

Minutes of a meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT** Committee held on Thursday 25th November 2021 at the Bodle Street Green Village Hall

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

Also present: Jackie Cottrell – Parish Clerk
1 member of the public

00414 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
Karen Cook – Family commitments

00415 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - NONE

ELECTION OF A TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN

Cllr Andy Long, Chairman of the Parish Council volunteered to chair the meeting.

00416 RESOLVED to elect Cllr Andy Long as the temporary chairman of the Environment Committee

MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment Committee meeting held on the 4th March and the 6th May 2021 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

00417 RESOLVED to adopt the minutes of the Environment Committee held on the 4th March and the 6th May 2021

MATTERS ARISING

The Chairman questioned the receipt of a detailed management plan from WAW.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A member of Wild About Warbleton questioned the flexibility of the Parish Council's mowing contract and whether the details of the contract were available to view.

The Chairman confirmed the Parish Council and the contractor were working side by side. The contractor had been given the power to take a pragmatic view with mowing decisions in order to try and preserve and enhance the environment. In conclusion there was flexibility but there would need to be compromises made by all parties and any changes would continue to be monitored closely.

Another Councillor emphasised the Parish Council had taken account of the requests of WAW and had taken a sympathetic view to their cause.

The member of WAW thanked the Parish Council for their efforts so far and assured Members the group would continue to carry out surveys in

areas in and around The Green as well the five wildflower routes but appreciated the practicalities of any drastic changes suggested.

She thanked the Parish Council for supporting the five routes and reported it had been a successful year, the group had been pleased with the significant bio-diversity that had resulted from the lack of mowing. There had been no traffic accidents or safety concerns raised.

They were continuing to work on a management plan for The Green and surrounding areas.

The Chairman was assured by another Councillor that ESCC would be providing an ecologist report in the future. The same Councillor would also be requesting a report summarising the results of the 14 separate parish councils who had trialled the ESCC grass cutting trial.

ENVIRONMENT TERMS OF REFERENCE AND GUIDANCE

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

6.2. To consider any further changes

It was **AGREED** to defer this item to the next Environment meeting when a permanent Chairman might be residing over the Committee.

SLR

7.1. Update on the SLR meeting

The Clerk confirmed to the Committee ESCC had approved the minutes of the recent SLR meeting. The Clerk confirmed the blocked drains at Bodle Street Green had been cleared.

Ruby Brittle, Stakeholder & Engagement Manager at ESCC had requested that Trevor Merchant and the Head of Customer Services would contact the Parish to arrange a meeting to discuss the concerns flagged at the SLR meeting and to address any outstanding queries about works being delivered by utility companies in the parish.

Deer signs had been erected near Marklye Lane although some of these had already been stolen.

Corinne Black, Customer Service Manager at East Sussex Highways had confirmed that the Senior Highway Steward had carried out an inspection of the locations that Cllr Long had highlighted overgrown trees and hedgerows. Multiple areas of vegetation that needed to be cut back had been identified. They were on privately owned land so this matter had been referred to the Licencing and Enforcement Team who would be writing to the land owners requesting relevant action is taken.

7.2. Update the Clerk on any issues to be reported to Highways

The Clerk requested Members report any highways issues to herself and she would raise them with Highways.

The Chairman stated his displeasure at the slow reactions of Highways to move the road closed signs and the diversion signs at the Cowbeech end of Cowbeech road at the junction with Hammer Lane which were still in situ two weeks after he had raised concerns about this matter to them personally at the SLR meeting.

The Clerk to contact Highways for an update.

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

It was **AGREED** to add - Removal of signs when works on the highway has been completed – to the next agenda.

A Councillor suggested that the Parish Council should consider a process for reporting Highways issues in order to ensure SLR meetings are effective as possible.

It was **AGREED** this would be considered at the next Environment meeting.

INFRASTRUCTURE BUDGET

8.1. To review and consider any infrastructure repair quotes

The Clerk reported she had only received one quote for the broken drain cover despite contacting several companies. The reasons for the lack of responses were likely to be due to the job being so small and therefore unattractive to contractors. Due to the urgency of the works, it was **AGREED** to proceed with this quote.

The same company had also been asked to quote for the repair works to the notice board and village sign. They had then been asked to break down their quote and specify the individual costs of the notice board and village sign repairs but this had not yet been received.

The Clerk had since found another contractor who was prepared to quote for the notice board and village sign repair work. She had also asked this company for a separate quote for a new notice board as this might be a more cost-effective solution.

The Clerk was instructed to obtain more quotes for the notice board and village sign as well as investigating the costs of a brand-new noticeboard. She would also obtain two further quotes for repair work to the Osborne House forecourt and if possible quotes for just patching as well as re-surfacing. Members noted that the forecourt had been highlighted at a CIL meeting as a potential location for electric charging points.

Cllr Long and Wells volunteered their services to meet any contractors on site.

- 00418** It was **RESOLVED** to accept the JF Construction quote to remove and replace the broken manhole cover and surround at a cost of £360 + VAT, total cost £432.00

OSBOURNE HOUSE CLOCK

9.1. To review and consider the quotation options of the winding mechanism to the Osbourne House Clock

The Clerk referred to the quote which had been obtained as a result of the clock not being wound during 2020 due to COVID. The Parish Council agreed to investigate the option of an auto winding system being fitted.

As a result, Thwaites & Reed had observed the clock in situ. They had advised not to recommend any kind of auto winding because there was only one type of chain that could be guaranteed not to cause long term damage to the clock mechanism, and that system would cost approximately £5,000 ex VAT. Auto winders consume electricity and require full replacement every 10 to 15 years.

