

TUNBRIDGE WELLS COMMONS CONSERVATORS

Minutes of a meeting held via video conference on Thursday 26 March 2020 at 2.00pm

PRESENT:

Ewen Cameron (Outgoing Chairman)
Paul Burnett
Stephen Lacey
Ian Marshall (Incoming Chairman)
Chris McHugh
Cllr Joy Podbury
Clare Sinha
Corin Thoday
Cllr Chris Woodward

APOLOGIES/UNABLE TO ATTEND:

Cllr Barbara Cobbold
Antony Moore
Cllr James Scholes
Clive Evans (Friends of Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Common)

ATTENDING:

Giles Membrey (Director)
Philip Tew (Treasurer)
Steve Budden (Warden)
Gemma Stapeley (Assistant Clerk)
Liz Ellicott (Rusthall Parish Council)

MINUTES

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Antony Moore and Cllr James Scholes.

2. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

In accordance with the third Schedule of the County of Kent Act 1981 it was noted that the Conservators are required at the first meeting held on or after 1 January each year to appoint a Chairman for the ensuing year.

AGREED. That Ian Marshall, representative of the Freehold Tenants, be appointed as Chairman until the quarterly meeting of the Conservators in March 2021.

Ian Marshall in the Chair.

The Chairman conveyed his grateful thanks to Ewen Cameron for his year in office.

3. MEETING BY VIDEO CONFERENCE

The Conservators provided approval to hold the meeting via video conference and for it to be recorded.

4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2019 were considered and approved. A copy to be sent to the Chairman to be signed and returned.

5. MATTERS ARISING

Storm drainage

Since the last Conservator's meeting on 5th December 2019, the West Kent Partnership (WKP) flood mitigation proposal, involving five scrapes to hold back water on Tunbridge Wells Common, has not been progressed. The work on the test dig holes has been postponed and rearranged due to excessive rainfall over the Winter period making access for the test rig difficult. The WKP team have also been kept very busy managing significant flood incidents across the County. Test dates are now being agreed with the Warden.

The Warden considers that the proposed scrapes are in the right locations, since the WKP have conducted appropriate surveys. One of the sites appears to be located by a substantial Oak tree and it was confirmed by the Warden that the sites could be moved subject to the welfare of the Common. It was proposed that there is also an existing small pond on Castle Road that could be consolidated with one of the new scrapes, to capture water running down Castle Road.

The Assistant Clerk was asked to obtain the full proposal and map from Max Tant to be sent to all Conservators.

The failure of the existing storm drain system was also raised, as it was thought that the existing storm drain system should be adequate and might eliminate the need for the scrapes if it was fully functioning. To save time, money and effort the problems with the storm drains should be resolved before the scrapes or at least in conjunction with the scrapes as a combined management plan.

There is particular concern along Major York's Road where there is a dip in the ground between the junctions with Nevill Park and Hungershall Park where water collects after heavy rain and could cause cars to aquaplane.

The Assistant Clerk has been liaising with Alex Brauning, the Asset Team Leader (Drainage Planned Works) of the Highways Asset Management Team at KCC. Mr Brauning has confirmed that they have plans to repair the highway drainage at various locations around the Tunbridge Wells Common, with the most pertinent being on Major York's Road. He confirmed that Major York's Road drains to a series of soakaway manholes within the verges either side. Mr Brauning anticipated a full replacement of the drainage system on this road but would need to start the project by conducting investigative groundworks and sought the Conservator's permission for this.

Flooding on Common View in Rusthall was also discussed. The Warden explained that the end property on this road (44) had experienced water running off the Common straight into the garden and house. It is thought that the problem was the excessive levels of rain experienced during the Winter combined with the inadequate drainage system on the Taylor Wimpey housing estate on the adjacent land. The Warden has attended a site visit with Liz Ellicott (Rusthall Parish Council) and the estate management and he has offered to put a small drain in down the side of the road but this currently wouldn't have anywhere for the water to go, so will not provide a complete resolution. This matter remains ongoing.

AGREED. The Assistant Clerk to contact Max Tant and to confirm to Alex Brauning that the Conservators give permission for investigative groundworks to commence along Major York's Road.

Outstanding actions from the last meeting relating to this matter - Cllr Chris Woodward to raise concerns about disputed remedial drainage work at the next Joint Transport Board meeting. He will also discuss the entire matter with Cllr Catherine Rankin, KCC's Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport.

6. DIRECTOR AND WARDEN REPORT

Director's Report

The Director provided a full report in advance of the meeting.

He confirmed that he had met with William Benson, Chief Executive of TWBC, who continues to emphasise support for the Conservators.

The Director is due to rewrite his Planning Gain proposal document (previously called S106) and re-present to David Scully, Landscape Officer at TWBC.

A quote has been requested and received for a new website, this project will now progress with the support of the Committee.

Warden's Report

The Warden had provided a full report in advance of the meeting.

