

Wickersley Parish Council

Minutes of the Woodland Committee Meeting

Tuesday 23rd March 2021 @ 6.30pm held Remotely via the Microsoft Teams Platform

Members: Cllrs: - M Scott (Chairperson), P Thirlwall, E Boswell, S Ellis, K Phillips, R Postlethwaite, Gorse Warden Paul Paddock, Wood Warden Katie Smith

In Attendance: S Fletcher Deputy Clerk, Mark Scott, P Thirlwall, K Phillips, Katie Smith, Paul Paddock and Ian Kennedy. With a member of the public. S Ellis joined at 19.15hrs

The Chair welcomed all the attendees and set out his expectations for the woodland committee to be held on the Microsoft Teams platform. The Deputy Clerk advised the joining instructions had been advertised on the Parish Website with the details of the Agenda Items to be discussed.

379. To receive apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from P Bates and P Ryder - volunteers, it is noted that Councillor Ellis will join the meeting later due to an overlap meeting.

380. To resolve if members of the press and public are to be excluded from any agenda items of the meeting due to the nature of the business to be transacted. Under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, S1 (2))

Resolved: There are no items to be excluded.

381. To approve the minutes of the Meeting held on 8th December 2020

Resolved: The minutes of the meeting were approved and signed as a true record by Councillor Scott.

382. To note matters arising from the Meeting held on 8th December 2020

There were no matters arising.

383. To receive information regarding the Volunteers Programme for 2021

383.1 Update on works completed and planned works- The Deputy Clerk updated the Committee that unfortunately due to the Covid Restrictions only very minimal works had been achieved. Volunteering for the parish is being promoted in the latest newsletter so hopefully we will be able to progress and develop when restrictions are lifted.

384. To Receive an update on the bridge in the Gorse

The Deputy Clerk stated that the contractor has marked the proposed position of the new Bridge and has cleared the scrub away. There has been an issue with the larger timbers however, it is confirmed that the construction work will commence on 5th April. This prompted discussion on the need to provide a hard surface on the path to the bridge to ensure the correct levels and the suitability of the pathway. The Chair, Cllr Scott added that he would assess the situation. It is noted that access to the area is better served from the Golf course.

Wickersley Parish Council

385. To receive a budget update to 30.01.2021

Financial Statement for Wickersley Parish Council Financial Report to 31/01/2021	As at 31/01/2021	Committed to 31 Mar 2020	Total projected to 31 Mar 2021	Budget 2020-21	Surplus/-Deficit projection to 31 Mar 2020
Gorse - general	560.00	2,195.00	2755.00	2500.00	255.00
Wood - general	1362.55	1,287.45	2650.00	2500.00	150.00
Wood & Gorse Wardens	55.00	55.00	110.00	110.00	0.00
Common Bank Lease	0.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	0.00
Woodland Committee Events	180.00	320.00	500.00	500.00	0.00
Total Woodland Management	2157.55	3,957.45	6115.00	5710.00	405.00

A discussion followed where concern was raised in relation to a possible overspend, the Deputy Clerk pointed out that there had been no major expenditure except for the removal of dangerous trees and branches throughout the wood and the Gorse. Ian Kennedy added that there had been an unusually windy period whilst the trees were in leaf which can cause more damage and you can never predict that expenditure. Cllr Scott added that he appreciated everyone's comments and is mindful of the tighter budget restrictions Covid has forced upon the parish.

Resolved: that the budget is approved

386. To discuss matters relating to Wickersley Gorse

386.1 Wickersley Gorse Monitoring Report – Mr Ian Kennedy took the committee through his report on the Gorse advising that the works had been completed on damaged trees and branches. There is one outstanding item, the removal of the poplar tree, there is a quotation for and despite the access issues the figure does appear to be on the high side, advised to seek new quotes. Brush cutting on the grassed area is planned. The new tree planting on the northside is developing well and the new trees planted in March 2020 require the brambles and weeds stripping back about 1m round to ensure good growth. He added that the top path will require some work pruning back as this growth hampers smooth passage on the busy pathway. A work programme for guidance is provided on page 7 of the report, bearing in mind the budget comments the works are not critical.

