

CROWTHORNE PARISH COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TRUSTEES OF WALTER RECREATION
GROUND AND CIRCLE HILL HELD ON TUESDAY 18 OCTOBER 2022 AT 9.30AM IN
THE LOWER CONFERENCE ROOM, PARISH HALL, HEATH HILL RD SOUTH,
CROWTHORNE**

Present:	CPC Mr M Dodd Cllr Mrs G Robertson Cllr S Sever – in the Chair Cllr C Thompson Mrs M Saville – Administrator Mrs J Robertson – Assistant Admin Mrs L Turkington – Project Officer	WWPC Mr P Metcalf Mrs K Hughes Cllr S Turtle Cllr K Whitehead
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Apologies accepted: Cllr J Cannon

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

2 TO NOTE THE RESIGNATION OF KATY HUGHES AS TRUSTEE AND CONFIRM THE APPOINTMENT OF KEVIN WHITEHEAD AS TRUSTEE

Trustees noted the resignation of Katy Hughes as a trustee and confirmed the appointment of Cllr Kevin Whitehead, WWPC.

3 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Trustees of Walter Recreation Ground and Circle Hill held on 1 July 2022 as circulated, were taken as read, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

4 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 1 JULY 2022

1 Min 7.1 – Woodland Update

Mr Dodd reported that repairs to the raptor box and the installation of additional raptor boxes have yet to be undertaken.

2 Min 7.2 – Wildflower planting

Wellington College has provided some wildflower seeds which have been sown at the Walter Recreation Ground in the area at the front by the bench. Additional seeds have also been purchased by the Trust. Further seeds which will cope better with shady settings will be sown in the area under the trees where the old footpath ran to help recolonise the area. The Project Officer has asked the Mens Shed if they could construct some signs to stop mowers and people trampling across the area. The Administrator also requested that some signs for the Queens Green Canopy site are made up for the same purpose. This informs the public that the areas are being managed.

3 Min 7.4 and 14 – Green Flag/Local Nature Reserve LNR application process

CPC’s Project Officer has begun work on investigating and initiating the LNR status for the sites. The work of the Berkshire Conservation Volunteers (BCV) is being scheduled and planned to ensure the sites are managed in a way that will put the trust in a strong position to make a successful application. Non-native species such as cherry laurel are being removed and areas rewilded/recolonised to encourage wildlife. Volunteer hours are also being monitored with over 50 hours of time accrued since the start of the year. The

4 (cont)

Woodland trust saplings procured via a grant for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee were also carefully selected to suit the woodland setting.

4 Min 7.5 – Cherry Laurel

Berkshire Conservation Volunteers have continued with the program of cherry laurel clearance weekends on the southern boundary abutting a residential property close to the New Road cut through at Circle Hill. Ongoing liaison with the neighbour abutting the clearer site has continued to ensure they are appraised of the works. The Project Officer and Mr Dodd have also met to discuss a potential program to clear or substantially reduce the presence of holly on both sites in order to facilitate the recolonisation of the site by native species of flora, fauna and wildlife. The Project Officer was thanked for the program/structure which she has put in place which gives BCV a clear direction for working.

5 Min 7.6 – Japanese Knotweed

There have been reports of Japanese Knotweed and Mr Dodd has attended site twice to inject the plants and ensure this is killed off and also to monitor that the plants are responding as hoped to the treatment. Trustees, through Mr Dodd, thanked Wellington College for allowing Mr Dodd the time to attend to this.

6 Min 7.7 – Berkshire Conservation Volunteers

Update had been provided under 4.4 above.

7 Min 7.10 – Repair and maintenance work

This was covered under minute number 8.

8 Min 7.12 – Environmental Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

ASB and environmental crime has continued to be an issue particularly at the Circle Hill site. It is believed the saplings which were planted in June 2022 as part of the Queen's Green canopy were uprooted by vandals. There was some suggestion by trustees that this may be deer damage but tyre tracks suggest that the damage in the area may have been deliberately caused by humans. The damage was reported to Thames Valley Police however despite their Officer offering to assist with the replanting, there was nothing the Police could do to follow up the crime report due to lack of evidence.

Cllr Turtle suggested this damage may have been unintentional/accidental caused by cyclists who have cycled at speed down the hill and then being unable to stop in time.

Graffiti damage to the trees near the bike jumps has been treated with a jet wash. Persistent fly tipping of domestic waste is continuing with carpet samples having been put in one of the bins and cleaning bottles still being left in another bin.