As an update on his report, the Warden highlighted that the amenity grass cutting had started today (26th March) and that seeding of the Fir Tree pond area and Happy Valley was imminent.

Issues arising as a result of Covid-19

The Assistant Clerk provided an update on the office arrangements made to accommodate the Covid-19 guidance from Government to work from home if possible. This included work done with 360 Software Solutions to arrange email and website CMS access from home, Office 360 access to files and folders and an answer phone message left on the office phone to provide the mobile number of the Warden and Assistant Clerk. As the Town Hall is now closed these measures have ensured business continuity from an office perspective.

It was suggested that the website contact page should be updated to explain that the office telephone is no longer accessible due to the closure of the Town Hall.

The Warden provided an update on his contractors, all of whom were continuing to work, while observing sensible precautions and social distancing. The only contractor that was of concern was Oakbourne, which manages the litter picking contract. The contractor had had to return to Scotland and his brother was operating the contract. It was decided that the Warden should get signs made to ask the general public to ensure they take home their litter as a potential infection hazard. It was also anticipated that the amount of litter would reduce with fewer users.

It was noted that the Covid-19 guidance from Government was changing rapidly and that potentially all contractors might be unable to work due to their own health or imposed working restrictions. As such the main critical areas of work should be identified to maintain health and safety for Commons users. With this in mind, it was suggested that paths and tracks should be cut on either side to a width of 2 metres to maintain a minimum safe passing opportunity and that highway sightlines would need to be managed. The Warden reported that all dangerous trees and storm damage had been addressed.

AGREED. The Assistant Clerk to update the website contact page to explain that the office telephone is no longer accessible.

The Warden to purchase signs asking the general public to ensure they take home all of their litter.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT AND CONTINGENCY PLANNING

Risk Management

The Risk Register provides a comprehensive list of all potential risks to the management of the Commons. The Risk Management document summarises the key risks and the goals of the Conservators.

Ownership of the risks is ultimately the responsibility of the Conservators as a body and the Director as their proper officer. Day-to-day monitoring and response to individual risks are

delegated as described in the register, role descriptions, annual plans, budgets and work schedules. The Committee oversee risk management on behalf of the Conservators. It discusses developments in key risk areas with the officers on a quarterly basis and reviews the risk register in detail annually.

Additional risks associated with Covid-19 will be addressed by the Committee as a priority.

Contingency Planning

It was decided that the Commons should remain open to enable the community to use it for their suggested daily walk/exercise. Partial closures would be very difficult to manage. The closure of Fir Tree Car Park was considered but there was concern that cars driving up Fir Tree Road would find it difficult to turn round, there was also the question raised as to whether the publishers occupying Linden Park cricket club offices were still working and would require use of the car park.

Enforced closure of the Commons by Government would hopefully be avoided, but the development of policy would be monitored, and updates circulated to all.

The possibility of the Covid-19 virus remaining on the Sandstone rocks where children play leading to infection transfer was discussed. The Conservators agreed that it was important to establish whether this was possible so that the general public could be appropriately advised. If there is a risk, then Conservators would consider isolating the rocks and or putting up appropriate warning notices.

The Warden confirmed that the volunteer sessions have now finished for the season and that the archaeological dig site in Rusthall has temporarily closed.

It was suggested that if the Covid-19 issues escalate quickly then the Committee could be called to coordinate the Conservator actions.

AGREED. The Clerk to email his contact at the London School of Tropical Medicine to find out about the risk of transferring Covid-19 on the Sandstone rocks.

Post meeting note: The advice from the London School of Tropical Medicine was that the virus was unlikely to survive long on porous rock (Sandstone) and we should not worry about the risk of infection. No further action required.

8. FINANCIAL REPORT

The Conservators had received a copy of the financial report in advance. The Treasurer highlighted that the accounts were on budget and that he had received the £5,000 planning gain money for tree planting. The variances were explained in detail.

The Treasurer had received a request to analyse the invoices by supplier, which was provided in his report.

Salary increases for the office team were proposed at 2% increase prorated to the time in the year that the individual was in position.

Additional expenses due to Covid-19 measures such as signage, widening path cuts and IT could utilise the contingency, the Treasurer was comfortable with this.

AGREED. The Conservators approved the salary increase. The Assistant Clerk to notify TWBC Payroll.

9. PROPOSED PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION

It was agreed that the competition would provide an uplifting focus to daily walks and as such should continue.

It would be important to ensure that the wording incorporates safe social distancing guidance. Prizes and marketing to be finalised by the Assistant Clerk, with approval delegated to the Committee.

AGREED. Assistant Clerk to continue to plan the event and report back to the Committee.

10. ALL ABILITIES PATH FROM ST. PAUL'S CHURCH

The proposal was received from The Friends of Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons and incorporated details on location, practicality, costs and funding and stakeholders.

