

Environment Committee
Minutes of a Meeting of the held on 30th July 2009

Present: Mr Gregory (Chairman), Mrs Burgess, Mr Salisbury, Mr Gilboy, Mrs Revell, Mr Mercer, Mr Blanch

In attendance: Mrs Jones (Clerk), Marie-Ange Chevrier, Mark Russell & members of the public

77 Management of the Observer Field:

Marie-Ange Chevrier gave a presentation regarding the ecology of the Observer Field and outlined a template for an ecological strategy for Cuckfield giving the historical background to the landscape and the current situation including information regarding the natural vegetation and wildlife of the field. Two management options were presented: continuing with the present regime or aiming for the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme. This would need to involve other landowners but, if the scheme met with the approval of Natural England grant funding for a ten year period would be available. Greater information on the biodiversity would be needed but it was anticipated that this would be provided by volunteers. The latter scheme could provide an opportunity for an ongoing contribution towards the creation of an important wildlife corridor for the local environment.

78 Restoration of the Observer Post

Mark Russell gave a presentation regarding the restoration of the Observer Post. There are over 1500 Posts throughout the country but only five are currently open for visitors. The Post in Cuckfield was in good condition but would deteriorate if no work was undertaken. Restoration work would be undertaken by volunteers at no cost to the Council with the eventual aim of having occasional open days when the public could visit the post.

Following some questions, Marie-Ange Chevrier and Mark Russell were thanked for their extremely interesting presentations and, together with the members of the public, then left the meeting.

79 Apologies for Absence were received from Mr Gallagher

80 Declarations of Interest: None

81 Approval of the Minutes The minutes of the meeting held 4th June 2009 (previously circulated) were taken as read and confirmed as a true record

82 Clerk's Report and Matters Arising From the Minutes

Min 234/08: Skatepark: Monthly inspections were now in hand. The clerk to follow up on repairs required to the bowl by the contractors.

Min 237/08: Dog Fouling: Information had now been prepared for the school for action in the autumn.

Min 33: Mantell Board: This was now on order and should be available shortly.

Min 36: Footpath Maintenance: A meeting had still to be arranged with the contractors

Min 38: Overgrowth on Pavements: Burgess Town Council had done some clearance.

Min 40: Clean Up Day: No information had been received and it was agreed to follow this up with the Cuckfield Society.

83 Financial Budget & Forward Plan

The financial statement and budget for the financial year was noted. It was noted that the funds for the restoration of the clock had now been received. The statement showed the additional payments for rates for the previous financial year but expenditure was otherwise in line with the budget.

84 Water Bowser

Following the near accident with the watering of the hanging baskets, it had been agreed to consider the purchase of a water bowser. Information had been received regarding a 40 litre and a 70 litre product. Concerns were raised regarding the weight of the bowser and the lack of a brake. It was agreed to ask the supplier to provide samples for evaluation.

85 Churchyard Matters

85.1 Quinquennial Inspection: The quinquennial inspection for the churchyard had been circulated. There was a need to have an inspection of the woodworm in both the north and west lychgates. It was agreed that this work be put in hand as soon as possible. There was also a need to clear the ivy, etc. from the Listed monuments. This would be undertaken by the groundsmen in the autumn. A programme of repairs was also required for the monuments and it was agreed to ask Mr Gallagher for a suitable contact.

85.2 District Valuation: A letter had been received from the District Valuer requesting information regarding the cemetery. It was hoped that Mr Gallagher would be able to provide this information.

85.3 Garden of Remembrance: The clerk had written to local funeral directors regarding possible sponsorship for the new gates but no response had been received. It was agreed to contact the Mid Sussex Times to see if they would run an article on this. The granite tablet was now ready for erection and the remembrance plaque needed to be put in hand for hanging in the church

85.4 New Burial Area: The new area of the burial ground was now in use. The use of chip and pin for recording burials would also need to be looked into.

85.5 Burial Records: It was agreed to ask Mr Gallagher to obtain further information from alternative companies for the digitisation of the records.

85.6 Memorials: Mr Gallagher had suggested that additional income could be obtained through the sale of memorial plaques. It was agreed to undertake further investigation into this item.

86 Allotments

It had been noted that allotment holders were burning garden waste not generated from their allotments. This matter would be mentioned when letters were next sent to tenants.

87 Replacement of the Christmas lights

Quotations had been received from two companies for new lights. Prices from the suppliers were similar but although one had originally proposed far higher installation charges. After contact from the clerk this had been reduced but concerns remained that the charges could increase in future years. There was also the issue of the cost of storage for the original lights. After discussion, it was therefore agreed to remain with the existing contractor. The clerk would clarify the costs and, provided these remained within the budget, the order for the new lights would be put in hand.

88 Street Furniture

It was agreed to purchase a large litter bin for the end of Courtmead Road and a new salt bin for London Lane. A small litter bin held in store would be erected in London Lane, councillors to inform the clerk as to the siting of this.

89 Risk Assessment

The Risk Assessment Action Plan had been circulated to members. This was approved by the committee and signed by the chairman.

90 Any Other Business

90.1 Management of the Observer Field: Members were very attracted to the ideas proposed by Ms Chevrier for the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme. A detailed project plan with time-line would be required and approval from Natural England would be required. The process would require co-operation with several local landowners but it was considered that the project could be of great long-term benefit to the community. The current management programme could continue for the interim whilst these other issues were explored. The matter would be placed on the agenda of the next full council meeting for full consideration.

90.2 Royal Observer Post: Members considered that Post was part of the local heritage and this was an opportunity for the Post to be restored at minimal cost to the Council. It was considered that the principle of the restoration should be agreed subject to issues of access and insurance being satisfactorily resolved. A detailed schedule of works would also be required. It was believed that both projects could work in parallel for the benefit of the community.

90.3 Courtmead Road Footpath: It was requested that consideration be given to the re-designation of footpath No 22 in Courtmead Road to an urban footway.

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