



MINUTES OF MEETING OF AMENITIES COMMITTEE
22 April 2024
10:00, Woolton Hill Church Hall

Chairman: Cllr Rand (Chair)
Present: Cllr Cooper, Cllr Hurst, Cllr Blakeway
Clerk: Amy White

1. Welcome and apologies

Cllr Blakeway was absent.

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. To Agree Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2024 were agreed and signed by the Chairman, Cllr Rand.

4. To update on actions from previous meeting

- Clerk to ask EWPC volunteer strimmer to trim whole of parish field path in preparation for path improvement. **Actioned**. The Clerk met with the volunteer strimmer who is happy to help strimming the edges of the path in preparation for weed reduction.
- Clerk to obtain quotes from Paulsoms, CE Groundworks, Ian Pearce for path material to relay for 2024 to create the cambers. **Actioned**. Paulsoms did not wish to quote, Ian Pearce expressed reservations on adding more material to the path.
New Action: Cllr Rand to contact HCC Ranger to discuss improving the path with additional material.
- Hay bales: Cllr Rand will speak to the tenant to discuss their removal when the ground has dried up- the area where the bales are sited is particularly wet. **Actioned**- see item 7.
- Boundary of field: Cllr Rand will speak to the tenant on their knowledge of the field boundary as a preliminary investigation to the precise scope of the field. **Actioned**- see item 7.

5. Recreation Grounds consideration of booking requests for boules court

Dick Randall has retired and passed his business on to a new father and son team. The Clerk has contacted them regarding the S106 monies for goal mouth improvements and new play equipment but not yet had a reply.

Action: Clerk to contact BDBC inspection team to find out their new recommendation for playground repairers.

Boules booking requests: A request has been made to book the court. The committee decided a booking system was not viable and the court was there for public use at any time.

Action: Clerk to respond to enquiry for boules court.

6. CCTV update

Two of the leads between cameras have had to be replaced due to damage. The cameras are now all working.

The urgent spend was approved by the council over email (£560) and will be allocated to the CIL budget.

Action: Cllr Rand to write a piece for Spectrum on the CCTV improvement.

7. Parish field and biodiversity update

Hay bales: Sean is in touch with the farmer to get the bales removed as soon as the field is dry enough.

Field boundary: Both Cllr Roots and Cllr Rand have both walked the field boundaries.

Sean Early will ensure that the field hedge bordering Copnor will get cut this year.

Cllr Roots has taken pictures of the field boundary and created a working document to confirm the trees that will be assessed in the upcoming tree survey.

For the future, it was felt the PC needs to have a clear expectation of a management plan for the field, separate to any biodiversity plan, as tasks completed have been often verbally agreed and the PC has been fortunate to have had a good tenant.

CPRE: Cllr Hurst explained that CPRE would be willing to come and do an audit of the hedge.

Action: The Amenities committee (Cllr Rand) report for the Annual Parish Meeting should highlight that this will now be a key priority for the PC.

8. NGO relationship building

Cllr Hurst has been to a Hampshire NGO conference- his report is at the end of the Minutes. It was agreed to join CPRE as a member.

Action: Clerk to subscribe to CPRE (£60 p.a.) and confirm at full council.

9. Footpaths

Cllr Blakeway has set up a whatsapp group of volunteer rangers who will be able to action identified issues on footpaths.

Action: Clerk to put Cllr Blakeway's request for volunteers to clear brambles and Himalayan balsam by the Boardwalk on to Facebook and the website.

10. Meadowbrook

The Clerk has received information from BDBC that Heads of Terms are being drafted for the land transfer.

Action: Clerk to confirm with BDBC that EWPC will still require a solicitor to review Meadowbrook Heads of Terms.

Going forward, the Amenities Committee will need to review and photograph the Meadowbrook boundary, similar to the parish field, to ensure it is clear what responsibility of maintenance rests with EWPC.

11. ASB on EWPC property

None to report.

12. General Maintenance

Scofell agreement: It was questioned during the meeting that the committee is not sure what jobs have or have not been completed.

Action: Clerk to follow up on a monthly basis with Scofell on what jobs have been completed.

13. Items to take to next meeting

Usual items.

Next meeting 10am, 21 May 2024

Actions from 22 April meeting

Action: Cllr Rand to contact HCC Ranger to discuss improving the path with additional material.

Action: Clerk to contact BDBC inspection team to find out their new recommendation for playground repairers.

Action: Clerk to respond to enquiry for boules court.

Action: Cllr Rand to write a piece for Spectrum on the CCTV improvement.

Action: The Amenities committee (Cllr Rand) report for the Annual Parish Meeting should highlight that this will now be a key priority for the PC.

Action: Clerk to subscribe to CPRE and confirm at full council.

Action: Clerk to put Cllr Blakeway's request for volunteers to clear brambles and Himalayan balsam by the Boardwalk on to Facebook and the website.

Action: Clerk to follow up on a monthly basis with Scofell on what jobs have been completed.