AGREED. The Conservators approved the project in principle but requested further details as the project developed. There would be no residual obligation on the Conservators for ongoing maintenance and the Friends would handle the fundraising.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Ruth Wakefield's tree

The Warden has received a request from Ruth Wakefield for a tree to celebrate their wedding anniversary, noting that David was a past Conservator and Chairman.

AGREED. The Conservators gave their permission for a tree, with the variety and location to be decided by the Warden.

Rusthall Cricket Club fencing

The Warden has received a request from Rusthall Cricket Club which would like to install fencing behind their pitch.

AGREED. The Conservators gave their permission for the fencing. The Warden to communicate this decision and oversee its installation.

Website

The Director requested permission to fast track the project to set up a new website, so that it better reflected the Commons and the work of the Conservators.

This project could possibly be funded by the Freehold Tenants.

AGREED. The Director and Assistant Clerk to work on an appropriate website specification to enable three quotes for the work to be obtained.

12. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

22 Rusthall Road, loft conversion, creation of a dormer window on the rear roof slope and a single storey side extension. On behalf of the Conservators a comment was made to clarify that no building material may be placed on the land in front of the property or delivery vehicles may park or overrun the grass at any time.

Park View House, Hungershall Park. Removal of a conservatory, sheds, pergola and greenhouse; relocation of a barn; erection of a two-storey extension; outdoor swimming pool; sunken garaging and alterations to driveway and landscaping. On behalf of the Conservators a comment was made to clarify that the land adjacent to the property is Common and that materials must not be stored there, nor vehicles parked.

Land rear of 1 and 2 Montacute Gardens. Erection of nine two-bedroom apartments. The Director confirmed that this was applicable for planning gain.

- 13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – 25 June 2020 at 2.00pm at Rusthall Parish Council Offices.** There will be a walk on Rusthall Common for all starting at the Parish Council Office at 12.45pm. Subject to current lockdown restrictions being eased.

Agreed Actions

Agenda Item	Detail	Responsibility
3	Chairman to sign the minutes of the previous meeting.	Chairman/Asst Clerk
4	Request the plans for scrapes from Max Tant.	Asst Clerk.
4	To confirm to Alex Brauninger the Conservators' approval for the investigative groundworks on Major York's Road.	Asst Clerk

6	Update website to explain that the office telephone is not accessible due to Town Hall closure.	Asst Clerk
6	Signs to be purchased asking the general public to take their litter home, should this become necessary.	Warden
7	Risks associated with Covid-19 to be reviewed as part of the risk register.	Committee.
7	Obtain guidance on the possibility of Covid-19 transfer on Sandstone.	Director
8	Notify TWBC Payroll of salary increases.	Asst Clerk
9	Continue to plan to photography competition.	Asst Clerk
10	Communicate the Conservators' decision on the all ability path to The Friends.	Asst Clerk
11	Decide the location and variety of tree for Ruth Wakefield.	Warden
11	Communicate the Conservators' approval to Rusthall Cricket Club.	Warden
11	To work on an appropriate specification to enable three quotes for a new website to be obtained.	Director/Asst Clerk

TUNBRIDGE WELLS COMMONS CONSERVATORS

Minutes of a meeting held via video conference on Thursday 25 June 2020 at 2.00pm

PRESENT:

Paul Burnett
Ewen Cameron
Stephen Lacey
Ian Marshall (Chairman)
Antony Moore
Cllr Joy Podbury
Cllr James Scholes
Clare Sinha
Corin Thoday
Cllr Chris Woodward

APOLOGIES/UNABLE TO ATTEND:

Cllr Barbara Cobbold
Chris McHugh

ATTENDING:

Giles Membrey (Director)
Philip Tew (Treasurer)
Steve Budden (Warden)
Gemma Stapeley (Assistant Clerk)
Liz Ellicott (Rusthall Parish Council)
Clive Evans (Friends of Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Common)
Freddie Hulbert (Linden Park Cricket Club) for item 3.

MINUTES

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Barbara Cobbold and Chris McHugh.

2. MEETING BY VIDEO CONFERENCE

The Conservators provided approval to hold the meeting via video conference.

3. LINDEN PARK CRICKET CLUB

Freddie Hulbert, Director of Cricket had provided the Conservators with a letter explaining the Club's concerns regarding damage to the outfield, this was provided in advance of the meeting.

Mr Hulbert clarified that although representatives of the Club had met with Conservators on previous occasions the current level of damage to the outfield was substantially worse than in previous years. As has been experienced across the Commons, the number of people and dogs had significantly increased during lockdown and many have been using the outfield for exercise, social gatherings, picnics and on occasion cycling. The damage caused to the ground over the very wet winter had not had time to fully recover before lockdown commenced and as such the outfield was now in a poor state. Increased amounts of time were spent by the Club on litter picking and clearing bags of rubbish. The Club also reported numerous holes, photographs were supplied to illustrate some of the holes. There was concern for the health and safety of those playing cricket and those visiting the Commons walking on the outfield. It was agreed that the majority of these holes were caused by wildlife; rabbits, foxes and badgers but that some were dogs allowed to use the outfield.

