



# **WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

A Meeting of the **HIGHWOOD MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE** will be held at the Oakwood Centre, Headley Road, Woodley, RG5 4JZ on **MONDAY 11 DECEMBER 2017 AT 7.30 PM**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Manjeet Gill'.

Manjeet Gill  
Interim Chief Executive  
Published on 1 December 2017



# **WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **Our Vision**

A great place to live, an even better place to do business

## **Our Priorities**

Improve educational attainment and focus on every child achieving their potential

Invest in regenerating towns and villages, support social and economic prosperity, whilst encouraging business growth

Ensure strong sustainable communities that are vibrant and supported by well designed development

Tackle traffic congestion in specific areas of the Borough

Improve the customer experience when accessing Council services

## **The Underpinning Principles**

Offer excellent value for your Council Tax

Provide affordable homes

Look after the vulnerable

Improve health, wellbeing and quality of life

Maintain and improve the waste collection, recycling and fuel efficiency

Deliver quality in all that we do

## MEMBERSHIP OF THE HIGHWOOD MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE

### Wokingham Borough Councillors

Laura Blumenthal

Beth Rowland

### Town Councils

Kay Gilder

Woodley Town Council

Guy Grandison

Earley Town Council

Mary Holmes

Woodley Town Council

Alison Swaddle

Earley Town Council

### Friends of Highwood

Freda Pattison

Community Representative

ITEM NO.	WARD	SUBJECT	PAGE NO.
1.		<b>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING</b> To confirm the Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 January 2017.	5 - 8
2.	Bulmershe and Whitegates; South Lake	<b>COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE RANGERS' REVIEW</b> To consider the annual activity report from the Countryside Service.	9 - 10
3.	Bulmershe and Whitegates; South Lake	<b>REPORT FROM THE FRIENDS OF HIGHWOOD</b> To consider a verbal report from the Friends of Highwood.	

### CONTACT OFFICER

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
HIGHWOOD MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE  
HELD ON 19 JANUARY 2017 FROM 7.30 PM TO 8.35 PM**

**Committee Members Present**

Councillors: Laura Blumenthal, Beth Rowland, Kay Gilder, Guy Grandison, Mary Holmes and Alison Swaddle

**Friends of Highwood**

Freda Pattison (Community Representative)

**Officers Present**

Neil Carr (Principal Democratic Services Officer) and Simon Bartlam (Countryside Operations Officer)

**1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

Kay Gilder was elected Chairman of the Conference for the 2016/17 municipal year.

**2. APOLOGIES**

No apologies were submitted.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Simon Bartlam updated the Conference on the S106 funds available for improvement works at the Highwood site. The current amount available was £52k.

Simon Bartlam also updated the Conference on the development of web pages giving details of the Highwood site. Work had begun to develop the web pages as part of the wider Countryside Services section of the Council's website. The relevant officer had been seconded to work on the Council's major organisational change programme and it was likely, therefore, that the work on the web pages would be progressed later in the year.

**5. COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE REPORT**

Simon Bartlam, Countryside Operations Officer, introduced the Countryside Service report, set out on page 9 of the Agenda. The report gave details of activities carried out during the year in accordance with the Highwood management plan. The report included details of the following:

- Management Tasks – removal of dangerous trees and scrub on the heathland;
- General Rangering – cutting back footpaths, removing flytipping, litter picking, site inspections and managing incidents;
- Volunteer Involvement – support from the Friends Group and volunteer workdays including the Dinton work skills project.

Simon reported that ongoing action related to rhododendron/laurel control and completion of heathland fencing. It was also proposed to carry out a test project to remove scrub from a designated section of the heathland area. This project would be well signposted to inform residents about the work.

Simon also reported on the involvement of volunteers in the improvement works. The number of volunteers had reduced in the past year, partly due to the reduction in community service activities. However, as a result of the additional countryside sites coming on stream across the Borough, additional staff resources were being allocated to the Countryside Service. This would help to create additional capacity which would benefit sites such as Highwood.

