

**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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