The Club pay Targetfollow a rental for the ground and have a contractual obligation to maintain the ground. Targetfollow noted that they had supported the Club in allowing them to sublet the clubhouse. The Conservators do not receive any income from the Club and with such a limited budget were unable to support the Club financially with the maintenance work required on the outfield. It was also confirmed by Mr Hulbert that Tunbridge Wells Borough Council would not contribute as they already support the Commons financially through the precept.

Previous suggestions to fence off and reseed small areas of the outfield had not been deemed workable and the Conservators explained that insisting dogs be kept on leads on the outfield would require amendment to the bye-laws and would be impossible to enforce.

Following discussion IT WAS AGREED to support the Club with the issues raised as follows:

1. An equal quarter of the outfield could be appropriately fenced off by the Club during the closed season, every year on a rolling four-year basis. The Warden would need to agree the type of fencing in advance of any work being undertaken.
2. Linden Park Cricket club to provide information with key messages to the Assistant Clerk to be posted on the Commons' Facebook group, this could be done as regularly as is required.
3. Linden Park Cricket Club to continue to engage positively with the general public and Jane (CurlyVera), having conversations regarding appropriate behaviour asking for their support with the protection of the outfield.
4. The Conservators to continue to engage positively with the general public when the occasion arises.
5. Linden Park Cricket Club, with input from the Warden, to review signage around the outfield.

Mr Hulbert then left the meeting.

4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 26th March 2020 were considered and approved. A copy to be signed by the Chairman and returned to the Assistant Clerk.

5. MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The minutes of the Committee meetings held on 29th May and 9th June 2020 were noted and would also be signed by the Chairman.

6. MATTERS ARISING

Storm drainage

Due to the challenges of Covid-19 the investigative groundwork around Major York's Road has been on hold until Kent County Council's contractors resume work. The Assistant Clerk continues to liaise with Alex Brauninger, the Asset Team Leader (Drainage Planned Works) of the Highways Asset Management Team at KCC on this.

Risk Register

It was confirmed that the Risk Register would be reviewed by the Committee periodically and by the Conservators annually at the March meeting.

All Abilities Path

An update was provided by the Friends which explained that Covid-19 had delayed the overall progress with the project. However, some work had commenced as follows; Rusthall Parish Council had been approached for financial support with a physical inspection from them pending. The Warden had reviewed estimates and options from contractors with site visits to be arranged. A member of the local Access Group had walked the proposed path and provided their full support.

7. MANAGEMENT REPORTS

i. Director's Report

The Director provided a full report ahead of the meeting.

Planning Gain discussions have continued with the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Planning Department. A second version of the proposal document had been submitted to William Benson and the Planning Department and will be distributed to the Conservators.

A portfolio for the South and South East in Bloom will be submitted at the end of June, which this year will be on a virtual basis.

The Director continues to meet with the Chief Executive of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, William Benson. Mr Benson is keen for the Conservators to explore a dedicated cycle track from Langton Green into Tunbridge Wells and scheduled further discussions for September. When this subject was last discussed a tentative route had been outlined but the difficulties of dealing with Church Road raised serious financial questions and the Council took the matter no further.

ACTION The Director to distribute the latest draft Planning Gain document to all Conservators.

ii. Warden's Report

A full report and work schedule were provided in advance of the meeting.

The Warden explained that during the Covid-19 lockdown there had been a substantial increase in the number of people using the Commons. Rubbish bins were being used to excess and were regularly full and overflowing; littering was a serious problem with mess left after picnics and social gatherings with reports of BBQs and other antisocial behaviour; recreational cycling had increased along with the associated complaints and families were found to have been camping in Happy Valley. He commented that it will be very interesting to see whether this changes in future months as the lockdown is eased.

There have been a large number of trees cut back due to high footfall on the footpaths.

We have received a claim from a man whose car was damaged by a falling tree near the Spa Hotel roundabout. It was a double stemmed rowan tree, with one stem falling. The other stem will be cut down on 4th July. The matter is being dealt with by the insurance company. In this type of case we can't expect the tree to have been picked up on the tree survey, although this section of the Common was last surveyed three years ago.

The extension of Fir Tree Pond has evaporated at a rapid rate with the warm weather. However, in the original deeper area there was still water to support the pond vegetation.

The Warden observed one of the flood management soakage tests on the Common and was told that the results were not promising with poor permeability which might suggest that the project wouldn't be feasible. However, the full report has not yet been received.

The Public Right of Way Team led by Jonathan Bibby has had three footpaths resurfaced including WB24 which runs from below Nevill Park to the garden centre, WB34 which runs from Castle Road up to the Wellington Rocks and WB35 Strange's Avenue. This is work that was rescheduled from April. The Warden has recommended other paths that require work including the Tarry Path and was encouraged to communicate quarterly with Mr Bibby to ensure work progresses.