Cllr Hurst Report on NGO conference

Hi all, over the weekend I attended a Hampshire NGO conference. I did not think it would be that interesting but it was rather eye opening on the present state of play and increasing importance of NGOs in Hampshire as our elected bodies reduce their resource.

Whatever our views of non elected NGOs the fact from this session is they are becoming increasingly important to us. The wildlife NGOs were well represented in this session with their senior people attending and being very vocal and active.

It became clear that the key wildlife NGOs in Hampshire are

- Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Chief Exec Debbie Tann (clear she is a key player in Hampshire).*
- Council for Protection of Rural England, Hampshire (CPRE), Chair Margaret Paren (quite but has a national body supporting her)*
- Hampshire Ornithological Society (HOS), President, Chris Packham (very dynamic and vocal in the meeting as you would imagine)*

Other National groups were well represented but the ones above are most politically active in Hampshire, especially the Wildlife Trust and CPRE.

These all have large and active memberships (way bigger than similar county groups).

Overview of biodiversity in Hampshire.

They gave a good overview of the present state of play of biodiversity in Hampshire...

38% of Hampshire is regarded as protected landscape (National Parks, National Landscapes, Nature Reserves etc). One of the highest in the country.

125 SSSIs equating to 13.2% of the county area

4094 SINCS covering 9.4% of the county area.

80% of accessible green space in Hampshire has a wildlife designation. The accessible greenspace not designated as a wildlife area (such as parks, recreation grounds, public open spaces) has shrunk significantly from development and agricultural designation in the last few years putting pressure on the 80% of land. Most parish councils are now well below green space targets.

Farm holdings in Hampshire are bucking the national trend and getting significantly larger. Hampshire has seen more hedgerows removed and farm buildings developed than most of the other counties in the UK.

Continued loss of ancient woodland from farming and development.

51 SINCS covering 176 Hectares of land has been lost from development between 2010-2019 and this continues at pace. 60% of these sites were species rich grassland as they are seen as easy to develop.

90% of grassland SINCS in Hampshire saw a decline in condition.

However, many SSSIs have seen a biodiversity improvement.

The growth of our NGOs.

The Hampshire NGOs are growing their memberships rapidly, they have money and becoming more politically active and taking over county council and Borough Council biodiversity activities.

Hampshire CC are using the NGOs for biodiversity work, especially surveys and reducing their own resources (so this resource going to the NGOs). Borough councils are also not recruiting biodiversity expertise, again outsourcing to the NGOs.

Hampshire and the Borough Councils no longer buying land for protection, but the NGOs are actively purchasing poor agricultural land and are starting rewilding projects.

These NGOs are much more active in Central and Southern Hampshire - a quote "we hear little from North Hampshire parish councils".

The NGOs are becoming very active in planning and they see bodies such as the North Wessex Downs National Landscape being marginalised from under funding. Interestingly they still see the National Parks as getting the lion share of government money for these type of organisations.

On planning, the Wildlife Trust and CPRE have both commented in detail on the BDBC Local Plan....

- objected to the proposed "garden village" at Popham*
- supported brown field site at Overton Mill*
- objected to inclusion of warehousing at Jct 17 of M3*
- actively pushed for the inclusion of the concept of "valued landscapes" and agreed with with the final BDBC list.*
- challenged BDBC on the lack of proposed green space*
- agreed with the overall priorities of the plan but challenged how they will achieve it with the present resource.*

The NGOs are now being pulled in to present planning discussions by town councils and parish councils. For example they are objecting to 245 planned houses to the south of Tadley.

They are also battling councils on proposed development in the countryside. They feel that local politicians are viewing the area outside the protected landscape as unprotected, and can be developed. They are seeing more planners agreeing to development in the countryside.

The NGOs are putting more pressure on local politicians and MPs to "turn vision into reality". They feel their increasing membership is empowering them to become politically active.

NGO Priorities

Projects

- big focus on protection of chalk streams and their flood plains (they have got their members monitoring water quality and are prepared to take legal action against the water companies).*

- focus on preventing further loss of species rich grassland by becoming actively involved in key planning decisions impacting this land.
- supporting local organisations to improve biodiversity of grassland
- active project for Hampshire Hedge planting (5000 m of new hedges planted since last year) - CPRE driving this and wanting local organisations to get involved.
- supporting the Hampshire CC project to develop a "Local Nature Recovery Strategy". This is primarily the development of wildlife corridors linking to the protected landscapes.

Strategies

- pressure political parties at the election, through mobilising their membership
- the NGOs wish to become the source of biodiversity evidence for LPAs and get increasingly involved in significant local planning issues - almost removing Hampshire CC from their survey role.
- they will continue to purchase land for nature protection
- they will pressure borough councils to deliver more greenspace as part of development.
- stay close to the development of Borough Local Plans
- ensure the concept of valued landscapes are put in place and protected
- ensure development of sustainable tourism (very critical of poorly managed tourism development by Borough Councils).
- they stated they wish to start to guide the mandatory biodiversity net gain investments required in development - "making sure Borough teams do their job".