

Bringsty Common Manorial Court

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting on 8th November 2017 at Whitbourne Village Hall

Present:

Allan Corder, Tom Fisher, Mike Harrison, Paul Friend, Carol Friend, Peter Hall, Sue Long, Martin Roche, Anne Evans, Cllr Nigel Shaw, Jenny Creek

1. Apologies for absence

Claire Hall

Also absent: Tim Phillips

2. Chairman's report

There was nothing to report.

3. Treasurer's report

We have received cheques for £200 from WPC and BPC towards the mowing of the football pitch and I would, once again, like to thank both parties for their contributions.

After discussions with Allan, I sent a cheque for the agreed £50 to Mary Seldon on 13th September against her invoice which was not dated. As of 27th October statement, it had not been cashed. The cheque is entered on the spreadsheet in the anticipation that it will be cashed in November. The business account balance at the end of October agrees with the bank statement. The auditing process with Mary has not worked smoothly so we should consider alternatives for next year.

The August invoice from Ashley was not itemised and, when paying, I added a hand written note reminding him that we needed the invoices itemised. Unless there are any objections, I would like to continue to reject any invoices that do not contain sufficient detail for our needs. There were no objections.

4. Official Business

a) Election of Chair, Vice Chair and Treasurer

The following were elected:

Chairman: Allan Corder	proposed by Tom Fisher seconded by Mike Harrison
Vice Chairman: Tom Fisher	proposed by Allan Corder seconded by Sue Long
Treasurer: Mike Harrison	proposed by Allan Corder seconded by Carol Friend

b) Co-options

Jenny Creek was co-opted and re-appointed as clerk

c) Auditor's report for year 2016/17

The auditor's comments were noted but the committee felt that there was no indication of any problems with the accounts.

d) Need for extraordinary AGM to pass auditor's report

It was agreed that there is no need to hold an extraordinary meeting. This was discussed at the AGM and there were no requests for such a meeting to take place.

The report was accepted by the committee.

e) Appointment of auditor for 2017/18

Paul proposed that we appoint David Hunter-Miller, who is clerk to Brockhampton Group parish council, as our auditor for the coming year. He has already been approached and is happy to perform the task, for a fee of £50. This proposal was accepted unanimously.

f) Dates for meetings in 2018

The clerk proposed the following dates: 14 February, 09 May, 12 September and 14 November for the ordinary meetings and Saturday 20 October for the AGM. These dates were noted by the committee. They will be confirmed as soon as possible.

5. Parish Reports

a) Ward Councillor - Nigel Shaw

The grit bins for the Live & let Live track are at the Kingsland depot. Hopefully they will be in place before the end of the winter.

The encroachment of sewage waste onto the Common from the Live & Let Live was discussed. This issue is now in the hands of HCC.

b) Brockhampton - Paul Friend

No updates from Bromyard Downs Common association or the footpaths officer.

A presentation was given by a member of the public with regard to plans for a glamping site at the far end of the Downs prior to submitting the plans for approval.

The council is in the initial stages of preparing a neighbourhood development plan. In response to a question from Allan, Nigel and Paul outlined the scope of these plans. He requested that the interests of Bringsty Common should be included in the Brockhampton plan.

Tom asked about the situation with the fencing plans for the Downs. Allan replied that he had recently been informed by George Thompson that these had been turned down.

c) Whitbourne – Anne Evans

The Whitbourne parish website now contains a link to The Commoner.

A new councillor, John Walker, has been co-opted for the next two years following the relocation of his predecessor.

6. Public Questions

None

7. Matters Arising from Minutes of last meeting

a) The Commoner available on parish websites

As noted above, both the parish websites now carry links to The Commoner, as does the Bringsty Common website.

b) Stewardship grants

i. outcome of meeting with Natural England (NE)

The intention of the meeting in September was to voice our dissatisfaction about the way our application was handled. Allan believed that NE had accepted there was a basis for starting negotiation on a workable plan which could potentially lead to some level of funding. Instead they suggested a feasibility study, which he feels we will have to accept, given that we are unlikely to get any funding from elsewhere. Hopefully the end result will be some level of funding. If not, the matter will be taken up with our MP.