IT WAS AGREED to add one double bin on the lower cricket pitch and one double bin near Wellington Rocks.

iii. Treasurer's Report

A number of detailed financial reports were distributed in advance. The Treasurer reported that the annual internal audit was completed on Monday 22nd June and that there were no findings.

There has been a conscious effort to reduce costs in 2019/20 to reduce a potential budget deficit which in the end did not transpire. There is a small general reserve on the account of £43,460

The Treasurer was thanked for managing the potential deficit and for presenting the accounts in a more user-friendly way.

IT WAS AGREED to adopt and approve the Annual Financial Statements for the year ending 31 March 2020 and the Annual Governance and Accountability Return and associated supporting returns to be provided to the external auditors.

iv. Assistant Clerk's Report

The Assistant Clerk provided a summary of the new Commons' Conservators Facebook group, noting that it had been launched on 6th April and currently had 694 members. The group had been very well received by the community and had been used to communicate key Covid-19 safety measures along with the standard information on flora, fauna, walks, geology, conservation, historical information, educational reference material and nature-based activities.

On 1st May the Commons Conservators' Photography Competition had been launched. Entrants were asked to send in a photograph of any aspect of the Commons that made them go "wow". The images have been shared on various Facebook pages and groups to enable those who were self-isolating or unable to get to the Commons due to lockdown, to still experience the area. 23 entries had been received with the competition due to close on 31st July with judging shortly after. The outgoing and incoming mayors offered to be photographed with the winning images, which was gratefully accepted. It was also suggested that the competition be promoted via Next Door (local social networking service for neighbourhoods), the Assistant Clerk to investigate.

Work has commenced on both the litter picking and grass cutting contracts which are due for renewal on 1st April 2021. Conservators to be presented with a proposal at the September meeting, which will be progressed by the Committee in the interim.

ACTION To promote the photography competition on Next Door.

A proposed approach for the litter and grass cutting contract to be agreed with the Committee to be presented to the Conservators at the September meeting.

8. NEW WEBSITE

The new website project will now be completed by the Committee using the draft specification. All progress to be communicated with the management team.

ACTION The Committee to progress and report back to the Conservators.

9. OPEN SPACES POLICY

The draft Open Spaces Policy was approved and adopted by the Conservators. The document is to be reviewed annually.

ACTION The Assistant Clerk to add review dates to the Open Spaces Policy and upload to the website.

10. REQUEST FROM THE COMMON ROOMS

Targetfollow had received a request from the Common Rooms bar to use a section of the Common between London Road and Mount Ephraim Road, in front of Thackeray's Restaurant as an extension of its bar, setting out tables and chairs and allowing customers to sit there. The Common Rooms' owners had provided a proposal in advance of the meeting with full details for the consideration of the Conservators.

The Conservators acknowledged and were sympathetic to the need to support small businesses during this very difficult time. However, there were several concerns regarding the proposal which included the safety of patrons so close to the very busy road, especially while crossing Mount Ephraim Road; the encroachment of the Common which is something the Conservators work very hard to protect; noise nuisance for local residents; litter associated with the disposable cups and possible increases in use of the litter bins and the definitive footpath running through the middle of the area.

The Conservators were supportive of a temporary compromise solution and the Committee were asked to investigate the options further, to include consultation with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council licensing and safety teams.

ACTION The Committee to investigate possibilities and to produce a draft Open Spaces Policy Addendum to deal with the temporary Covid-19 situation.

11. EVENTS AND SIGNAGE

Requests were received as follows:

ACTIVITIES ON THE COMMONS – all subject to Covid-19 guidance

- i. Wild Child Forest School (Friends) originally 6 sessions during August school holidays now deferred to 2021 but permission requested to plan ahead.
- ii. Rusthall Bonfire 31st October 2020.

SIGNAGE

- i. Signs for Rusthall Bonfire (31st October 2020)

IT WAS AGREED: All requests were approved subject to following government guidance at the time.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Fitness classes on the Commons

The Warden had received a request for a yoga class to temporarily hold their sessions on the lower cricket pitch.

ACTION To forward all fitness class related requests to Paul Burnett to coordinate while keeping the Conservators informed.

Ash Trees at Still Green

The Warden had been contacted by Jonathan Bibby regarding ash trees at Still Green. The Warden believed they were on the Commons boundary with the Targetfollow land and asked Paul Burnett to review.

Roles and Responsibilities

As a consequence of some difficulties in working together the Chairman advised that he would review the responsibilities of both the Director and the Committee.

ACTION To avoid any further complications on project work, the Chairman will work to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Director and Committee.

13. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

White Hart, 16 Lower Green Road, Rusthall. Conversion of public house into 4 bed dwelling. Comment made on behalf of the Conservators - The Conservators have no comment to make on the application but would remind the applicant that the land at the front of the property is part of Rusthall Common. The Conservators wish to make it clear that no building materials may be placed on the land and no construction or delivery vehicles may park there or overrun the grass at any time.

