

NOTES ON A MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT WORKING GROUP (EWG)

6th September 2023 via Teams

Attendees: Cllrs John Turner (JT), (Chair), Hugh Cleaver(HC), Rebecca Leach (RL) and Domenico Tarricone (DT) with Alan Ford (AF), Ken Howes (KH), Ed Langridge (EL), Lizzie Pannell (LP) and Dave Pate (DP).

In Attendance: Catherine Barrett (CB), Assistant Clerk

Members of Public: There were none.

Apologies: Kay Dooley (family commitments).

1. To ask members for their consent to record the meeting to aid the production of meeting notes

Members consented to the meeting being recorded by CB using the Teams recording function for the purpose of accuracy of the minutes. She would delete the recording once the minutes had been signed off at the next EWG meeting.

2. To elect a Vice-Chair

It was **RESOLVED** to appoint DT as Vice-Chair of the working group.

3. To give an overview of action points and updates from the previous meeting on 25th April

The action points are listed below. It was agreed to refer to specific points under the relevant agenda item.

4. To give an update on the installation of electric vehicle chargers at Langton Green Village Hall car park

JT reported that the chargers were in the process of being installed and completion was scheduled for the following week. He asked members for feedback about parking enforcement in the charging bays and the following points were made:

- RL said that parking should not be restricted during school drop off and pick up times.
- LP added that this allowance should only be made during term time.
- EL commented that the question of enforcement was a problematic one, especially as the EV chargers worked at 7kw/hour. It would take some time to fully charge a vehicle at this rate, and it was more likely car park users would only use the Chargers to 'top up'.
- DT said that there should be a common-sense approach to enforcement, and KH added that initially, the chargers should be seen as experimental; there was no point in enforcing until a period of monitoring had taken place to learn about supply and demand.
- JT thanked members for their feedback and agreed to draft a recommendation for Full Council on 3rd October. EL and RL would proof this before submitting.

5. To consider the outcome of the Glyphosate-free weed control trial at Langton Green recreation ground.

JT said that the trial was almost complete. Wet weather in July and some of August had made it difficult to treat the weeds, however, there had been a clear 6-week period in which to treat the areas the parish council was responsible for at Langton Green Recreation Ground. Natural Roundup had been used in one area, while a Vinegar-Washing-up Liquid-Salt solution had been used in others.

It was clear that nothing was as effective as Glyphosate-based treatments, however, of the two alternatives trialled, Natural Roundup was cheaper and more effective. The weeds had required multiple applications so there were cost implications, but lessons had been learned about how to treat the weeds

more efficiently, and JT said that a revised trial during the 2024 growing season would be his recommendation.

HC commented that effect should be more important than cost, although JT replied that this was not a view shared by all.

RL asked if there was a labour cost, and JT said that he was due to meet with the Groundsman to discuss this, although the Groundsman had spent less time on some weeded areas in 2023 than previously, since these areas had been left to grow longer, with minimal strimming to keep them under control.

JT added that Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) was beginning to review its weed control policy, and it was advisable to get ahead in establishing alternative methods before the government's review of glyphosate products in 2025. It was **RESOLVED** that JT would recommend to Full Council that a further trial should take place during the 2024 growing season.

6. To give an update on re-wilding activities at Pocket Park, Speldhurst, including:

- An update on Laurel removal to date and consider next steps – The first phase of Cherry Laurel removal had been completed, with the 2nd phase planned for October. AF reported that removing the Laurel had let the light into the back of the park and he looked forward to seeing what would grow next summer. He noted that the Laurel which had been removed was already beginning to reseed, and this would need addressing. JT added that AF's documentation of the evolving biodiversity was very important. AF said that more photos had been taken that week, and a moth trap had been set in June, with around 35 different moth species recorded.
- An update on the noticeboard – Due to a busy summer in the council office, CB had been unable to order the noticeboard, but would do so as soon as she had capacity.
- Consider next steps on bat/bird boxes – AF said that these needed to be installed away from direct sunlight on the east side of the park. Two or 3 boxes should be purchased, to begin with, with different-sized holes, so that Blue Tits could nest without being bothered by bigger birds. These should be ordered using some of the remaining UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) from TWBC.
- Consider next steps on hedging – Funding for the purchase and planting of hedging plants on the road-side, and the side facing 38 Roopers and Little Court Lodge would be included in an application to Sussex Lund.
- An update on the application to Sussex Lund – It had not been possible for JT to meet with AF and EL to work on this application. The deadline was early October, and it was **RESOLVED** to arrange a meeting within the next two weeks.

