

## SILCHESTER COMMON MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Committee met at the Calleva Arms on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2015 at 8.00pm.

**Present:** Anne Tynegate, Chris Lee, John Harrison, Paul Baker, Steve Spillane (SPC Chairman), Maxta Thomas (Minutes Secretary)

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Item	Action
1. <b><u>Apologies</u></b> Jon Saltmarsh, Graham Dennis, Bob Radley	
2. <b><u>Approval of Minutes of July Meeting</u></b> Minutes unanimously approved.	
3. <b><u>Matters arising from minutes of July meeting</u></b> MT to transfer money from school for School Field work. Bridge work – JH has not been able to check the slippery bridge NE of Lordswood as weather has been dry when he has been there. This still needs to be investigated. CT to investigated non-slip surfaces. Date of Risk Assessment should be 20/01/14, not date stated in previous minutes.	MT CT
4. <b><u>Cattle Report</u></b> TB testing – all 24 cattle are clear. Tests are now carried out yearly. JH noted that one steer on neighbouring land has been identified as positive. Situation to be monitored. Fencing corral field – request from Ben K to re-look at fencing around this field. Does not belong to SCMC – belongs to Englefield Estate, with HWT looking after it. Graham Dennis to investigate – JH to talk to Ben and Graham.	JH/GD
5. <b><u>Accounts</u></b> Accounts report – balance is £23,130, unrepresented cheque for £22. The invoice from Heathland Management Services has come in. After all bills paid there is around £12k left. This is more than expected due to an unexpected payment of £8k from the SPS. This money is considered secure, as professional assistance has been sought to assist with submitting SPS application forms. JH gave some background on the SPS scheme and CAP reform. It is not known how long the SPS scheme will continue. AT went over revised HLS schedule of payments – next HLS payment is now due in around a year's time, and this should be for close to £15,500. Nearly £4k has been paid recently and will be transferred from SPC accounts to SCMC account. VAT reclaim also to come in. HLS capital works – claims currently at £2500. The current HLS 5 year plan ends in March 2016. JH noted that SCMC will now need to formally apply for scheduled HLS money – he is currently trying to obtain the application form. Reserve to allow for cattle purchase costs – needs to be maintained at current levels.	MT
6. <b><u>Contractor Work</u></b> Heathland Management work –now complete. Comments from public have been very positive. Sale of wood by contractors – end result of sale of wood was £412 + VAT for nearly 18 tonnes of wood at £35 per tonne, less £11 per tonne removal costs. This was taken off the HM bill. Now that the major work is done, it is considered unlikely that any more significant wood will be cut for the next few years. SS and CL queried the amount received for wood, noting that the current retail rate appears to be higher than what was negotiated. JH noted	

that the wood wasn't particularly good quality, and the contractor removing the wood was a big benefit to SCMC and the Council. JH felt that rate received was competitive. JH also noted that the contractors reputation is at stake and therefore not in their interest to undersell the wood. However, future sale of wood to be investigated before agreement.

Use of keys by contractors and others – CL noted that some keys to common gates have gone missing – there is no keyholders list. Some contractors have keys. He asked if SCMC want to consider changing the locks on the 6 access gates to the common. After a lengthy discussion, it was agreed that the decision would be put to a full committee vote at the next meeting. SS noted that it may be worth replacing them as they are at least 15 years old, and that the SPC may contribute to the cost. Costs and options to be investigated in the meantime. CL to action. Also consider a keyholders list.

CL

## 7. **Silchester Volunteer Group**

Work Party Dates – already discussed and confirmed at previous meetings.

Volunteer Lists - JH asked that Peter Elliott is not sent emails for inclusion on the early list. Individual work party leaders to note.

JS/all

Availability of list to committee – JS has been asked about this – he has concern about data confidentiality. SS suggested a googlegroup or something similar. Also, volunteers can be asked for permission for SCMC to use their contact details. Only for use when JS is not available. MT noted that she is the official data controller for the Council, and should therefore have some control over the list. Also, access needed in case of emergencies. MT to speak to JS regarding list.