CPC has recently applied for a Community Safety Fund grant from BFC/PCC Community Safety Partnership for the provision of detached youth workers one evening a week who will be asked to visit several parks and open spaces in Crowthorne parish – the two trust sites have been included in the bid proposals. Although the award has not yet been confirmed it is understood that the bid is being recommended for approval and that the detached youth work visits could start as soon as November if The Wayz can appoint detached youth workers quickly.

The Administrator also requested BFC's footpath officer visit the sites as they have a footpath running through them which does appear on tracking software with Ordnance Survey. Although the visits will be infrequent, BFC have agreed to this. A request was also made for Ranger visits as a full time Ranger is to be employed for Buckler's Park. Unfortunately, this request was not granted as the Ranger is commissioned by another funding stream. It is hoped that visits from detached youth workers and the footpath officer will help to discourage ASB.

9 Min 7.15 – Tree works

This was covered under minute number 7.

10 Min 8.2 – Cllr Doreen Dye

In line with the decision by trustees at their last meeting, the Project Officer is trying to procure a Hornbeam tree (ideally locally sourced) to plant in Cllr Dye’s memory. It is proving to be a challenge with many young trees not being of local origin. The tree will be located in the area at the front of the Walter Rec.

11 Min 8.4 – Fencing

This was covered under minute number 8.

12 Min 8.5 - Removal of a tree from trust land

The Administrator had an opportunity to correspond with the neighbour whose land abuts the space where a tree appears to have been removed from Trust land at the entrance to Circle Hill adjacent to the Chiropractor’s and they had not witnessed any suspicious activity on Trust land.

13 Min 13 – Installation of footpath at Walter Recreation Ground

The grant funded works to install and reroute the footpath at the Walter Rec. are largely complete – the hard landscaping has been completed by the contractor and the associated works to recolonise the area where the old path was removed are now underway. Photos of the new path have been shared with trustees. Positive comments have been received from members of the public noting how much safer and easier it is to use the new footpath. It was agreed to ask the grounds contractor to weed spray the area to keep weed growth to a minimum. Trustees extended their thanks to the Project Officer for her excellent work on delivering this project.

5 ADMINISTRATOR’S REPORT

None.

6 TO NOTE THE HALF YEAR ACCOUNTS AND COMMENT ON THE PRELIMINARY BUDGET FOR 2023/24

The Trustees noted the preliminary budget for 2023/24 as presented and following much discussion made amendments to several line items thereby reducing the preliminary total budget figure by just under £2,000.

The Trustees agreed to carry some unspent budget from the current year into earmarked reserves for 2023-24 to enable year 1 of a 3 year program of the woodland management works to start. This work will support the LNR application, which when in place will enable the trust to bid on grants with a better prospect of success.

It was therefore unanimously RESOLVED to set a final budget of £13,500 which equates to £6,750 for each parish council (50/50 split).

It was agreed to ask Travis Perkins if it would be possible for them to undertake some repairs to the fence as a goodwill gesture, with the possibility of placing a sign on the fencing stating that they had undertaken the work. Cllr Turtle pointed out that shrubbery alongside the fence line would need to be cut back at the same time.

7 TREES:

i) TO RECEIVE, NOTE AND AGREE THE ANNUAL TREE SURVEY BY GROUND CONTROL

ii) TO AGREE THE COST OF THE TREE WORKS SPECIFIED (SUBJECT TO THE MAXIMUM FIGURES QUOTED BY GROUND CONTROL) AND DELEGATE AUTHORITY TO THE ADMINISTRATOR TO UNDERTAKE THE WORKS WHEN 3 QUOTES HAVE BEEN RECEIVED

Trustees received and noted the Annual Tree Survey report dated 30 September 2022 as undertaken by Ground Control. Ground Control have advised that work must be carried out on 8 trees at Circle Hill and 2 at the Walter Rec. within 3 months of the inspection due to the dangerous condition of the trees.

Ground Control have indicated in the report what they would charge to undertake the works. These sums have been used as a ‘worst case scenario’ for budgeting purposes and two other comparative quotes have been sought from local tree surgeons to undertake the work. The Administrator proposed to award the works to the cheapest contractor who could undertake the work within the time frames specified in the reports. One of the quotes received is for £2,300, the other quote is still awaited. The budget provision for tree works this year is £5,850 so sufficient funding is available for the works.