An action point was set for CB to ask the mowing contractors to mow the re-wilded grass area, and to request that the Groundsman tidy up the brambles.

EL said that it was important to tell residents what the EWG was doing at Pocket Park, and raised the question of getting schools involved, which had been discussed previously. RL suggested getting pupils involved as part of their Forest School sessions, and it was **RESOLVED** that RL and LP work on this together.

7. To consider sewage discharges into local rivers and streams

DP said that there was still a significant issue with discharges in the stream at the bottom of Barden Road. CB added that Greg Clark had talked about the water in the River Grom around Burrswood. The Dorset Arms Angling Society, who had fishing rights over this section of the river had paid to have the water tested, which was found to be of poor quality. DP said that demonstrated that the issue was parish-wide. He added that with unlawful discharges having been in the national news, it was particularly relevant, but the question was, what could be done to address the issue? DT offered to contact Greg Clark, who was Chairman of the Dorset Arms Angling Society in addition to his role as MP for Tunbridge Wells, and it was **RESOLVED** that DP would supply him with some anecdotal evidence to include in his email. It was agreed that it was important to register with Greg Clark that the unlawful discharges were unacceptable.

8. To discuss points of focus for the Autumn and Winter

John asked members to consider what they would like the EWG to address into Winter 2024 and beyond. It was RESOLVED that each member should bring two ideas with them to the next meeting, having let Catherine know about them beforehand. An action point was set for CB to send out the Terms of Reference as guidance.

9. Any other Business

KH expressed continuing concern about the Planning Committee's tendency to remain neutral on planning applications when there were clearly Tree Preservation Order and conservation issues involved. He gave an example of a recent application that had involved the felling of 5 Ash trees and asked why the committee had not requested a double-check of the proposed plans at the very least. JT thanked KH for raising this point again and suggested that he make it one of his suggestions for future EWG activities.

With nothing further to discuss, the meeting ended at 8.45 pm.

Summary of Action Points

No.	Summary	Owner	Created	Status
01/23	Add the election of a Vice-Chair to next meeting agenda	CB	25/04	Complete
03/23	Present ToR for approval at Full Council	CB	25/04	Complete
06/23	Liaise with CB about putting Moth Trap in Pocket Park	AF	25/04	Complete
07/23	Research into Glyphosate-free Round-up	JT	25/04	Complete
08/23	Add sewage discharge to next meeting agenda	CB	25/04	Complete
04/23	Meet to work on an application to Sussex Lund	JT/AF/EL	25/04	In progress
05/23	Purchase Lectern Noticeboard	CB	25/04	In progress
09/23	Liaise with CB about a piece for Langton Life on Glyphosate-free trial at LGRG	EL	25/04	TBA
10/23	Draft recommendation on EVC Bay enforcement for Full Council	JT	06/09	TBA
11/23	Draft recommendation on further glyphosate-free weed control trial in 2024	JT	06/09	TBA
12/23	Develop an approach to primary schools to get them involved with Pocket Park, Speldhurst	RL & LP	06/09	TBA
13/23	Order and install birdboxes	CB/AF/JT	06/09	TBA
14/23	Request mowing contractor to mow re-wilded area and Groundsman to tidy up brambles at Pocket Park	CB	06/09	TBA
15/23	Contact Greg Clark to request a conversation about water quality in parish rivers. DP to send DT anecdotal evidence to include in his email.	DT/DP	06/09	TBA

16/23	Bring two ideas about what you would like the EWG to address in 2024 to the next meeting	All	06/09	TBA
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