**HENFIELD COMMONS JOINT COMMITTEE**

**A G E N D A**

**Minutes of a meeting**  of the **Henfield Commons Joint Committee** held on **Wednesday 28th September 2022** at **9.30am** in the **Garden Room** of the Henfield Hall.

**PRESENT:** Mr A Sharp (Joint Chairman) Mr M Eastwood (Joint Chairman)

Ms G Perry Mr M Morgan

Mr R Noel Mr E Colgate

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Mrs P Grant (Clerk)

Mr T Baker (Henfield Conservation Group)

Dr J Coultas

Mr J Everitt (Horsham District Council)

*Six members of the public*

**Item Description**

1. **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS INTERESTS**

No Declarations

1. **APOLOGIES**

Mr J Willis, Mr P Crawford, Mr J Potts

1. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF 29th JUNE 2022**

These were agreed by the meeting and signed by both Chairmen.

1. **CHAIRMANS` ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Format of meeting

Joint Chairman (JC) Eastwood explained to members of the public that there are six voting Members, invitees who are not and that under the Open Forum section of the agenda members of the public are invited to speak on any subjects relating to our Commons.

*He then adjourned the meeting.*

**OPEN FORUM**

All members of the public present were residents of Henfield Common North.

One member explained there had recently been a meeting of Henfield Common North residents and thanked Dr Coultas who is very knowledgeable on various subjects and has been a great help in communicating between this Committee and the residents. The residents then highlighted a number of issues summarised under the following points with questions added for the Committe Members to consider..

1. A large pot hole at the entrance to the road from the main highway - who should repair it ?

2. Worn out "residents only” signage - whose responsibility is to renew them ?

3. Road sign where the dead end part of the sign (the “T”) is no longer visible - who should repair it ?

4. Overflow parking on both sides of the entrance making entrance and exit to the road difficult and on occasion impossible - can we introduce say wooden bollards on the Common side and what are the criteria/risks, we hear if we do so and a car is damaged by a post the landowner may be liable unless there are things like reflective markers etc ? We need to understand what we can do and what the risks are ?

5. Who has maintenance responsibility for which parts of the road. Can we make the lines of responsibility clear and document them ?

6. How do we more effectively restrict parking to residents only ? Do we need to remove/replace the permits sign which is no longer relevant ?

7. Should we more clearly allocate the parking bays for Alma Terrace and Part Forges so that parking is neater and how to communicate with those residents ?

8. Are there any enforcement options for those non residents parking or residents parking in the wrong place ?

Mr Morgan agreed that the residents had taken over the responsibility for the maintenance of the road and that it had once been an unmade track for access and that a property owner was a builder and had added tarmac to the road. Discussion took place regarding how far the responsibility goes and Horsham District Council need to be contacted for clarification.

The general agreement by all those present was that there was now an increase in vehicle ownership, lack of driveways or garages due to the properties` age. JC Eastwood suggested forming a separate working group of residents and Committee Members to attempt to solve problems and Mr Noel suggested contacting Sarah Payne our County Councillor as the points raised are largely highways issue. It was agreed that two Henfield Common North residents will join a working party with JC Eastwood, Mr Morgan and Sarah Payne and email contact will be made to set a date.

**Action: JC Eastwood to contact everyone and set a date and time for a site visit.**

Dr Coultas said the brambles on Henfield Common North were very high and coming into contact with vehicles. JC Sharp said a cut is due but would prefer they be cut back and not down and will schedule this. After residents comments we will look to reduce height at the highest points so that we retain a hedge but at a height which gives visibility of the Common.

**Action: JC Sharp to contact Parish Council Works Officers to set a date for this work to be undertaken and to communicate this to the residents via Dr Coultas.**

Dr Coultas said at their recent meeting discussion had taken place regarding maintenance of the road and that they would only repair potholes and not make them completely smooth as this is a country road.

Finally residents agreed that there had been a massive rat population increase after the hot weather and lack of food and that they are everywhere.

*The meeting was reconvened.*

5. **COMMONS BUDGET 2022/2023**

JC Eastwood had previously sent out documents to Members including Henfield Common Draft Action Plan and Plan of Action and had also contacted a tree surgeon with regard to tree surgery.

He proposed in the future to establish a maintenance budget, wholly funded by HDC and a restoration budget with costs to be shared between HDC and HPC. This will require an increase in the HDC budget and from £15,780 per annum to £18,500.00 and a new budget of £4,000 from HPC in the financial year 2023/24. JC Eastwood asked Mr Noel to take up this increased budget request with HDC and that he would raise it with HPC.

JC Eastwood proposed submitting a proposal of £18,500 future budget and £4,000 to the Parish Council. This was seconded by Ms Perry and all agreed.

**Action: JC Eastwood to add this item to the HPC Council Meeting agenda and prepare an explanation and budget sheet to be shared with Mr Noel who use it to brief HDC Finance**

HPC have already agreed to contribute £1500 towards removal of the willow in the reed bed in the current financial year which was welcomed and this work can now proceed although it was also acknowledged this is not a permanent solution as the willows will regrow in time but hopefully we can remove them more regularly in the future so that they don’t grow as large. The removal of the root bowls should also slow growth.

Mr Everitt said his team will cut the reed bed with the Henfield Conservation Volunteers removing the reeds and an area less than one third will be cut shortly. It was agreed that this will become an annual task with the use of HDC Ranger/contractor resources plus volunteers should help to keep costs down and help to avoid a further budget increase request. Ms Perry recommended letting the Henfield Common north residents of this. JC Sharp said we need to deal with the leaky dam first, Mr Everitt said there are still logs in place and that cut reeds could also be laid there to reinforce the dam. He also reported that the reed bed is very dry.