As part of a tender for the conversion of The Retreat Hotel, 55-57 London Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 1DS, email received to request a parking bay suspension and or using part of the Common directly outside the Hotel for a compound area. Appropriate response, declining the request to use part of the Commons, was sent.

At very late notice, the Conservators were supplied with details of a planning application for the Beacon Hotel. It is a significant application and as such the Director offered to investigate collate responses and prepare a draft report.

ACTION The Director to discuss the proposal with David Scully and revert to the Conservators with a draft repose.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – 17th September 2020 at 10.30am, whether it is via video conferencing or in the Town Hall will be confirmed closer to the time.

Update: It is now confirmed that the Town Hall is likely to remain closed so the meeting will take place via video conferencing at the earlier time of 10.30am.

A walk on the Commons in advance of the meeting is proposed again and will be considered closer to the time, reviewing logistics and government guidance.

Agreed Actions

Agenda Item	Detail	Responsibility
3	Work through agreements with Linden Park Cricket Club.	Warden
4	Chairman to sign the minutes of the previous meetings and send to the Assistant Clerk	Chairman
4	Approved minutes to be uploaded to the website.	Assistant Clerk
6	Continue to work with Alex Brauningger on the storm drainage project.	Assistant Clerk
7i	Latest draft Planning Gain document to be distributed to all Conservators.	Director
7ii	Continue to provide suggestions on footpath maintenance to Jonathan Bibby.	Warden
7iv	To promote the photography competition on Next Door.	Assistant Clerk
7iv	A proposed approach for the litter and grass cutting contract to be agreed with the Committee to be presented to the Conservators at the September meeting.	Management Team

9	Add review dates to the Open Spaces Policy and upload to the website.	Assistant Clerk
10	Investigate possibilities and to produce a draft Open Spaces Policy Addendum.	Committee
12	Forward all fitness class related requests to Paul Burnett to coordinate.	Management Team
12	Work to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Director and Committee.	Chairman
13	Discuss the Beacon Hotel planning proposal with David Scully and revert back to the Conservators with a draft response.	Director

TUNBRIDGE WELLS COMMONS CONSERVATORS

Minutes of a meeting held via video conference on Thursday 17th September 2020 at 10.30am

PRESENT:

Paul Burnett (joined from agenda item 8)
Ewen Cameron
Cllr Barbara Cobbold
Stephen Lacey
Ian Marshall (Chairman)
Antony Moore
Cllr Joy Podbury
Clare Sinha
Corin Thoday
Cllr Chris Woodward (joined from agenda item 8)

APOLOGIES/UNABLE TO ATTEND:

Chris McHugh
Cllr James Scholes
Clive Evans (Friends of Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Common)

ATTENDING:

Giles Membrey (Director)
Philip Tew (Treasurer)
Steve Budden (Warden)
Gemma Stapeley (Assistant Clerk)
Liz Ellicott (Rusthall Parish Council)

MINUTES

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Chris McHugh and Clive Evans.

2. MEETING BY VIDEO CONFERENCE

The Conservators approved the holding of the meeting via video conference.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th June 2020 were considered and approved. A copy to be signed by the Chairman and returned to the Assistant Clerk.

4. MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The minutes of the Committee meetings held on 20th July and 8th September 2020 were considered and approved and would also be signed by the Chairman.

5. MATTERS ARISING

Linden Park Cricket Club

Following on from the Club's representation at the TWCC' meeting in June 2020, contact from the Club and follow up on the agreed actions has been limited. The Warden has heard via John Harvey that the Club plan to start fencing off the outfield as agreed, at the end of the season. The Warden must be involved in the plans for this.

Storm drainage

Kent County Council's Flood and Water Management team and West Kent Countryside Management Partnerships have now reported back on their project for natural flood management retention and infiltration measures on Tunbridge Wells Common. They concluded that the project would not be feasible due to poor water infiltration rates of the soils at a shallow depth. All Conservators received an email on 9th August 2020 confirming their conclusions. The final report has been requested from Louise Smith at KCC.

The KCC Highways team, led by Alex Brauning, have started their investigative work as part of the Major York's Road proposed surface water drainage improvements. To date this has included topographical and geological surveys and a review of the ecological and arboricultural constraints. Proposed outline design ideas should be ready for Conservator consultation by mid to late October 2020. Once all parties are agreed in principle then the next step would be development of a detailed design proposal.

Rusthall Bonfire

This event has been cancelled for 2020.

Footpath Management

The Commons have benefited from significant investment, by KCC, in footpath maintenance this year. The Warden was reminded to continue to liaise with the Public Rights of Way team, led by Jonathan Bibby to ensure further work is identified.

Ash trees on Still Green

The Warden and PB plan to meet on site to discuss ownership and management of the trees in question.

Actions

All actions from the June meeting were reviewed and closed.

6. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

IT WAS AGREED that the meetings of the Commons Conservators be held at 2.00 pm on the following dates:

Thursday March 25th 2021.

