**HENFIELD COMMONS JOINT COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting of the **Henfield Commons Joint Committee** held at **10:00am on** **19/09/25 at The Henfield Hall, Coopers Way, BN5 9EQ.**

**Members:** Cllrs.Gill Perry (chair), Roger Noel, Josh Potts, Chris Simmonds, Mark Andrews

 Tony Baker, Eddie Colgate, John Willis (non-voting members)

**Officers:** Pete Crawford, Malin Andersson, Neal Matheson, Emily Gibbons-Filippini

**Members of public:** Andrea May

1. **DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS:** None
2. **APOLOGIES:** Eddie absent.
3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF 02/06/25:** Approved without change
4. **CHAIRMAN’S ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Gill noted the fair on Henfield Common was a success.

Gill said that Henfield Parish Council (HPC) has been asked to comment on the proposal to take on Parsonage Wood.

1. **MATTERS ARISING:**  Addresses under other agenda headings
2. **OPEN FORUM /CORRESPONDENCE:**

Discussion regarding the process of Wellbeck’s proposal to HPC via Horsham District Council (HDC). Pete explained the process of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) credits in a development, and how developers will likely not interfere with a highly rated environment as it can be costly to offset these credits elsewhere. Gill noted that the S106 agreement would result in 20 years of paid maintenance costs. Roger noted the Planning and Infrastructure Bill is due in the Commons for royal assent and may upset present BNG calculations. Josh raised the issues of SuDS and ash dieback clearance in relation to the proposal. Chris and Gill discussed the costs of the annual plan and Pete advised on contractors’ costs for ongoing maintenance. Pete suggested speaking to Kate about a comprehensive report on Parsonage Wood. All committee members voted in favour of the proposal going forward.

**Gill to raise suggestion of obtaining report from Kate on Parsonage Wood to the HPC committee for discussion.**

John and Tony summarised their ongoing work regarding tree surveys. Tony said parish residents strongly support HPC looking after nature. John raised the importance of early messaging to involve the residents at the new development in volunteering.

1. **TANYARD**

Malin confirmed the hedge-cutting will commence soon subject to quote and offered to conduct yellow rattle seeding again due to last year’s success.

Malin and Gill noted the new wooden gates have received positive feedback. The metal gate is with Horsham Forge for repair and restoration. Chris noted the gate was made by the second of a three-generation blacksmithing family in the village. Suggestion of using socials to highlight the story of the gate.

Malin noted littering at the Tanyard eco-island. Chris mentioned a few trees need to be cut back from the pond. Neal suggested removing the laurel as it is poisonous and non-native.

**Malin and Neal to visit site and plan management actions for the trees.**

**Malin to collect litter from the eco-island using the boat later in the year.**

Discussion regarding updating the interpretation board now or after Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), due to Council logos becoming outdated. Consensus that outdated logos will be present for many years to come and updating the board takes priority.

**Malin to look into replacing interpretation board.**

Discussion regarding difficulties accessing the area of the Tanyard adjacent to 10 Chestnut End to commence installing a root barrier. Malin confirmed the management plan is being written.

**Neal and Malin to visit the site today to assess the blackthorn, access, and possibility of robo-flail.**

1. **HENFIELD COMMON**

Neal and Malin updated the committee on the volunteers’ successful additions of four trees to the Ancient Tree Inventory, and the obtaining of a five-year felling license for halo-thinning around the veteran oaks. HDC contractor provided quotes for the halo-thinning and the widening of the horse trail. Agreement that halo-thinning should be completed before 2028 due to LGR.

**Malin to produce copy regarding halo-thinning, litter on eco-island, and metal gate for socials.**

Discussion regarding conflicting information about horse-riding on the Common: Parks Byelaws state no horses, but the interpretation board suggests considerate riding is allowed. Agreement that residents’ feedback about horses is generally positive. Discussion regarding the rerouting of horse-riders off the causeway as HPC receive frequent complaints regarding its surface condition. Gill noted previous attempts to install barriers met concerns regarding the WSCC PROW team’s suggestions on large metal accessible kissing gates.

**Malin to liaise with WSCC and explore options for two gates at either end of the causeway accessible for walkers and wheelchairs.**

**Malin to consider wording for the interpretation board and reprint at the same time as Tanyard board.**

Discussion regarding the future timing of the fair to balance residents’ use of the Common and biodiversity requirements of the management plan. Agreement that an early September event allows the majority of grasses and plants to seed. Discussion of arrangements such as a bi-annual fair to allow the Common to rest or using King’s Feld as a venue on alternate years. Noted that Shaylers would like to return annually.

**Andrea to put out communications for feedback for a future decision on the fair’s schedule.**

Discussion regarding the fair’s accessibility. Malin received a complaint from a resident using a walker about the uneven ground. Gill suggested a matting path from the disabled parking bays to the fair. Pete notes that track matting can be expensive, and not all stalls would be accommodated by a central path. Andrea raised an issue with the overgrowth on the access path which used to accommodate the width of a vehicle, and mentioned feedback from Access Henfield that they would not attempt to visit the Common. Gill and Malin confirmed scalloping in this area was scheduled.

**Malin to prioritise widening Henfield Common access path.**

Pete confirmed HDC’s legal team are in discussion with Southern Gas Network’s legal team about the gas pipeline. There is a suggested easement figure of £20,000 to be confirmed.

Malin updated committee on ongoing work with coppiced willows, ditch scrub management and bramble management, and upcoming pond-sedge clearance. Gill asked if the trees between the causeway and the A281 can be cleared. Gill noted that the current process of Malin liaising with conservationists and bringing a list of works to HPC is working successfully.

**Malin and Neal to visit site and consider the felling of the trees alongside the A281.**

1. **BROADMARE COMMON**

Ownership of road through Broadmare Common discussed alongside Oreham Common.

1. **OREHAM COMMON**

Malin confirmed she had been able to access scrubland for mowing and some new oak saplings must be removed to reclaim and maintain the grassland.

**Malin to arrange for the removal of the young oaks.**

Gill mentioned some councillors are concerned about the ownership of the roadway through Oreham Common and Broadmare Common in relation to potential asset transfer to HPC, due to the surfacing quality.

**Pete to investigate ownership of the roads and circulate a map to councillors.**

1. **BUDGET/EXPENDITURE**

Summary of budget expenditure so far and upcoming works already discussed. Josh noted that in the past HPC has been cautious and underspent. Agreement to try and use full budget going forward.

1. **LOCAL GOVT REORGANISATION**

Gill noted that a new LGR committee has been set up in Henfield and is meeting next week to discuss asset transfers. Pete offered to attend meetings where helpful. Further discussion regarding the procurement process for contractors and the possibility that the parish could find local contractors with good deals. Chris said Grasstex had retained their previous prices for HPC this year despite their own costs rising. Roger emphasised that HPC should propose for HDC to rectify road issues at Oreham and Broadmare Common if ownership is proved, before the transfer of assets.

1. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS?**

Discussion regarding resurfacing the parking area by Alma cottages. Pete noted it may not need to be approved by the Secretary of State if it will not cause damage to the wider Common. Malin suggested the easement could be used to fund the project. Malin noted the hole in the sand surface of the parking area by the Cricket Club, potentially caused by surface run off. Gill noted the open planning application at Swains may cause damage to the HDC-owned roadway.

**Malin and PC to ascertain if HDC or Parish ownership of parking area near cricket club.**

**PC and Malin to investigate availability of budgets for infrastructural projects and parking areas.**

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 5th December.** All meetings to start at 10:00am.