MT/JS

Work Party Areas - these are set for the rest of the season – areas from paths can be expanded as necessary.

Next season – JH suggested work around Bramley Ponds. CL noted that there are some invasive species in the area that will need to be checked. Also need to take care around telephone lines. Other suggestions are invited.

Volunteer Social - JH invited ideas. CL suggested a BBQ at Village Hall, and asking people to share organisation of the event. The BBQ can be borrowed from the Calleva Arms. It was agreed to follow this idea up. Late May/Early June suggested, with an evening event (6pm onwards). PB to investigate dates and liaise on organisation. Budget of £10 per head – therefore around £250 total cost for the event. It was suggested that it should be a volunteers only event with no partner; however, the opinion of volunteers to be sought prior to a final decision. PB also to investigate cost of food and alcohol. SS volunteered to organise food.

PB/SS

Tools Update - Nothing to report. New petrol can required. Andy Allcock to organise.

## 8. **HLS Report**

HLS has provided a guaranteed income to SCMC of £15k per year, which has been paid automatically to date. This will now need to be formally applied for on an annual basis. Some money spent on capital works can be claimed back from HLS. The current 5 year plan was agreed 4 years ago – this has now been completed a year ahead of schedule.

Review of present 5-year plan – ongoing maintenance will need to be carried out for the next year, which will likely be predominantly volunteer driven. Basic payment will still be paid, although there may not be any further capital works for next 5 year plan. AT noted that funding opportunities are being tightened. SCMC are looking at 're-establishment of wet plateaux', which may qualify for further funding for this period. However, further removal of scrub is unlikely to be funded. SS asked if we had another map show wetland areas – there is one in existence, but it is not an HLS specific map. AT to investigate. Also worth investigating a public friendly habitat map for the future use.

AT

PB noted the test area for spraying – the tests were very successful. Areas that have had extensive work carried out will need revisiting in approximately 10 years – therefore towards the end of the next 5 year plan. No further maintenance required in these areas other than very general. PB also noted that efficient monitoring of treated areas is needed so that general maintenance is carried out in a timely fashion.

CL asked if work being finished early was a concern. JH confirmed that it is not, as some contingency was built in to take bad weather into account. Some work was carried out early because conditions and money were both there at the right time.

Fern spraying – maps of areas, were produced by AT for the first 5 year plan. Waiting for new chemical guidelines as the current chemical has now been banned. A new fern spraying programme will need to be put in place in due course.

CL asked about ‘dead hedges’ – does the Common need them? General consensus was probably not essential, but guidance from Graham Dennis will be sought. They are a good habitat for various wildlife and are popular with volunteers; however, there is plenty of different habitats already on the common. SS noted that these also look good to users of the common. PB noted that perhaps other methods should be explored – log piles etc. Good alternative to wholesale clearance although the public do not necessarily understand that this ultimately promotes growth. CL noted that care needs to be taken in clearing areas with regards to habitats – too much clearance can remove habitats for some wildlife

GD

The path linking Wrens’ ride and Kings road needs clearance before the Fun Run and this can be done at the same time as remaining work parties

Suggestions for 2016-2021 – JH invited suggestions for future work on the Common, ready for putting together for a new 5 year plan. New plan should be in place for April 2016, with AT and JH already in talks with Natural England to put in place. Draft should be ready by autumn 2015.

JH/AT

9. **Public meeting to present HLS & SMC work**

Will now not be part of the Council APM, so a June presentation was suggested and agreed. JH/AT to contact Natural England and HWT for possible keynote speakers..

JH/AT

10. **Risk Assessment / Safe Working Practices**

AT has sent out. No updates other than date change.

11. **Karlsruhe Pond Update**

Duke of Edinburgh volunteer is looking at maintaining Karlsruhe Pond. JH to liaise.

JH

12. **Ferretting on the Common**

PC has been approached for ferretting on Silchester Common. It was agreed after some discussion that this does not fit with SSSI and HLS requirements.

13. **SCMC Terms of Reference**

Existing ToR are in need of updating. To be discussed in conjunction with SPC.

JH/SS

14. **AOB**

SS is updating website with up to date details.

SS