Thursday June 24th 2021.

Thursday September 23rd 2021.

Thursday December 9th 2021.

7. MANAGEMENT REPORT

i. Directors's Report

The Director provided a full report ahead of the meeting.

The Director will continue to discuss his planning gain document with TWBC Planning department. It was agreed by the Committee that the linked projects would be updated annually each December. These projects are example projects that the planning officers can refer to when in discussions with a developer. Projects associated with cars and vehicles are not appropriate.

The Management team will be working on a grass-cutting paper for the Committee and for Conservator consultation at the December meeting.

The Director will continue to monitor any further planning applications for the Beacon. JP noted that often those individuals who object to the first application, don't object again if a second revised proposal is submitted. If a second proposal is submitted, the Facebook community and other local neighbours would be encouraged to consider commenting on the proposal.

A cycle route proposal connecting Langton Green with Tunbridge Wells town centre is due from TWBC. The Director will keep Conservators updated on this.

ii. Warden's Report

There has been an unusually high number of storms this summer, with high winds causing damage to the trees in full leaf. Consequently, spend on the tree budget is more significant at this time of year than usual. The Treasurer is aware of this and will be ensuring that the limited budget is managed.

The process of cutting and widening all paths and cutting long grass is well under way. Mick Dann who usually completes the small flail work has not been available, Honnington have instead been contracted to complete the work this year. Although they are slower, as they learn the area and requirements, it is a worthy investment for future years.

Completion of the outstanding work on the Second Marl Pit Pond is due to restart week commencing 28th September, kindly paid for by the Freehold Tenants and the Friends.

Ian Johnstone, of KHWP, has completed the vegetation survey of Bull's Hollow, required to satisfy the terms of the Sussex Lund funding for the new scrape. We await further instruction on when the project can commence.

Subject to available funds in the budget, it is hoped that the heather seeds can be harvested to extend the area of growth.

The Conservators congratulated the Warden on a gold award in the South and South East Britain in Bloom competition. Kasia Olszewska from TWBC has been thanked for development of the submitted portfolio.

The Warden reported that a person was injured while climbing on Happy Valley rocks. It was obviously a significant injury as five ambulances were at the scene. Unfortunately, no official details were reported to the Warden and as such he plans to make connections with representatives of the local emergency services to improve communication and to enable accident reporting to be more accurate.

The Warden conducted a site visit with Fiona Payne of the Highways, Transportation and Waste Team at KCC, to view the proposed zebra crossing on London Road, opposite the Thackeray's Restaurant. The Conservators have already approved this project, subject to the Warden's site visit. During the work, the team plan to remove a significant volume of soil to re-grade the bank on the Common side, by Belleville. The soil will be retained by the Warden for use across the Common, for example to fill holes under benches. The Warden was satisfied by the plans for the project.

iii. Treasurer's Report

The external audit of the accounts took the form of a desk top review this year. Although the external audit opinion has not yet been received, the Treasurer had been informed that there would be a qualification as he had omitted to sign the return, but he assured everyone that this would be of no consequence.

It remains the plan to meet the budget approved by the Conservators in December 2019.

Cash resources are some £105,000.

Update: the external audit report has now been received which raised no issues.

iv. Assistant Clerk's Report

The Facebook group continues to grow and now exceeds 900 members, it is seen as a valuable tool for two-way communication with the community. Litter, bins and litter picking are currently the most popular topics of discussion on the group and reflect emails into the office.

Over the Summer, Keep Britain Tidy launched a campaign called "Be kind to our local parks" in response to the significant increase in the number of people using outdoor spaces and associated littering. The increase is clearly reflected on the Commons. A double litter bin has been installed on the lower cricket pitch and by Wellington Rocks to help accommodate additional waste. The

Assistant Clerk is making local connections to help support litter picking and possible community picks.

The risk register has been updated with four changes as follows:

1. Reduced risk of the office accommodation being unavailable.
2. Increased risk of cost increases for litter contract.
3. Comments for risk of reduced public interest in and support for the Commons to include Facebook as evidence that this is not significant.
4. One new risk added, increased usage putting pressure on Commons' maintenance.

It was agreed that the Risk Register would be reviewed annually in December.

A full review of all policies has been completed, all documents now being up to date, excluding the health and safety policy which is covered in agenda item 10.

8. LITTER CONTRACT

The Assistant Clerk had provided all Conservators with a paper on the litter contract in advance of the meeting. The paper provided details of five options available from 1st April 2021 with associated advantages and disadvantages. Conservators were asked to direct the Assistant Clerk to a preferred option to enable more detailed work on that option to be progressed.

As background, the current contract was awarded to Oakbourne and commenced 1st April 2018 for three years with an option to extend for one/two years. Oakbourne have expressed interest in discussing an extension.

The arrangements can be broken down into three key components, emptying the 30 bins across both Commons, disposing of the black sacks of waste and litter picking. The majority of the costs are in the emptying of the bins.