It is possible that further tree works will be required later in the year if there are storms as trees have occasionally suffered storm damage in these locations in previously years, particularly where there have been drought conditions followed by rain and high winds. It was therefore unanimously RESOLVED to agree to the costs of undertaking the works at both sites, subject to a maximum of:

Site	work/fees	Cost
Circle Hill	Tree work	£3,625
Circle Hill	Admin. fee	£125
Walter Rec.	Tree work	£625
Walter Rec.	Admin fee	£125
Total	Combined work & admin fees for both sites	£4,500

It was also unanimously RESOLVED that authorisation is delegated to the Administrator to appoint a contractor to undertake the works, subject to the cost limit above, following receipt of quotations by a minimum of 3 contractors.

8 TO AGREE A QUOTATION FROM NICK ROBINS FORESTRY TO REPAIR 3 AREAS OF FENCING AT CIRCLE HILL WOODS

The three sections of fencing are damaged and require reinstating/replacing. Secure fencing also discourages fly tipping by vehicles backing up to open sections of woodland and offloading waste from tipper style trucks.

The section by Larkwood Drive entrance has been pending repair since the last financial year and was deferred for the new financial year.

The Administrator sought to obtain quotes from Richard Smith who has historically undertaken fencing work for the Trust, but he has now retired. Nick Robins has the grounds maintenance contract for this site and his quote is very reasonable, so it was recommended that the Trustees agree to incur the cost of these works. It has proved

difficult to obtain quotes, so no alternative quotes are presented.

Trustees unanimously RESOLVED to agree to the costs of Robins Forestry undertaking repairs to three sections of fencing at Circle Hill as follows:-

Site	work/fees	Cost
Circle Hill	Four cleft chestnut fencing posts by Larkwood Drive supply and fit,	£125.00 plus VAT
Circle Hill	On the green by the Welcome to Crowthorne sign. To put in an additional rail	£35.00 plus VAT
Circle Hill	On the section of green at the start of Circle Hill Road near to the Welcome to Crowthorne sign - three new posts plus straps which will include removing all the old concrete and putting new in.	£365.00 plus VAT
Total		£525 plus VAT

The Trust has £1,000 in budget for 2022/23 for fencing works and no costs have been incurred against this budget line this year.

9 TO CONSIDER AND DETERMINE WHETHER A 'FRIENDS OF CIRCLE HILL AND THE WALTER RECREATION GROUND' GROUP SHOULD BE INITIATED AND HOW THIS WILL BE MANAGED

The two sites managed by the Trust, and Circle Hill in particular, have suffered from criminal damage, arson, littering and general anti-social behaviour which seems to have escalated recently.

The Project Officer recommended that 'Friends of Circle Hill' Group is formed which local groups and residents could be invited to join. They would be encouraged to keep an eye generally on the sites and report any concerns to the Administrator and if appropriate the police. They could also pick up any stray litter they find on site and chat with any other people they pass by on their visits.

There are several individuals known to use the sites on virtually a daily basis who often do report concerns and pick up litter. By formalising a group for these individuals, it would ensure their visits could be covered by the Trust's insurance (which does cover volunteers) and ID badges and lanyards might be offered so that the public understood they have a connection with the management of the site.

It is expected that the more visible these 'friends' are, the less likely other visitors to the site are to commit offences or behave in an anti-social way.

The local Police teams do not have the time and resources to actively patrol in the way they have previously and visits from the BFC's footpath officer are extremely infrequent. The trust sites are not covered by Ranger provision as are not owned and managed by BFC or WBC.

Groups such as the Berkshire Conservation Volunteers who visit the sites frequently on Sunday morning are having a great impact on site management and ecology. It would be beneficial to enhance this volunteer coverage by also having a 'friends of' group who were there more frequently.

Following some discussion, the Trustees RESOLVED to set up a 'Friends of Circle Hill and the Walter Recreation Ground' Group and invite interested local residents and groups to participate as 'friends'. It was agreed that the best time to do this would be spring time. Different platforms for launching/promoting this group were discussed; Crowthorne Eye, Facebook and the formation of a WhatsApp group once members were established.

Cllr Turtle suggested that WWPC, perhaps jointly with CPC, could set up a table at the late-night shopping event on 2 December to promote this group and distribute flyers with further information. Mr Dodd stated that he may be able to obtain some free woodland bulbs to distribute with the flyers and also conduct introductory walks in the spring time.

10 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

1 CPC's Clerk notified members of the Crowthorne Community Neighbourhood Action Group meeting (roadshow style) being held on Wednesday 19 October starting at Bigshot Park at 5pm and then progressing to the Morgan Rec. at 5.45pm. This is a good opportunity to meet borough and other parish Cllrs, Clerks, TVP, and other members of community.

11 ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDAS

- Woodland footpath update
- Planting of British wildflowers
- Green Flag application status
- Future promotion and public awareness

Meeting closed at 11.17am.

Signed

Dated