confirm with KALC that this was allowed.

7. Any other business

- DP requested that a media release be produced once a ban of Rosate 360 had been agreed.
- KN appealed to members to speak to neighbours and friends in the parish about joining the working group. It was agreed that a social media appeal for younger members was a good idea.
- LP would follow up with the Speldhurst Guides about joining them for an environment themed session.

- CB said she would send provisional dates for 2023 working group meetings when she circulated minutes. She asked members to let her know if the dates and times proposed were not convenient.

There being nothing further to discuss, the meeting ended at 8.30pm.