Cllr Thirlwall asked if the trials on Himalayan Balsam Rust had been successful, Paul Paddock added that he would provide an update for the next meeting from someone involved in the trial in the Midlands.

386.2 Report from the Gorse Warden Paul Paddock – photographs had been circulated to committee members prior to the meeting and Cllr Scott shared the screen to illustrate to other participants of the meeting. Paul stated he was reassured that the works on the new bridge was imminent as the condition of the existing bridge is causing concern, another photograph illustrated how much erosion has taken place and the collapsed banks beyond the bridge. Other photographs capture the wild garlic and blue bells starting to grow. There had been a small fire set and some rubbish noted. Paul added he considered that the new trees planted in March 2020 would benefit from clearing brambles and would welcome the silver birch that had fallen being dealt with. Paul also commented that he thought the regeneration of a pond in the gorse is not productive.

Wickersley Parish Council

386.3 Update on signage for nitrous oxide capsules – The Deputy Clerk stated that laminated signs had been displayed in the parish notice boards relating to the misuse of nitrous oxide cannisters.

386.4 Update on Recommended Works from Management Consultant – this has already been discussed in minute 386.1.

387. To discuss matters relating to Wickersley Wood

387.1a Wickersley Wood Monitoring Report – Ian Kennedy presented his report on the woods stating that all works on the previous recommendation had been completed. He added that a silver birch has moved on its root plate and requires removal to the rear of 54 Wood Lane. In addition, there is a dead branch hanging on an oak tree that requires removal. Other trees that have fallen naturally, are not affecting pathways, and can be left. Ian reported that he had inspected trees to the rear of 2 The Pines to query overhang, he added that there is end of branch overhang but is not significant the shading with the trees being to the east of the property is not considered excessive. He reported that he had also inspected the trees along the path near 44 and 46 Wood Lane again there is some overhang but not excessive or intrusive. He added that members will consider if works are necessary and appropriate at this time. The digging and creation of BMX type jumps were noted and should be monitored to ensure everyone can enjoy the woodland. Works on the glade to pull out new growth can take place as and when volunteers are able however the brush cutting should be delayed until after birds nesting to September/October. There is a works schedule included on page 7 of the report with some coppicing of 2 parcels of land to the rear of 12 – 16 Woodside Court to be carried out in November 2021 as part of the approved management plan.

387.1b Mr Veal, a resident and neighbour wanted to raise several issues in the wood firstly the appearance and condition of the middle entrance where the substation is located, himself and neighbours were concerned it appears neglected and would welcome work being done even willing to be involved together with neighbours. Cllr Scott advised that budgetary constraints are a principal factor to be considered and if volunteers are willing to be involved, we as a parish would support them. It was noted that this is not the main entrance and the trees do come up to the access causing shade limiting planting and any planting should be sympathetic to the ancient woodland. Secondly, Mr Veal was concerned about the density and height of trees around his property and is mindful of the previous comments of the consultant and matters relating to budget constraints and asked what the process involved. Ian Kennedy advised that as the area is subject to a TPO an application is made to Rotherham MBC for tree work, the works must be necessary and appropriate and detailed on the application. There is no fee and the process takes approximately 8 weeks it is not guaranteed that the application would be successful but the Parish would not object to necessary work if approved and carried out at his expense with suitably qualified contractors. Mr Veal commented that the benefits of living adjacent to the wood outweigh the negatives and will consider this option.

387.2 Report from Wickersley Wood Warden – the report was circulated via email for members earlier in the day. The last quarter has been busy and eventful after receiving

Wickersley Parish Council

the email notifying her of the damage to the gate's, troughs left through the woodland. The social media reports of dog thefts were posted and thankfully unfounded, there is concern about the fairy grotto and the materials used, nails, plastics one tree has 23 individual nails embedded in it with various attachments the resultant litter issue is worrying. There are regular litter pickers in the wood as well as her which can only be a positive. The damage to the bench was really disappointing after only a week, everyone commented how beautiful it was with queues for photographs. Cllr Ellis added that contact with SYP had not identified Wickersley as a potential location of interest for dog thefts.

