



**WOKINGHAM  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

A Meeting of the **HIGHWOOD MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE** will be held at the Oakwood Centre, Headley Road, Woodley RG5 4JZ on **WEDNESDAY 8 JANUARY 2020 AT 7.00 PM**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan Parsonage'.

Susan Parsonage  
Chief Executive

Published on 30 December 2019



# **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

Mary Holmes

Woodley Town Council

Geoff Littler

Earley Town Council

Alistair Neal

Earley Town Council

### Friends of Highwood

Freda Pattison

Community Representative

| ITEM NO. | WARD                                    | SUBJECT   | PAGE NO. |
|----------|---|---|----------|
| 1.       |   | <b>ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN</b><br>To elect a Chairman for the 2019/20 Conference.  |          |
| 2.       |   | <b>APOLOGIES</b><br>To receive any apologies for absence.   |          |
| 3.       |   | <b>DECLARATION OF INTEREST</b><br>To consider any Declarations of Interest.   |          |
| 4.       |   | <b>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING</b><br>To confirm the Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 January 2019.   | 5 - 8    |
| 5.       | Bulmershe and Whitegates;<br>South Lake | <b>COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE RANGER'S REVIEW</b><br>To consider progress relating to the Highwood Management Plan in 2019/20 and any matters arising. | 9 - 10   |
| 6.       | Bulmershe and Whitegates;<br>South Lake | <b>REPORT FROM THE FRIENDS OF HIGHWOOD</b><br>To consider a report from the Friends of Highwood.  |          |

### CONTACT OFFICER

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
HIGHWOOD MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE  
HELD ON 8 JANUARY 2019 FROM 7.30 PM TO 8.30 PM**

**Committee Members Present**

Councillors: David Hare, Kay Gilder, Guy Grandison, 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 Specialist)

**1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

Kay Gilder was elected as Chairman of the Conference for 2018/19.

**2. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Laura Blumenthal.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Conference held on 11 December 2017 were confirmed as correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**5. COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE RANGERS' REVIEW**

Simon Bartlam, Countryside Operations Officer, introduced the Countryside Service report, set out on Agenda page 7. The report gave details of the activities carried out during the year in accordance with the Highwood Management Plan.

The report included details and analysis of the following issues:

- the installation of four welcome signs to the site entrances, funded through the Highwood access improvement scheme.
- the 5-8m strip of land on the side of the woodland would not be transferring from Cala Homes. Cala Homes would manage the land through a separate management company.
- progress was being made in closing unofficial access points to the site.
- the heathland scraping work had been successful with new heather coming through.
- progress on general work including cutting back footpaths, strimming and removing hung-up trees.
- dealing with one illegal encampment on the site.
- a small amount of fly tipping on the site and no issues with fires in spite of the hot summer.
- Bulmershe Pond – still waiting for the University to progress the transfer.
- no reported problems with cyclists – however, members were aware of a handful of issues over the year. It was felt that problems were most likely during school run times.
- two possible incidents of encroachment investigated – turned out to be on Cala Homes land – encroachment onto the ditch line.

- 65 volunteer workdays (excluding Friends visits).
- there remained £18,635 in access improvement money which could be used for additional path surfacing in 2019/20.
- the ditch towards Earley station had a number of blockages.
- the maturity of the woodland combined with drier weather suggested a move to more frequent inspections – twice per annum.
- Website – there had been little progress due to the continued secondment of a member of staff.
- a walker had fainted on site and it was felt that one or two additional log benches would be useful for walkers who needed to rest.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) the Countryside Service report be noted;
- 2) the Countryside Service team be thanked for their ongoing work to support and improve the Highwood site;
- 3) Alison Swaddle use her University contacts to chase progress on the Bulmershe Pond transfer;
- 4) Countryside Service staff attend the site to monitor any issues with cyclists during school run hours;
- 5) Simon Bartlam investigate any legal/enforcement/signage issues relating to controlling the behaviour of cyclists on the site;
- 6) Simon Bartlam monitor any potential encroachment issues on the site;
- 7) the residual access improvement monies be used to fund additional pathway surfacing;
- 8) Simon Bartlam investigate the reported blockages in the ditch leading to Earley station;
- 9) routine tree/footpath inspections be increased to twice yearly;
- 10) Woodley Town Council and the WBC Communications team be asked for assistance on developing webpages for Highwood.

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

Freda Pattison gave an update from the Friends of Highwood group. The Friends continue to support the Countryside Service by patrolling the site every day, litter picking and reporting back on new issues.

Freda highlighted the issue of dog walkers not removing dog waste from the site. This was felt to be a national issue, but could be monitored locally to ensure the correct level of bins, signage, etc.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) Simon Bartlem monitor any ongoing issues relating to dog waste on the site;

- 2) the Friends of Highwood be thanked for their continuing efforts to support and maintain the Highwood site.

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## Highwood Management Conference - 8 January 2020

### Countryside Service Rangers' Review 2019/20

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#### 1. Management Tasks

- Scrub removal from Heathland Compartment
- Rhododendron removal from Compartment 4
- Reed bed establishment on Southlake (not technically Highwood but CS staff and volunteers managed project).

#### 2. General Rangering

- 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
- Removal of 3 bike ramps
- Tree surgeon spent 2 days making safe a dangerous trees on site.
- Respond to 4 incidents of illegal camping on site and removal of an individual
- No reported incidents to the Countryside Service regarding aggressive cycling on 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 staff on site to the location of jobs
- 105 volunteer workdays (excluding Friends visits) have been carried out this year, including volunteers from CROW (Conserve Reading on Wednesdays), Thames Valley Conservation Volunteers and Community Services
- 3 days Himalayan balsam/ scrub pulling from Heathland compartment.

#### 4. Next year (this winter)

- Coppicing Compartment 4
- Rhododendron/ Laurel control in Compartments 1-4
- Unused Access Improvement money £18,635 - path surfacing programmed for Jan-Feb 2020.

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