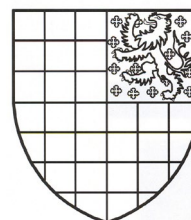


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**LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL**

MINUTES

of the **Landport Bottom Management Committee** held on **Wednesday 4th December 2019**, in the **Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lewes** at **7:00pm**.

PRESENT Cllrs Bird; Burrows; Handy; O'Keeffe; and Vernon

In attendance: S Brigden (*Town Clerk [TC]*) B Courage (*LTC Town Ranger*) and Ms Thyone Outram (*Lewes District Council Specialist Advisor - Downland and Nature Reserves*).

LBMC2019/01 **ELECTION of CHAIRMAN:**

Cllr Handy was elected as Chair of the Committee for the 2019/20 municipal year

LBMC2019/02 **QUESTIONS:** There were none at this point. Observing were representatives of the Friends of Landport Bottom and Lewes Old Racecourse Management Company.

LBMC2019/03 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Apologies had been received from Cllr Sains, who had recently suffered a bereavement. Cllr Henman was understood to be campaigning for a Parliamentary seat.

LBMC2019/04 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** Cllrs Bird and Handy noted that they lived adjacent to Landport Bottom.

LBMC2019/05 **REMIT of the COMMITTEE:**

Members noted the remit of the Committee, which is:

- a. To conserve and enhance Landport Bottom as an important feature of the local landscape
- b. To increase biodiversity by appropriate habitat management
- c. To protect and conserve the Scheduled Ancient Monuments; Registered Battlefield site, and other important historical features.
- d. To promote quiet, informal enjoyment of Landport Bottom by the general public.
- e. To involve the local community in the development and management of the site
- f. To increase the understanding and awareness of the importance of the site, amongst local people and visitors.
- g. To manage the site with the Health and Safety of the visitors, staff and volunteers as a high priority.
- h. To manage stock with the highest welfare standards.
- i. To maintain current fixed assets to high standards.

LBMC2019/06 **BUSINESS OF THE MEETING:**

- 1 Members considered a report (*FC017/2018, copy in the Minute Book*) which had originally been presented to Council in March 2019. The report provided a summary history of the site since its purchase, jointly with Lewes District Council (LDC), in 1992 and the reasons for the formation of the present committee following the Council's acquisition of sole ownership in 2018. It was explained that day-to-day operations on the land continued to be overseen by Ms Outram, as before the transfer; now under a formal agreement with LDC retaining their services.
- 2 There followed a general discussion which led to a focus on priorities. It was acknowledged that the current Management Plan should be updated as it was a third revision, conducted in 2006, of a plan originally adopted ten years earlier. It was still relevant in many ways, but a comprehensive review was appropriate. Ms

Outram agreed to prepare an update by Easter 2020 for consideration by the committee. It was requested that this should include a section on operational policies.

- 3 Ms Outram explained some of the background to operations on the land, relating biodiversity and decisions such as grazing (type; frequency; location *etc.*). The land was entered into a Higher-Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme, and there were specified methods for species surveys *etc.* the HLS agreement expires in 2021, and extension must be applied-for within one year of expiry, so that question would need to be addressed in Spring 2020. It was agreed that a meeting be held on that subject in February.
- 4 In the past several surveys had been conducted using consultants, and there was a body of reference material obtained since the land was first ‘reverted’ to chalk grassland from arable crops in 1992. Lewes District Council intended to enter, with partners, a Nature Improvement Area project to increase downland grass areas, and this would involve further data gathering and surveys of species such as newts and Skylarks. A *Changing Chalk* project may allow the engagement of dedicated staff and would cover downland between Lewes and Eastbourne. There were opportunities for “citizen science” although managed projects were desirable, and the Friends of Landport Bottom may engage in such exercises.
- 5 In the context of the objective to promote “quiet informal enjoyment” by the public, questions arose around various issues such as sheep-worrying and conflict between horse riders and other users of the land; a number of occasional, but recurring problems. Also the dilemma of dog-fouling, given that the area was intended to remain as open Downland and waste bins were themselves undesirable in great numbers. It was felt that a compromise position should be possible, and the matter of location and any practical constraints for additional bins would be researched. Members were keenly aware that the land was intended for general public access, and its position on the urban fringe brought several dilemmas for daily management.
- 6 A question was posed as to the effectiveness of post-Bonfire site cleaning by the two Societies who hired the land. It was stated that ‘cleanup’ may not appear as thorough as in the past, but this was attributed largely to changes of personnel within the societies. There was a principle in place to retain payments to support additional remediation work, and Ms Outram and Mr Courage felt that the system was reasonably practical. It was suggested that the user license could be discussed in February when reviewing the HLS extension option.

LBMC2019/07

CONCLUSIONS:

The Committee will meet in February specifically to address the matter of an extension to the Higher-Level Stewardship agreement and also review the terms of hire for the land.

An updated Management Plan will be prepared by Easter 2020 for consideration by the committee in April or May.

LBMC2019/08

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and declared the meeting closed.

The meeting closed at 8:10pm

Signed date