387.3 Update on works in Woodland- the deputy clerk reported that contractors had completed most of the tree works and our handymen have an increasing list of tasks in woodland working their way through them.

The chair thanked everyone for their comprehensive reports on the Gorse and Woodland.

Resolved: that the management reports on the Gorse and Wickersley wood are accepted.

387.4 Update on aggravated trespass and criminal damage – the deputy clerk updated members that she has not received an update from the investigating officer despite messages left on his mobile number. It is very disappointing even after providing CCTV evidence and registration numbers for the police to investigate. Cllr Ellis commented that the neighbourhood team was severely depleted at present and actively recruiting officers.

387.5 Overhanging Branches concerns from residents- this has been addressed in minute 387.1.a and b. The deputy clerk is to advise interested parties, and neighbours of the woodland of the comments made in relation to the submission of an independent application to Rotherham MBC

387.6 Update on Recommended works from Management consultant- this has been discussed in minute 387.1 and 387.3, in addition the volunteers had been unable to assist, however as restrictions are eased, we are to develop volunteers in the wood.

387.7 Ad-hoc displays (Materials, items, danger to wildlife, dogs) The Chair advised that the ad hoc displays were causing concern for the welfare of wildlife and the biodiversity of the woodland, it would also appear that a social media page had evolved. A lengthy discussion followed, and it was agreed that the Chair is to publish a statement outlining the concerns on the parish website and on the parish and local Facebook group that are accessed by Wickersley residents, with a request to remove the items after the easter weekend. Other schemes for easter sticks be declined at this time but reviewed to develop next year.

During the discussion, a suggestion was made that if the concrete blocks are to be retained as a second barrier then they could be painted by children to blend in.

This suggestion may be developed further.

Resolved; that a statement prepared and published by The Chair, Cllr Scott

388. To discuss and agree any actions for Woodland Committee Projects

388.1 **Sculpture** – the deputy clerk updated that the sculpture bench had been installed on

Wickersley Parish Council

9th March by our handymen with the sculptor present. Unfortunately, the sculpture was subsequently damaged within a week with the antennae being broken off and the stability of the chair compromised. The handymen rectified sharp edges and will resolve the stability issue. The general discussion was that the bench was wonderful with lots of positive comments on social media. It is also noted that future designs should be scrutinised for vandal proof options.

388.2 **Warning Signs** – Cllr Thirlwall updated the committee on the signage to indicate items and activities prohibited in the woodland and gorse. To provide signage at all entrance points the quotes received were in the region of £900 + vat. Discussion followed that signage should be positive and informative not always negative and some individuals would continue their activities despite prohibitive signage. Suggestions were made to update the displayed information in the Notice boards. It is proposed that a bid is submitted to the full parish as a project although it is not an essential item.

Resolved: that a bid is submitted

Standing Orders extended from 8.30pm to 8.45pm

389. **To discuss Woodland Policies** – The chair advised that this is a work in progress, the first review the ‘Tree Policy’ - ‘Works to Trees – guide to Neighbouring land owner/occupiers’ was discussed and the points were found to be appropriate and concise. The second ‘Prohibition Policy’ required a change to the text to state ‘motorcycles’. Other policies applicable to woodland will be reviewed in due course.

Resolved: that these policies, now reviewed is adopted by the full parish
Policies attached as Appendix 1 & 2.

390. **To discuss and agree risk assessment and insurance arrangements.**

This is a standard item on each Agenda included to ensure that all aspects are up to date. It is noted that prior to the projects a risk assessment is required.

391. **To note the meeting schedule for 2021 Commencing at 6.30pm**

Tuesday 22nd June 2021
Tuesday 28th September 2021
Tuesday 30th November 2021

Resolved: the date of the next meeting is Tuesday 22nd June 2021 at 6.30pm.the venue to be confirmed following Government restrictions in place.

The meeting was closed 8.40pm

Chairperson..... Councillor Mark Scott