**Action: JC Eastwood to consider communication explaining the value of this work to residents in general and to be sent specially to Henfield Common North residents**

Mr Noel explained that it was not possible to carry forward any budget not spent at HDC as it is absorbed by the District Council rather than used as a reserve fund. It was important then to spend everything that we are allocated. Both Mr Everitt and JC Eastwood agreed that going forward the funding from the District Council should be used first and then the Parish Council`s contribution.

Mr. Morgan explained that we do have over £28,000 in easement monies which should be used for capital projects and JC Sharp pointed out that there may be extra works needed on Broadmare Common when the new management plan is published. It was explained that larger one off items can be dealt with by submitting a separate capital bid. Mr Everitt recommended putting a capital spend bid request in as early as possible from April but no later than October for any major works ie establishing a bund or leaky dam at Henfield Common or draining ponds at Broadmare. This will be considered by this Committee as we understand what is needed and the associated costs.

6.  **HENFIELD COMMON**

1. Current position

JC Eastwood asked the Committee for approval of his Draft Action Plan and Ms Perry did say that the Parish Council had expressed interest in the state of the Common. Mr Morgan was in favour of the Plan. JC Sharp commented on the cutting of one third of the reed bed as sometimes this was not possible as it was too big and it may be split into more cuts. JC Eastwood agreed to amend this to between 10 and 33% annually. He also said it was important to convey our future plans to the public via communication particularly if walking through the reed bed would interfere with the wildlife and that the cut grass areas of the Common are not a dog toilet.

**Action: JC Eastwood to consider a regular communication plan about our Commons with features in BN5, Parish Magazine and on social media**

JC Sharp would like to see another glade cut in the north common woods to allow light to the floor and JC Eastwood will add this item to his Plan. Mr Morgan said previously cut willow had started to grow again and action is needed.

**Action JC Eastwood to make amendments to the action plan and recirculate the final version**

Dr Coultas asked if the reed bed had been completely cut in the past and it was confirmed that this happened some time ago to help this Committee understand what was going on in the reed bed. She also asked about the cattle grazing but JC Eastwood explained that he wanted to avoid that distraction at this time, see how the new Action plan worked for 3 years and then we would revisit the issue.

Mr Colgate had previously mentioned the spread of pendular sedge and what could be done. Mr Everitt recommended cutting it back and that our Works Officers should be able to do this.

**Action: JC Sharp to discuss with Works Officers**

Mr Colgate also brought up the water dropwort in the marsh which is overpowering the ragged robin and orchids, Mr Everitt suggested cutting off the seed heads.

**Action: JC Sharp to consider whether the volunteer Conservation group could assist here**

Mr Colgate also said he causeway ditches are rather deep, Mr Everitt would like to look at the wet areas as Ms Perry thought something was blocked. JC Sharp said over time the ditches are cleared which does make them deeper and perhaps they should be allowed to silt up but said a lot of people liked to see the water. It was suggested to look at this during the winter and to clear the vegetation around them.

**Action: JC Eastwood to ask Works Officers to stream the edge of the causeway ditch to reveal the outlet pipe to the marsh area so that he and Mr Everitt can visit and discuss the way forward in October**

Mr Tony Baker (Henfield Conservation Group) said his Group is always looking to place debris elsewhere and an area near the cricket pitch such as that explained in the action plan may work but could we bring that forward. JC Eastwood invited him to identify a suitable area and then bring a proposal forward to this committee.

**Action: Mr Baker to identify debris area and to bring a proposal forward**

He also said a habitat survey had been carried out and would like to see the impact of the various plans and was advised that Mike Russell of Sussex Wildlife Trust had been contacted about the impact on wildlife.

Finally Mr Colgate would like to see an area of the Common (small triangle) cut more often and this was seconded by Dr. Coultas who said anything much shorter would make it better to see and JC Eastwood said this would be looked at when visiting the Common but he did think that the Works Officer were cutting this area more regularly.

1. Reed bed

This had been discussed earlier.

7 **BROADMARE COMMON**

1. Management Plan

This had been carried out but not yet available and concern was raised if the ecologist recommended dredging a pond and we would then have to ask for more money. JC Sharp said that the Plan should be published by the year end and we could then consider the necessary actions.

1. Grass cutting regime

JC Sharp advised that PHB had cut the flood plain area and removed the cuttings.

8. **TANYARD**

1. Grass cutting regime

This may need to be cut again as the area is too large for the Works Officer. There are bulrushes growing and we need to cut the heads off. Mr Willis had also expressed concern that the brambles were spreading.

**Action: JC Sharp to look at organising another cut.**

Mr Colgate said he had two Sweet Chestnut saplings and wondered if they could be put in the meadow and it was suggested he contact the Tree Warden John Willis and he said he would do this.

9. **CORRESPONDENCE**

None apart from Members` emails.

10 **FINANCE**

The Clerk reported expenditure to end of June was £1242.50 although we had also received £500 attendance fee by the funfair which had been sent up to the District Council to add to our budget which is now £15,037.50. Much work has been completed by PHB but as yet we have not received their invoice which will need to be chased shortly.

**Actions: Secretary to chase any outstanding invoices in October and November.**

11 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr Everitt warned of the dangers of putting bollards up as we could be sued for damages and that this also applies to residents` placing logs or wood to deter parking. Mr Morgan reiterated that it is illegal to park on Common land, the right box way is purely to allow residents access to their properties.

12. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The meeting planned for 28th December has been cancelled and it was agreed to meet on Wednesday the 4th January 2023 at 9.30am availability to be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 11.40am.