



**Barkham Parish Council
And
Arborfield & Newland Parish Council**

Coombes Woodland Committee

Terms of Reference

Adopted by Arborfield & Newlands Parish Council: 17th October 2023

Adopted by Barkham Parish Council: 18th October 2023

Coombes Woodland Committee Terms of Reference

General

The Coombes Woodland Committee terms of reference have been produced to clarify the role in which the Committee and members therein are to consider issues and operate as a Joint Standing Committee of Arborfield & Newland Parish Council and Barkham Parish Council.

1. Committee

The Coombes Woodland Committee (CWC) is constituted as a standing Committee of Barkham Parish Council and Arborfield & Newland Parish Council, hereafter referred to as the Councils.

The Committee is empowered by the Councils to act on its behalf on all matters relating to The Coombes Woodlands, owned jointly by the Parish Councils, hereafter referred to as PCWoodlands.

2. Members

The Coombes Woodland Committee shall consist of a minimum of four members with up to two 'lay members'.

Two members shall be appointed by each Parish Council, and one lay person may be appointed by each parish where they can bring additional expertise to the Committee.

The quorum of the Committee shall be three members. The CWC meetings will require one parish councillor from each parish to be quorate.

3. Chairman

The Chairman will need to be a parish Councillor and is to be elected annually by the Committee at their first Meeting.

4. Voting

All members may participate at a meeting, but only those that are Councillors may vote and in the case of an equal vote the Chairman shall have a second or casting vote. The Chairman shall not have a casting vote if only two Parish Councillors are present, and in the event of an equal vote the decision will be deferred to a later meeting or to the Parish Council meetings.

All decisions shall be minuted and reported at the next Parish Council meeting

5. Interests

If a Member has a personal interest as defined by the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council, then he/she shall declare such interest as soon as it becomes apparent, disclosing the nature and extent of the interest as required. If a Member who has declared an interest then considers the interest to be prejudicial, he/she must withdraw from the room during consideration of the agenda item to which the interest relates.

6. Meetings

The Committee will meet as the workload requires, with a minimum of three clear days' notice given. One meeting must be held in October to facilitate the setting of the budget for the woodland management, to inform the Precept and to agree spending in the next financial year. There will be a minimum of three meetings per annum.

Although all decisions on expenditure will be reported to the Councils as a matter of public record, discussions of a commercially sensitive nature e.g. the procurement of goods and services during the tendering process, may require the Coombes Woodland Committee meetings to be closed to the public and press. This will be decided by resolution at the meeting prior to the item affected being discussed.

6.1 Meeting Duration

The Committee Meetings shall normally be for a maximum of 1 hour, but the meeting may be extended with a vote taken by Members.

6.2 Minutes

All Minutes shall be open for inspection by any Member of the Council or Public. Draft minutes will be published within one calendar month of the meetings, and

7. Responsibilities

The committee will oversee and administer all aspects of managing The PCWoodlands.

General Responsibilities:

1. To oversee the management The PCWoodlands
2. To protect and conserve The PCWoodlands for the continued use, enjoyment and education of residents of the Parishes and surrounding areas

3. The CWC will seek to promote the use of the location for recreation, education, fitness and other appropriate uses on a non-commercial basis.
4. The Committee is responsible for providing support and guidance to the administering Responsible Financial Officer in carrying out their duties including financial forecasting and any feedback from previous audits.
5. The Committee is authorised by the Councils to inspect on its behalf, any lands or premises which are relevant to the Committee's business; the Committee may authorise any member or members of the Committee to carry out such an inspection on its behalf.
6. The Committee is authorised by the Councils to enter into discussions with 3rd parties to develop ideas and assess costs for subsequent approval by the Councils.

Maintenance responsibilities:

1. To oversee and recommend maintenance requirements for The PCWoodlands
2. The CWC will arrange for an annual Tree Survey to be carried out, and will report the outcome of the Survey to the Councils.
3. The CWC will complete an annual risk assessment to decide on the size of a contingency fund required to cover unexpected events such as storm damage.
4. Emergency situations (eg removal of trees following a storm) can be actioned immediately under delegated authority by the clerk(s).
5. To review and monitor contracts for the maintenance of The PCWoodlands
6. The appointment of contractors by the CWC will be subject to the standing orders of the two parishes. With any expenditure under £1000, the Clerk will strive to obtain 3 quotes
7. The CWC will ensure that appropriate insurances are in place with respect to Public Liability, Damage and Liabilities

Finance

1. The CWC will prepare an annual plan and maintenance budgets covering i) Essential safety related maintenance and ii) Discretionary conservation maintenance. The plan and budget will be submitted to each of the Councils for approval.

2. The budgets agreed by the Councils will represent a maximum amount that the CWC can drawdown during the budgeting year under delegated authority by the clerk(s) without further reference to the Councils. All expenditure must be reported at the CWC Meetings and reported to the Councils at the next available meeting
3. Any amount over that value will be reported to the Councils for their approval. The Committee will also recommend to the Council a further annual budget amount to be considered as earmarked reserves for specific items of capital expenditure to cover emergencies as they may arise.
4. The CWC will seek to reduce the cost to the Parishes by use of volunteers, seeking 3rd party funding, phasing of proposed work and other.
5. The CWC will explore Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) as a means of funding the maintenance of the location.
6. A contingency fund will be held by the councils in the form of an earmarked reserve account. The size of the fund will be approved by the Councils and in the event the Councils do not agree then it will be based on the average of any proposals made.
7. Any underspend in a given year will be added to the contingency fund and held as an Ear Marked Reserve.
8. The Councils will financially support the agreed annual plans and budgets by making payments from precept income and, when available, CIL funds.

8. Delegation of Responsibility

The Coombes Woodland Committee members are delegated the responsibility for The PCWoodlands only.

9. Terms of Reference Review

The CWC will review these Terms of Reference annually, prior to the Annual Meeting of the Councils.