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BARKHAM PARISH COUNCIL & ARBORFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

COOMBES WOODLAND COMMITTEE

**Minutes** of the meeting of the Coombes Woodland Committee held on 15th May 2024 in the Parish Office, Arborfield Green Community Centre at 6.30pm.

**Present**: Cllr Barker (BPC) (in the Chair), Cllr Wrobel (BPC), Cllr Fox (ANPC), Mr Steel, Mr Norton, and Mrs Hayes Deputy Clerk for BPC.

**CWC 24/024 To receive and accept any apologies for absence** Local Government Act 1972 Sch12

None

**CWC 24/025 To receive any declarations of interest on items on the agenda** (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012/1464)

None

**CWC 24/026 Minutes of the Coombes Woodland Committee Meeting** LGA 1972 Sch 12 para 41(1)

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 6th March 2024 were approved and signed as a true record.

The minutes were signed by Cllr Barker.

**CWC 24/027 Questions from members of the public in respect of the business on this agenda (allotted time 15 minutes)** Public Bodies (admissions to meetings) Act 1960 s 1 extended by the LG Act 1972 s 100

Adjournment of the Meeting will be called if any members of the public wish to address the Committee on any matters or concerns relating to The Coombes Woodlands. If you would like to ask a specific question to be answered at the meeting, please submit the question at least 24 hours in advance.

Two members of the public attended to listen to the meeting.

A resident asked when phase 2 of the tree work would be carried out? This work will be carried out Monday 2nd – Thursday 5th September 2024.

**CWC 24/028 To review actions arising from the last meeting**

* 1. **How many people use the woods and what do they use it for?**

After a discussion it was decided that this information wasn’t a priority at present and would be looked into at a later date.

* 1. **Communications from resident regarding pathways in the Coombes**  
     The committee discussed the above point and advised that there are no plans at present.
  2. **Increasing bio-diversity. Plan for how to increase.**

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After a discussion regarding this, it was decided that the information gathered from the initial report would be reshared and reviewed to confirm what we are starting with, so that priorities can be established.  
  
ACTION – Deputy Clerk to share reports and documentation with the committee.

**CWC 24/029 To discuss the BMX track (within zone 2)**

A discussion was had by the committee in regard to the BMX track. The following points were raised.

Barkham and Arborfield & Newland Parish Council have various liabilities, and a statutory duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity on land in their ownership. (Section 102 of the environment Act 2021)

The Coombes is designated as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS). In order to retain this designation, it is subject to regular biodiversity surveys, carried out by the Thames Valley Environmental Centre. The most recent of these, in 2018, resulted in this sizeable area of land being excluded from the LWS because the unauthorised activity results in the displacement of wildlife species due to permanent loss of habitat.

The Coombes is also designated as a Local Geological Site (LGS). The area in which the unauthorised activity is occurring is of importance to this designation because it marks the transition between the sandy geology of the Eocene Bagshot Formation (and later deposits of river gravel) in the northern section of the Coombes and London Clay in the southern section. For this reason, it is of scientific interest.

Consequently, the unauthorised use of this area is inconsistent with the primary objective of managing the Coombes as a Local Wildlife Site and the statutory duty imposed on the councils to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

There were also concerns raised over health and safety issues with Zone 2 being used as a BMX track (Occupiers’ Liability Act 1957)

It was agreed that work to stop the unauthorised use of this land and to return to its former condition would be undertaken as a matter of priority.

**ACTION –** Cllr Fox and the Deputy Clerk would meet to look at risk assessments required for any work carried out.

**ACTION** – Deputy Clerk to confirm the insurance policy cover for volunteers and contractors.

**CWC 24/030 Measures to protect the Coombes from motor vehicles**

A discussion was had in regard to the above. It was agreed that works to prevent motor vehicles from accessing the Coombes would go ahead. It was agreed that any bollards erected to prevent unauthorised vehicular access to the Coombes should be situated on land owned by Wokingham Borough Council, in strategic locations over which public rights of way or permissive ways exist.

**ACTION** – Cllr Barker will liaise with Wokingham Parish Council to get this implemented.

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**CWC 24/031 To discuss adding a culvert for the stream with The Coombes Woodland**

The committee discussed the above and the risks associated with it. It was agreed that proposals to culvert the water course in the Coombes would not be taken forward for a variety of reasons, including the wider planning consideration relating to the Coombes.

**CWC 24/032 To discuss how volunteers can support**

The committee discussed what the volunteers could do to help and a list of requirements was created.

**ACTION** - Mr Steel & Mr Norton will create a plan and order of priority for work that be carried out by the volunteers. This would be shared at the next meeting.

**ACTION** – Deputy Clerk to create plan of what is needed to get volunteers up and running before start any work. If going to take too long, may have to get a contractor in to help.

**CWC 24/033 To discuss the proposed Coombes Woodland Committee logo**

This would be looked at outside of the meeting. The final design options would be shared among the committee and approved at the next meeting.

**CWC 24/034 To agree on a website domain name.**

The domain has now been purchased and work on creating a website could start.

**ACTION** - The deputy clerk will collate relevant content and images for the website.

The website will be – thecoombeswoodland.com

**CWC 24/035 AOB**

1. **Quote for A1 print and laminated map**  
   The committee agreed on quote 1 from the Bracknell Print room.
2. **Terms of reference were approved at the full council meeting.**   
   These were approved at a previous meeting and the committee acknowledged this.
3. **Deputy Clerk looking at costs for a first aid course.**   
   The deputy clerk advised that she was looking into first aid courses for members of the committee ready for when volunteering would start in the Coombes. The details of these would be shared for approval.

**CWC 24/036 To set the date of the next meeting**

The next meeting will be held in mid/late June. The exact date and time are to be agreed.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.15pm.