



**WOKINGHAM  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

A Meeting of the **HIGHWOOD MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE** will be held at the Oakwood Centre, Headley Road, Woodley RG5 4JZ Woodley Town Council on **TUESDAY 8 JANUARY 2019 AT 7.30 PM**

*Heather Thwaites*

Heather Thwaites  
Interim Chief Executive  
Published on 28 December 2018



# **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

David Hare

### 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>ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN</b> To elect a Chairman for the 2018/19 Conference.	
2.		<b>APOLOGIES</b> To receive any apologies for absence.	
3.		<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b> To consider any declarations of interest.	
4.		<b>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING</b> To confirm the Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 December 2017.	5 - 6
5.	Bulmershe and Whitegates; South Lake	<b>COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE RANGERS' REVIEW</b> To consider progress relating to the Highwood Management Plan in 2018/19 and any matters arising.	7 - 8
6.	Bulmershe and Whitegates; South Lake	<b>REPORT FROM THE FRIENDS OF HIGHWOOD</b> To consider a report from the Friends of Highwood.	

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
HIGHWOOD MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE  
HELD ON 11 DECEMBER 2017 FROM 7.30 PM TO 8.35 PM**

**Committee Members Present**

Councillors: Laura Blumenthal, Kay Gilder, Mary Holmes and Alison Swaddle

**Friends of Highwood**

Freda Pattison (Community Representative)

**Officers Present**

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

**1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

Kay Gilder was elected as Chairman of the Conference for 2017/18.

**2. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Beth Rowland.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the Conference meeting held on 19 January 2017 were confirmed as correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the addition of thanks to the Friends of Highwood for their efforts during the year (Minute 7).

**5. COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE RANGERS' REVIEW**

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

- Management Tasks – establishment of 700m of surfaced paths, installation of four welcome signs, heathland regeneration and fencing.
- General Ranging – cutting back vegetation, removing fly tipping and sections of barb wire, litter picking, addressing illegal footpath, fires, etc.
- Volunteer Involvement – working with the Friends of Highwood, 58 volunteer workdays and four days of Himalayan balsam pulling from the Heathland.
- Winter Programme 2017/18 – rhododendron/laurel control, scrub management, closure of illegal access point and installation of official access point (including signboard).

Simon also informed the Conference that the Bulmershe Pond would be handed over to Wokingham Borough Council on 31 March 2018. Work was under way to bring the pond site into a reasonable state before it was handed over to WBC to manage.

Simon confirmed that S106 funding of £21k still remained out of the original allocation. This would be used to fund the work programme going forwards.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were raised:

- Muddy condition of certain paths within Highwood;
- Behaviour of cyclists using paths and causing problems for walkers;
- Creation of an Illegal footpath from the Cala Homes Development;
- Cala Homes not meeting their obligations relating to access points;
- Residents at High Tree Drive installing a gate into their fence to allow access;
- Two sexual assaults had taken place in the woods during 2017;
- No progress on the Highwood web pages due to the secondment of a key member of staff.
- Encouraging wildlife diversity on the site, e.g. hedgehog hotels.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) the Countryside Service report be noted;
- 2) the Countryside Service team be thanked for their hard work and commitment relating to Highwood;
- 3) Simon Bartlam investigate measures to control the activities of cyclists on the site;
- 4) Simon Bartlam be notified of any criminal activity or anti-social behaviour on the Highwood site;
- 5) The proposed action to remove the illegal gate access and footpath be supported;
- 6) Simon Bartlam coordinate a press release on the positive messages from the Conference and the issues relating to cyclists' behaviour;
- 7) Laura Blumenthal and Simon Bartlam coordinate contacts at Cala Homes.

## **6. REPORT FROM THE FRIENDS OF HIGHWOOD**

Freda Pattison confirmed that the issues from the Friends of Highwood group had been raised during the earlier discussion on the Countryside Service report.

**RESOLVED** That the report from the Friends of Highwood be noted.

## Countryside Service Rangers Review 2018

### Highwood Management Conference – 8 January 2019

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

- Installation of 4 welcome signs at the entranceways to the site funded through Highwood access improvement scheme
- Installation of Boundary fencing alongside housing development boundary.
- Installation of access point from new development and closure of illegal access point.
- Closure of illegal access point from 24HTD and development.
- Scraping of Heathland section has been considered successful and will be looked at regards expanding over the next few years.

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

- General work including cutting back footpaths, strimming and removing hung-up trees. (monthly visits between April and October)
- Removing 5 incidents of fly tipping, garden waste.
- Litter picking.
- Tree surgeon spent 3 days making safe dangerous trees on site.
- Respond to 1 incident of illegal camping on site and removal of individual.
- 0 reported incidents to the Countryside Service regards aggressive cycling on the site.
- Currently investigating 2 incidents of encroachment onto the site.

#### **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.
- 65 volunteer workdays (excluding Friends visits) have been carried out this year; including volunteers from the Oracle, Thames Valley Conservation Volunteers, and Community Services.
- 3 days Himalayan balsam/ scrub pulling from Heathland compartment

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

- Scrub management on the Heathland Compartment
- Rhododendron/ Laurel control in compartments 1-4
- Unused Access improvement money £18,635 - Additional path surfacing?

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