Allan asked Tom and Paul if they could take on the task of completing the application for the study. It needs to be done promptly and the whole process is unlikely to be straightforward. In response to these discussions with NE, Andy McVeigh (botanist) visited the common. Peter was given guidebook which is intended as a guide to assessing rarity value. Andy has offered to look at it. We need to identify the sections of the common which were covered by the original agreement so Peter asked if maps and records are available from that survey. These do exist and will be made available before April when we expect a return visit from Andy.

This item will be discussed again at the February meeting.

ii. current scheme and payments situation

The existing agreement ended in October so there is currently no involvement from NE. We recently received an invoice for £1268 from the Rural Payments agency for a supposed overpayment of our existing grant, which NE backed up with an explanatory letter. However Allan challenged this and the request was withdrawn. Subsequently NE informed us that we had been underpaid! We are still due to receive a final payment of £1300.

c) Marley cottage firebreak

Allan has spoken to Dave Manton about this. He would only charge a nominal extra amount to cut round the cottage if it is feasible. It will be done as documented in the Minutes of the meeting on 13/09/17.

This item is now closed.

d) Woodland management scheme

The application for a grant to pay for a woodland management plan is being processed by NE. Dan Wencek believes he can now start some preparatory work on the plan.

Action: Jenny to put this item on the agenda for the February meeting

e) Trees on south slope of Jubilee

Allan suggested that we should contract Hugh for about 3 days' work to take down the trees which are/will block the view from the Jubilee. This will cost approximately £1000. They will be felled and left lying as a haven for wildlife. Paul asked if log seats could be made from the trunks if they are large enough.

These suggestions were unanimously accepted.

f) Butterfly conservation

i. green hay

Peter has looked at Bromyard Downs as a source of green hay but the benefit of taking it from there would be negligible. He has talked to a representative of Herefordshire Wildlife Trust who offered green hay at a cost but the sites suggested have different soil to the common so are probably not suitable. Peter has arranged to contact him again in the spring, with an inspection in the summer at the discretion of the committee. Andy McVeigh (see item 7 b i above) has suggested that we should in preference scrape some of the key areas to see what dormant seeds might germinate. This would probably be a cheaper option, but if it does not work, we can re-visit the green hay option. Allan asked what mechanism would be used. Paul suggested rotavation which would not be expensive. Peter suggested the old cricket pitch as a test area. Allan asked Peter to take charge of this project.

ii. rolling up the bracken edges

Paul said that there is insufficient material to be rolled up. No further action.

8. New Business

None.

9. AOB

a) Paul wondered if an approach might be made to green energy companies for sponsorship. This prompted a general discussion about the possibility of earning money from the bracken. The general opinion is that we earn money by not having to pay for bracken control. However, Allan agreed to make contact with a company manufacturing bio fuels, whose details we recently received, to see if they would be interested.

Action: Allan to contact bio fuels company

b) Tom reported that John Poyner has carried out the autumn clearance of the Drover's pond which took about 4 hours. There is a lack of water entering the pond. John suggested cleaning out an existing ditch to take water off the track, which is very wet in rainy weather. There is still HLF money left to pay for this. This was agreed by the committee.

c) Martin raised an issue regarding the gate at the southern cattle grid. The notice requesting the gate to be closed has disappeared. He thinks it should be replaced, even though there is currently no livestock on the common. Also the grid needs cleaning out. A discussion ensued on all aspects of the state of the gate and grid, with particular concern for the safety of horses and riders which are becoming more frequent on the common, also whose responsibility it would be. Allan felt that it would be a waste of time to clean out the grid as it will silt up again quite quickly but that the installation of a self-closing gate would be sensible. Paul said that Brockhampton group PC might be prepared to fund this, in partnership with HCC. He agreed to pursue this. It will not be put back on the agenda until he has something to report.

Action: Paul to investigate the possibilities of this funding

d) Peter has done some water testing of the brook with a basic kit in the vicinity of the hay pile. The results were very good and show that there is currently no pollution from run-off from the pile.

e) Paul said he would shortly be ordering the wood for five barn owl boxes, all of which have been sponsored by commoners. Sue asked where they will be sited. That is a matter for us to decide, so long as the aspect is acceptable.

There being no further business to discuss, the chairman brought the meeting to a close by offering his best wishes to everyone for the forthcoming Christmas season.

Next Meeting

The next ordinary meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 14th February 2018 at 7.30 p.m. This date is provisional until the bookings have been confirmed.