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Assets, Community and Environment Committee Meeting 15 October 2020

ACE016.a - To review the recommendations in the Horsefield Green Maintenance Plan and agree next steps

1. Introduction

In August 2013, a Landscape Management Plan was prepared by Allen Pyke Associates. The purpose of the plan was “to set out the overall management objectives for the common external areas and retained structural vegetation, and to describe the long-term maintenance required to allow the planting to flourish and reach its design potential”. When the Parish Council took over maintenance responsibilities for the public areas of Horsefield Green in December 2017, this plan was adopted as a guide to maintaining and developing the location.

A plan has also drawn up recently to carry out additional landscaping improvements to the land.

2. Action Areas

a) Grass

The regular grass areas are being mown and strimmed every 8-10 days and the edges are also being progressively tidied where the grass meets the path.

b) Meadow Grass

The meadow grass areas were cut in late September and will be cut again in the early Spring.

c) Hedges and Trees

Alfred Harmsworth (Golden Crown) is scheduled to remove a number of ash trees which have dieback disease in October. The chippings derived from these trees will be used to create the path across the newly cleared surface. Some of the hedges and plants that grow near/onto the path and in the wooded areas have been trimmed. We have also been pruning back excessive growth that encroaches onto paths and walkways as well as sawing back any fallen or unstable trees or growth in the wooded area.

d) Pathways

Paths have been treated with herbicide, edged (twice) and overgrowing brambles cut back. Leaves continue to be cleared from all pathways, as necessary. On the lower section path where water flow caused some erosion during the winter an estimate has been requested from Ryan Humber to restore its evenness and appearance. The upper area adjacent to the pond, which suffered some erosion when the pond overspilled, will be also repaired. An element of the improvement plan is for a low spot between the pond and the path to be filled and a raised mound created to create a barrier which will help prevent this from recurring.

e) Litter Removal

Carried out once a week (as required). A quantity of barbed wire fencing near the unofficial entrance to the green in the north-western corner has also been removed.

3. Landscape Improvements Proposal

A plan of landscaping improvements has been proposed and is included at Annex 1. Major works include the removal of a large area of undergrowth (brambles, ivy, etc.) in the centre of the green to prepare the way for the planting of a number of fruit trees and the removal of a large amount of grass from the pond. A new pathway will be laid through the orchard leading to the lower area of the green and other plants and hedges as well as additional bat and bird boxes will also be installed. It will also be necessary to remove a substantial quantity of grass from the pond.

4. Project Plan – Major Works

- i) At Annex 2 I have included a table that displays the tasks required to implement these improvements. Items 1 to 5 (highlighted in red) are the major tasks and would need to be carried out first. There are two proposed two timetables: “A” has the majority of tasks being completed before the end of this year, and “B” postpones some of them until next year.
- ii) Option A makes a number of assumptions, including that funds are available for immediate action and that CPC has the necessary resources to maintain this extra area, but it would at least enable us to plant up to half of the fruit trees this year.
- iii) Option B would leave the undergrowth in place until the New Year, then after the ground clearance was completed in the early spring, we could arrange for all fruit trees to be delivered and planted up later in the year.

5. Letter to local residents

It is proposed that a letter be sent to residents who live in the vicinity of the green to inform them of the planned works and to encourage them to submit comments. The suggested text of that letter is included at Annex 3.

6. Costs

I have included, where possible, estimated costs for the main stages of the plan. The Council has been promised a donation in the amount of £750 from the Independent State of Cuckfield (ISoC) and it is intended that this will be put towards the improvement works at Horsefield Green. This would fund a substantial proportion (around 75%) of the orchard development.

7. Recommendation

Whilst Option A has certain benefits in terms of displaying activity by the Council and would kick-start the project, it would have a significant impact on resources, specifically the additional staff time required to maintain the area (planting, weeding, mowing, pruning, maintaining pathways, etc.). On the other hand, with Option B the major *new* tasks would be delayed until the New Year, and only items such as the removal of dead ash trees and clearance of the pond would go ahead before year end. If funds are available and if the first tranche of trees could be acquired for planting in December, I would propose we proceed with Option A.

Name: Paul Stevens
Title: Operations Officer
Date: 12 October 2020

Annex 2 – Project Plan

Horsefield Green – Landscape Improvements Plan (2020-21)

No.	Description	Timetable A	Timetable B	By Whom	Estimated Cost
1a	Remove brambles and overgrowth	Oct/Nov 2020	Feb/Mar 2021	Alfred Harmsworth (Golden Crown)	£475
1b*	Remove dead ash trees	Oct/Nov 2020	Oct/Nov 2020	Alfred Harmsworth (Golden Crown)	£1,250
1c	Replace ash trees with hazel, maple and oak	Nov/Dec 2020	Spring 2021	-	-
2a*	Clear pond bed by 66%, strim area around pond and fill “low spot” to prevent overspilling	Oct/Nov 2020	Oct/Nov 2020	Alfred Harmsworth (Golden Crown)	£280
2b*	i) Remove ash trees from pond area and ii) replace with alders	Nov 2020	Nov 2020	Alfred Harmsworth (Golden Crown)	i) £350 ii) £290
3*	Repair existing pathway	Nov 2020	Nov 2020	Ryan Humber	Quote awaited
4	Plant fruit trees to create orchard	Dec 2020 and autumn 2021	Autumn 2021	-	£1,000
5	Lay new pathway and fill and block old pathway	Nov/Dec 2020	Mar 2021	Alfred Harmsworth (Golden Crown)	£180
6	Plant pyracantha around container (two sides plus in front)	Oct/Dec 2020	Oct/Dec 2020	-	-
7	Plant bluebell bulbs	Oct/Dec 2020	Oct-Dec 2020 and Sep 2021	CPC	£70
8*	Remove ragwort (as required)	Spring/summer 2021	Spring/summer 2021	CPC	n/a
9	Plant additional hedging (1 location only)	Autumn 2021	Autumn 2021	-	£50
10	Plant “native bulbs” (4 locations)	Autumn 2021	Autumn 2021	-	£20
11	Install additional bat and bird boxes	Not time bound	Not time bound	NHBS	£100
12	“Wood chips over informal path to reduce erosion”	Nov/Dec 2020	Nov/Dec 2020	-	n/a

(* denotes tasks that would be required as part of the regular maintenance plan)

Annex 3 – Suggested Text of Letter to Residents

Horsefield Green – Landscape improvements

Cuckfield Parish Council has developed a landscape and maintenance plan for Horsefield Green, leading on from the plans submitted by the developers. The map overleaf highlights the key activities which we are planning to undertake over the next year. These include:

- continuing to mow grass areas on a seasonal basis
- sowing additional wild flower mixes, and further bulb planting
- removing trees affected by ash die-back, and replanting with other species
- cutting back overgrowing hedges
- maintaining the formal paths in areas which have become washed out
- planting to screen the machinery container
- clearing the brambles in the south east corner and creating a new community orchard, with a mix of apple, plum and cherry varieties (with assistance from the Independent State of Cuckfield)
- moving the informal path in the south-east corner to a higher, drier level, and creating a meandering wood-chip walking surface through the new orchard

If you have any comments or feedback on the plans, we would be pleased to hear from you at a.n.other@cuckfield.gov.uk