



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

A Meeting of the **HIGHWOOD MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE** will be held in David Hicks 1 - Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham RG40 1BN on **WEDNESDAY 3 AUGUST 2022 AT 8.00 PM**

Susan Parsonage
Chief Executive

Note: Non-Committee Members and members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting, in line with the Council's Constitution.

Published on 26 July 2022



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Our Vision

A great place to live, learn, work and grow and a great place to do business

Enriching Lives

- Champion outstanding education and enable our children and young people to achieve their full potential, regardless of their background.
- Support our residents to lead happy, healthy lives and provide access to good leisure facilities to complement an active lifestyle.
- Engage and involve our communities through arts and culture and create a sense of identity which people feel part of.
- Support growth in our local economy and help to build business.

Safe, Strong, Communities

- Protect and safeguard our children, young and vulnerable people.
- Offer quality care and support, at the right time, to prevent the need for long term care.
- Nurture communities and help them to thrive.
- Ensure our borough and communities remain safe for all.

A Clean and Green Borough

- Do all we can to become carbon neutral and sustainable for the future.
- Protect our borough, keep it clean and enhance our green areas.
- Reduce our waste, improve biodiversity and increase recycling.
- Connect our parks and open spaces with green cycleways.

Right Homes, Right Places

- Offer quality, affordable, sustainable homes fit for the future.
- Build our fair share of housing with the right infrastructure to support and enable our borough to grow.
- Protect our unique places and preserve our natural environment.
- Help with your housing needs and support people to live independently in their own homes.

Keeping the Borough Moving

- Maintain and improve our roads, footpaths and cycleways.
- Tackle traffic congestion, minimise delays and disruptions.
- Enable safe and sustainable travel around the borough with good transport infrastructure.
- Promote healthy alternative travel options and support our partners to offer affordable, accessible public transport with good network links.

Changing the Way We Work for You

- Be relentlessly customer focussed.
- Work with our partners to provide efficient, effective, joined up services which are focussed around you.
- Communicate better with you, owning issues, updating on progress and responding appropriately as well as promoting what is happening in our Borough.
- Drive innovative digital ways of working that will connect our communities, businesses and customers to our services in a way that suits their needs.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE HIGHWOOD MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE

Wokingham Borough Councillors

Shirley Boyt

Laura Blumenthal

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.		ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN To elect a Chair for the meeting.	
2.		APOLOGIES To receive any apologies for absence.	
3.		DECLARATION OF INTEREST To receive any declarations of interest.	
4.		MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING To confirm the Minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2021.	5 - 8
5.		COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE RANGERS' REPORT To consider the annual progress report from the Countryside Service.	9 - 10
6.		FRIENDS OF HIGHWOOD To consider a verbal report from the Friends of Highwood.	

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HIGHWOOD MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE
HELD ON 1 FEBRUARY 2021 FROM 7.00 PM TO 7.45 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Laura Blumenthal, David Hare, Kay Gilder, Mary Holmes, Geoff Littler and Alistair Neal

Officers Present

Simon Bartlam (Countryside Service Operations Manager) and Neil Carr (Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist)

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Kay Gilder was elected as Chairman of the 2020/21 Conference.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Freda Pattison.

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Conference held on 8 January 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman at a later date.

5. COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE RANGERS' REPORT

Simon Bartlam, Countryside Operations Officer, gave an update on progress at Highwood since the previous Conference in January 2020.

Simon began by updating the Conference on actions set out in the Minutes, as follows:

- Bulmershe Pond Transfer – this issue was currently under consideration and it was envisaged that there would be progress in 2021.
- Cycling – additional signs had been introduced asking for considerate cycling through the site.
- Highwood web pages – the Countryside Service had been developing webpages for its sites, including Highwood.
- Dog bin – the proposed dog bin adjacent to the Cala Homes site entrance had been implemented.

Simon went on to introduce the Rangers' Report for 2020/21, highlighting the following points:

- Scraping of a section of heathland – a new compartment would be programmed for each year.
- The final £18.5k of footpath improvements had been completed in March 2020, thereby using up the access improvement budget.

- A resident had offered £800 to fund further work on the heathland – this money would be used to fund work with volunteer groups.
- Fly tipping – there had been five instances of small scale fly tipping during the year – an area of large leaved Periwinkle was removed after one instance of garden waste fly tipping.
- Cycling – there had been one incident relating to aggressive cycling on the site.
- BTCV had monitored the regeneration of areas cleared of Laurel and had reported a positive colonisation by native species.
- 89 volunteer workdays (excluding Friends workdays) had taken place including CROW (Conserve Reading on Wednesdays), Thames Valley Conservation Volunteers, BTCV and Community Services.
- Covid-19 had impacted on the number of volunteer workdays possible – Countryside Service staff had been seconded for marshalling work in order to ensure social distancing on the various sites across the Borough.
- Two Addington School pupils had spent 8 days working on the site – it was proposed to increase this provision in 2021/22.
- The potential for apprenticeships (potentially working with the Berkshire College of Agriculture) was under consideration.

Simon reported that the programme of work for the current year included:

- Coppicing in compartment 4 and Rhododendron/Laurel control in compartment 6.
- Heathland scraping as part of the regeneration project.
- Reed bed establishment on Southlake (not technically Highwood but Countryside Service staff and volunteers managed the project).
- CROW to carry out several days of conservation work on the Heathland following the financial donation to improve the area.

Simon confirmed that the Countryside Service budgets would be used to fund repairs, such as the current issues with muddy paths, and other ongoing maintenance issues. The pandemic had seen a number of new challenges for the Countryside sites, but there were no specific concerns relating to Highwood.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The Rangers' Report for 2020/21 be noted;
- 2) Simon Bartlam and the Countryside Service be thanked for their hard work and support during the year;
- 3) A site visit be arranged for the summer of 2021 to provide Members with an update on site issues;
- 4) The proposed improvement works for 2021 be supported.

6. REPORT FROM THE FRIENDS OF HIGHWOOD

Simon Bartlam reported that the Friends Group had continued to support the Countryside Service by walking the site every day, litter picking, reporting problems and directing staff to the location of jobs.

Freda Pattison had fed back that there were no specific issues from the Friends Group.

RESOLVED: That the Friends of Highwood be thanked for their ongoing commitment and support to the Countryside Service.

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Countryside Service Rangers Review 2021/22

Highwood Management Conference

1/ Management Tasks

- Scrub removal from Heathland Compartment (7)
- Rhododendron removal from comp 3 and 4

2/ General Rangering

- General work including cutting back footpaths and strimming (monthly visits between April and October 2021)
- Removing 3 incidents of fly tipping, garden waste.
- Litter picking.
- Countryside Service staff spent 3 days carrying out H&S tree work on the site.
- Tree surgeon spent 3 days making safe dangerous trees on site.
- Responded to 1 incident of illegal camping on site.
- BTCV have been monitoring the regeneration of areas cleared of Laurel, reporting a positive colonisation by native species.

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 the location of jobs.
- 118 volunteer workdays (excluding Friends visits) were carried out in 2021, including volunteers from CROW (Conserve Reading on Wednesdays), Thames Valley Conservation Volunteers, BTCV and Community groups.

4/ Winter 2021/22

- Coppicing compartment 8 and replant area after laurel control works.
- Rhododendron/ Laurel control in compartments 6 and 8.
- Scrub removal from Heathland Glade.
- 1 day Heathland scraping as part of the regeneration project.
- Reed bed establishment on Southlake to continue.
- CROW (Conserve Reading on Wednesdays) and BTCV have been commissioned in for several dates to carry out conservation work on the site, including some coppicing and scrub removal from the Heathland.

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