The Conference provided feedback on specific issues raised by local Members and residents, including:

- Ownership of the Bulmershe pond;
- Access issues relating to the Reading Borough Council allotments adjacent to Highwood;
- Exposed barbed wire along the boundary with the allotments;
- Opportunities for voluntary work for young people identified by the neighbourhood policing team;
- The potential for introducing hedgehog hotels at the Highwood site.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) the Countryside Service report be noted;
- 2) the Countryside Service team investigate the issues raised by Members and local residents.

## **6. HIGHWOOD PROGRAMME OF WORKS**

The Conference considered a report, Agenda pages 11 to 13, which gave details of the proposed Highwood programme of works. Simon Bartlam introduced the report and highlighted the following issues for consideration by the Conference:

- Fencing around the heathland was completed in August 2016 at a cost of £4,650 – this included four access points through the heath and 450m of netting around its perimeter.
- Quotations had been received for two styles of signboard – shot blasted cedar boards and Oak ladder boards. The Conference was asked to express a preference for the new signboards. The signs would indicate that the site was managed by the Countryside Service with contact details and space for notices/site information. The Conference supported the Oak ladder signboards at a cost of £2,600 for five boards.
- A quotation had been received for 500m of footpath improvements on the site. The map included in the agenda highlighted 400m of proposed improvements. It was

proposed that the remaining 100m of works be earmarked for a link to the new housing development adjacent to the site. The Conference supported the footpath improvements highlighted in the report and proposed improvements to a further 70m length of footpath adjacent to the allotments boundary.

Funding of the works highlighted in the report would leave £22k in the budget which could be carried forward and potentially used to respond to additional pressures arising out of the new housing development adjacent to the Highwood site. Simon Bartlam reported that confirmation was still awaited on the issue of access to the new housing development.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) the report be noted;
- 2) the Oak ladder signboards, detailed in the report, be approved;
- 3) the proposed footpath improvements be approved;
- 4) the funding proposals in the report be approved;
- 5) Simon Bartlam provide information to members of the Conference on the annual maintenance expenditure for the Highwood site.

**7. REPORT FROM THE FRIENDS OF HIGHWOOD**

The Conference received a verbal report from Freda Pattison on behalf of the Friends of Highwood Group. Freda reported that there were no ongoing issues relating to the site.

The Conference discussed access issues relating to the various site entrances and gates.

Simon Bartlam confirmed that the levels of littering and flytipping at the site were similar to previous years.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) the report from the Friends of Highwood be noted;
- 2) the Countryside Services team consider any accessibility issues relating to the Highwood site.

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## Highwood Management Conference

11 December 2017

### Countryside Service Rangers' Review

#### **1/ Management Tasks**

- Establishment of approximately 700m of surfaced paths within the woodland funded through Highwood access improvement scheme;
- Installation of 4 welcome signs at the entranceways to the site funded through Highwood access improvement scheme;
- Completion of Heathland compartment fencing funded through Highwood access improvement scheme;
- Heathland regeneration by removing top soil in heathland compartment. Experimental area.

#### **2/ General Ranging**

- General work including cutting back footpaths, strimming and removing hung-up trees. (monthly visits between April and October);
- Removing 4 incidents of fly tipping, garden waste;
- Removal of 7 sections of barbed wire in response to complaint;
- Litter picking;
- 1 incident of illegal access point being installed from 24 High tree Drive;
- Incident of illegal footpath from new development into woodland;
- Respond to 4 incidents of fires/graffiti/camping.

#### **3/ Volunteer involvement**

- The Friends group has continued to support The Countryside Service, by walking every day helping to patrol the site, litterpicking, reporting of problems and directing us on site to location of jobs;

- 58 volunteer workdays (excluding Friends visits) have been carried out this year including Dinton work skills project for vulnerable/at risk young people and Community Services;
- 4 days Himalayan balsam pulling from Heathland compartment.

**4/ Next year (this winter)**

- Rhododendron/ Laurel control in compartments 1-4;
- Scrub management on the Heathland Compartment;
- Closure of illegal access point from 24HTD and development;
- Installation of official access point from development site including signboard.