

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

25th April 2023 via Teams

Attendees: Cllrs John Turner (JT), (Chair) and Kay Dooley (KD), who joined the meeting at 7.25pm, with Alan Ford (AF), Ken Howes (KH) and Ed Langridge.

In attendance: Catherine Barrett (CB) Assistant Clerk.

Members of Public: There were no members of the public present.

Apologies: Lizzie Pannell (LP) and Dave Pate (DP), both due to work commitments.

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

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

JT said that all 3 Councillors should be present for this item. **RESOLVED** to defer the election until the next meeting.

3. To consider future meetings of the EWG

At the EWG meeting on 10th October 2022 it had been agreed to continue as a Working Group, subject to review in 6 months' time, when the ongoing feasibility of operating in this way would be considered.

It was now time for that review, and there was some discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of remaining as a Working Group.

While it was acknowledged that there would be greater autonomy in being able to make budgetary and operational decisions as a Committee without having to defer to Full Council, the Working Group had still achieved many of its aims without Committee status. It was also agreed that the environmental benefits of meeting online instead of traveling by car to meet in person outweighed any negatives, and Members **RESOLVED** to continue as a Working Group, subject to review in 6 months' time.

4. A review of actions

Minutes of the previous meeting – with Members' actions in red – had been shared. JT said he would put together a summary of actions for the next meeting. With the Working Group becoming busier, this would help keep Members on track with any action points set for them. The action summary can now be found at the end of these meeting notes.

5. To review the EWG Terms of Reference (ToR) for the year ahead

The current ToR had been shared and it was **RESOLVED** to recommend no further changes. The ToR would be presented for approval at the Full Council meeting on 9th May.

6. To give an update on the installation of Electric Vehicle Chargers at Langton Green Village Hall car park

JT reported that there had been some hold ups with the installation, due to delays with Kent County Council (KCC) and Connected Kerb, their contracted Installer. However, it was still hoped that this would take place in the next 6 months. It was proposed to take 2 of the disabled parking spaces behind the Parish Council office, and it was hoped that the Chargers would be rapid-charge. EL asked if there would be guidance notes on how to use the Chargers, and although JT was sure that KCC would cover this he noted the question. KH commented that installation and trial would be a good learning exercise, and that it was better to make a start on accommodating the transition to electric vehicles than not.

7. To give an update on budget and funding

- Budget carried over from the year 22/23 and budget for the year 23/24: There was £150 carried over from the financial year 2022/23, and an available budget of £500 for the year 2023/24. The Amenities Committee had also pledged to top up funds where works were to be carried out on Parish Council land.
- Funding from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC): TWBC had granted £1,300 from their community grants programme. This would be paid retrospectively for works carried out in Pocket Park in 2023. There was a possibility of further funds being made available in 2024.
- Funding from S106 Developer Contributions: The Developer of Ashurst Place, Langton Green, had given £250 in S106 money to be used by the Parish Council for environmental initiatives.
- Making a funding application to Sussex Lund: The 2023 Sussex Lund fund was now open for applications; this could only provide funding in 2024. JT suggested that there were a number of items where funding for Pocket Park, Speldhurst would be helpful:
 - The provision and installation of bird and bat boxes
 - The provision and planting of native plant species to replace the Laurels being removed
 - The provision and planting of hedging on the Penshurst Road side of the park

KH asked if it was possible to look at other areas in the Parish to expand our biodiversity programme. EL pointed out that as a parish of 4 villages, there were a number of biodiversity activities already underway – no mow at Groombridge Green; stopping use of glyphosate; encouraging residents to have a “no mow” approach as well as the work at Pocket Park. It would be impressive to demonstrate to Sussex Lund of the total program and that Pocket Park in Speldhurst was a starting point for biodiversity development throughout the parish.

It was agreed that KH’s point about other areas in the parish could be a useful strategy to use in the application.

CB advised that Sussex Lund were keen to see that applicants had a sustainability plan for the area they were working on, for example, allowing a realistic budget to keep bird and bat boxes in good repair in the years ahead.

It was **RESOLVED** that JT would work on an application with AF and EL. EL suggested visiting Sussex Lund to obtain more information about the application process. It was also agreed that having Sussex Lund go into the local primary schools to teach about what they were funding in Speldhurst should also be looked into.

8. To give an update on re-wilding at Pocket Park, Speldhurst

- John gave an update on the removal of the Laurels. The cost for the first phase of removal was £680.00, and this would cover the large Laurel in the centre of the park, and the Laurels on the left hand side of the park facing Roopers. The Laurels on the right hand side of the park would remain in place for now and JT had drafted a letter to the residents living nearby to keep them updated.
- CB had researched lectern noticeboard options and shared these with Members. She had spoken to the supplier, who advised that their stainless steel noticeboards were more long-lasting and robust than the wood or recycled plastic options. They could withstand adverse weather conditions and graffiti, and could be repurposed if necessary. After some discussion about the importance of using environmentally friendly materials, it was **RESOLVED** to ask the supplier if they could supply recycled steel. If this was not possible, the noticeboard would be purchased in new stainless steel.
- AF gave an update on plant life. He had spotted a primrose, Dog Violet and Field Wood-rush. CB had updated the archive. It was **RESOLVED** to put a battery operated moth trap in Pocket Park later in the summer to see how many types of moths were attracted.
- CB had looked at the cost of hedging plants for the Penshurst Road side of the park. These cost from £63.00 per pack on the Woodland Trust website. EL suggested contacting TWBC to ask if they had any hedging available, as they had previously given out free Blackthorn hedging.

9. To give an update on weed control at Langton Green Recreation Ground (LGRG)

JT said that the Glyphosate-free trial was ongoing at LGRG. EL asked if he could run a story on this in Langton Life and it was agreed that he would liaise with CB.

JT had reported that Paul Curry (Chair of SPC) had mentioned about a Glyphosate-free version of Round-Up weed killer. JT had done some preliminary research, and would research further, which suggested this may be another potential weed control treatment.

JT noted that TWBC were in the process of reviewing their pesticide policy.

10. To discuss sewage discharges in rivers and streams in the Parish

It was agreed to defer a discussion of this item until DP was present.

11. Recommendations for Full Council

The ToR would be presented to Full Council for approval on 9th May.

12. Items for Information

JT had attended the Kent Association of Local Councils' Climate Change Conference. His report on the conference had been shared. He had held a follow up call with a Parish Councillor from Brenchley and Matfield Parish Council. JT had sent an e mail to a TWBC contact suggesting that TWBC help facilitate a meeting of other parish councils to share learning about environmental activities. It was agreed that this was a positive way forward and JT hoped to be able to report further at the next meeting on **Tuesday 18th July**.

There being nothing further to discuss, the meeting ended at 8.30pm.

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	To be actioned (TBA)
02/23	Produce Action summary to keep Members on track with action points set for them	JT/CB	25/04	Complete
03/23	Present ToR for approval at Full Council	CB	25/04	TBA
04/23	Meet to work on application to Sussex Lund	JT/AF/EL	25/04	TBA
05/23	Purchase Lectern Noticeboard	CB	25/04	TBA
06/23	Liaise with CB about putting Moth Trap in Pocket Park	AF	25/04	TBA
07/23	Research into Glyphosate-free Round-up	JT	25/04	TBA
08/23	Add sewage discharge to next meeting agenda	CB	25/04	TBA
09/23	Liaise with CB about a piece for Langton Life on Glyphosate-free trial at LGRG	EL	25/04	TBA