Whilst on site they completed a health check and found the clock to be in working order and in good condition and complete but was dirty and needed cleaning and lubrication. The dial and hands were in poor decorative condition and should be re-enamelled to conservation standards.

The Clerk reported there were 3 quotes to consider:

A basic service for £1,244 ex VAT

An overhaul service and dial restoration for £6,022 ex VAT

An annual maintenance service after one of the above quotes had been completed for £890 ex VAT with no price increase for 5 years.

The quote stated all mechanical clocks require annual servicing.

Members noted the clock was currently in working order.

A Councillor confirmed the clock was made in 1897 and moved to its current position in 1965/6. It was the old school clock. The Parish Council had previously spent approximately £1,350 to have the clock re-gilded over 20 years ago.

It was suggested a public consultation could take place to ascertain how important the clock was to the community before any public money was spent as well as the possibility of a clock fund being set up to raise funds to restore and maintain the clock going forward. The final option was to remove the clock altogether.

It was **AGREED** to defer the item to the next Full Council meeting due to the significant costs involved.

BODLE STREET GREEN WAR MEMORIAL

10.1. To review and consider the quote for restoration works on the war memorial

The Clerk advised that the Treasurer of the PCC had stated in the original photos of the war memorial unveiling the engraved letters had a black background which he would like to have re-instated.

However, the health check report from the stonemason's had not highlighted that. They had advised the war memorial could be cleaned at a cost of £475 plus VAT and re-pointed at a further cost of £105.

The Committee agreed the works were not urgent but would need attention at some point in the future.

It was **AGREED** The Clerk would investigate the possibility of a grant and the item would be deferred until this time.

TO REVIEW EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL'S URBAN GRASS CUTTING SERVICE OPTIONS

12.1. To review and agree WPC's grass cutting option for 2022/23

All three options available were reviewed by Members and it was agreed to not make any changes to the existing grass cutting regime in place.

00419 It was **RESOLVED** the Parish Council would opt for Option 1 **Standard:** Two cuts over the course of a year to be carried out by ESCC at no cost to the Parish Council. Urban grass will be managed for safety purposes only.

12.2. To consider any changes to the grass cutting for The Green in 2022/23 and the associated financial implications

It was **AGREED** to not make any changes to the grass cutting for The Green but to continue to work closely with Orchard Landscapes and the local residents and to keep the protected area outside the Dunn Village Hall. The Parish Council would continue to review any reports and observations from Wild About Warbleton.

- 00420** It was **RESOLVED** to not make any changes to the grass cutting for The Green and surrounding areas

BIKE HOOPS ON RUSLAKE GREEN VILLAGE GREEN

13.1. To consider the safety and insurance implications of bike hoops on The Green

13.2. To agree WPC'S stance regarding bike hoops on The Green

The Clerk confirmed that the insurance company had stated that if the bike hoops did not belong to the Parish Council, then these would need to be covered by the local resident's insurance policy. She clarified any public liability claim would be with the local resident's insurance company.

It was acknowledged that there was lots of bike traffic in the village and those bikes were often propped up in positions near the village shop which were inappropriate and a possible safety issue at times. The removable bike racks were alleviating some of the bike congestion although it was noted they were not aesthetically pleasing and not particularly visible and posed a safety risk in the dark. Various alternative locations were discussed although Members noted in order for them to be a useful addition they would need to be located near the local shop.

Members considered the possibility of the PC adopting the bike racks and adding them to their existing policy. The Clerk stated the insurance company confirmed the bike racks would need to be secure and only able to be removed professionally otherwise the PC could be liable for theft of any of the bikes. Members noted relevant signage was an option to counteract this risk.

The Committee were displeased the bike racks were erected with no prior permission sought from the Parish Council.

- 00421** It was **RESOLVED** the Clerk would write to the resident and ask for the bike racks to be removed but provide them with the opportunity of suggesting an alternative location or solution that the PC could consider. The letter would also notify the owners of the insurance implication between notification and removal. The Chairman to deliver the letter personally.

CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

14.1. To discuss the permanent chairmanship of the Environment Committee

Cllr Long stated to the Committee that he would like to stand down from the Chairmanship of the Environment Committee in the imminent future. Cllr Thompson expressed an interest.

UPDATE ON THE FIVE WILD FLOWER ROUTES

Cllr Thompson reported all five routes were surveyed every month by WAW and the information was sent to ESCC.

The five routes were considered a great success with a significant increase in bio-diversity. ESCC had now listed them as dedicated wild flower verges and hopefully there would be even better results next year.

She asked Members to note that some of the verges were cut later than the time ESCC specified or not at all (October or November) and the PC might consider inspecting them in autumn next year to ensure the mowing had taken place.

Several Councillors expressed concern that historically ESCC have abandoned some similar areas in the past and they would need to be policed.

WAW had applied for a grant with the PC which ESCC had supported for signage along the five routes which would provide the community with information and would lead to a greater understanding of the process.

TO CONSIDER ANY BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE F&GP COMMITTEE FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2022/23

16.1. To recommend to the F&GP Committee for the financial year 2022/23

Members agreed there would need to be a rolling budget for the Environment Committee to maintain and repair its assets. £1,500-£2,000 was the agreed requirement. It was noted that some of the estimates received for repair works were very high.

4 meetings a year was considered adequate.

00422 It was **RESOLVED** the recommended budget requirement for the Environment Committee for 2022/23 would be set at a minimum of £1,500

TO REVIEW THE ASSET REGISTER

The Clerk confirmed to the Committee there had been no changes to the asset register apart from adding new items.

It was noted by Members.

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

This item was deferred to the next Environment Committee meeting.

The Chairman notified the Committee there was a mole on The Green and the Clerk was instructed to action the mole removal as soon as possible.

NEXT MEETING

To be confirmed

The meeting closed at 19.56