Given the significant increase in volumes of waste in the litter bins the contractor can now no longer manage to litter pick at this current time. Hopefully this will be resolved as Autumn arrives and the number of users of the Commons reduces.

The current arrangement for disposal of the black sack waste involves Oakbourne transferring the waste to Bridgland (the grass cutting contractor) for disposal.

The option of larger bins in fewer locations to replace the 30 small bins was raised by the Treasurer and although these may detract from the visual appearance of the Commons it is still worth exploring all ideas to manage costs and increase value.

CT suggested discussing the contract with TWBC to see if they could add it into their existing contract with Urbaser.

IT WAS AGREED that the Assistant Clerk would progress plans for option 3, to discuss a contract extension with the incumbent contractor, to manage disposal of the black sack waste

by a third party (waste management company) and to include litter picking back into the contract. She would report on progress in the December meeting.

IT WAS AGREED that Community litter picks could be planned and start to work alongside the litter contract.

It was noted that Rusthall Village Association and Rusthall Parish Council have litter picking equipment that might be available to borrow.

ACTION: Assistant Clerk to discuss available options for the litter contract with TWBC

9. WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT

The Committee, with support from the Assistant Clerk, have been working on the selection of a website development company to create a new website for the Commons. The four companies chosen to tender were DunkInk, Redboat, Kayo and Cordis. The latter are owned by Targetfollow.

PB had declared his business interest in Cordis from the beginning of the project and it was decided that he could be part of the Committee working on the project, but that CW and CS would lead the discussions and decisions.

In view of their potential conflict Targetfollow did not participate in the discussion at the meeting about the website or the subsequent vote to approve the appointment of Cordis.

ACTION: The Committee will continue to update all relevant parties as the project progresses.

10. POLICIES

i. GDPR

The policy was approved by all Conservators.

ii. Health and Safety

The Management Team had reviewed the current health & safety policy and advised that it needed to be reviewed with significant changes required.

IT WAS AGREED that the health & safety policy would be reviewed fully and that a draft document would be presented in December for Conservator approval.

11. EVENTS AND SIGNAGE – ACTIVITIES ON THE COMMONS

i. Rusthall Community Arts in Happy Valley

The request was approved subject to the group following Government Covid guidance.

ii. Saxon Orienteering ‘Kent Night Cup’

The request was not approved. For the following reasons:

- Given that the event would happen in the dark there was concern about participant safety.
- The large number participants could frighten others using the Common.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Declaration of any business interests

At the suggestion of EC, future meetings will be started with a declaration of business interests.

Request for permission to complete Open Reach works

The request was approved, subject to the Warden attending a satisfactory site visit.

13. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

- Beacon Hotel – Application formally withdrawn.
- 33 Common View - Loft conversion including rear dormer and internal alterations; addition of two rooflights to front elevation; changes to fenestration; alterations to front porch. Comment made on behalf of the Conservators - The Commons Conservators have no comment to make on the application but would remind the applicant that the land in front of the driveway is part of Tunbridge Wells Common. The Conservators wish to make it clear that no building materials may be placed on the land and no construction or delivery vehicles may park there or overrun the grass at any time.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – 10th December 2020 at 2pm, via videoconferencing.

Agreed Actions

Agenda Item	Detail	Responsibility
3&4	Chairman to sign the minutes of the previous meetings and send to the Assistant Clerk.	Chairman
5	Continue to provide suggestions on footpath maintenance to Jonathan Bibby.	Warden
8	Continue work on the litter contract project to progress plans for option 3.	Assistant Clerk

8	Discuss available options for the litter contract with TWBC.	Assistant Clerk
8	Plan and progress community litter picks.	Assistant Clerk and Warden
9	Provide an update on the website development project as and when required.	Committee
10	Review of H&S policy, draft document to be prepared.	Management Team
12	Addition of a declaration of any business interest at the start of all future meetings.	Assistant Clerk to add to the agenda.

TUNBRIDGE WELLS COMMONS CONSERVATORS

Minutes of a meeting held via video conference on Thursday 10th December 2020 at 2pm

PRESENT:

John Barber
Paul Burnett
Ewen Cameron
Cllr Barbara Cobbold
Stephen Lacey
Ian Marshall (Chairman)
Chris McHugh
Antony Moore
Cllr Joy Podbury
Cllr James Scholes
Corin Thoday
Cllr Chris Woodward

APOLOGIES/UNABLE TO ATTEND:

Liz Ellicott (Rusthall Parish Council)

ATTENDING:

Steve Budden (Warden)
Gemma Stapeley (Clerk)
Clive Evans (Friends of Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Common)
Jason Vickers (Cordis) for agenda items 1-3

MINUTES

1. DECLARATION OF BUSINESS INTEREST

There were no business declarations.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Liz Ellicott.

3. COMMONS WEBSITE AND BRAND PRESENTATION

Jason Vickers, of marketing agency, Cordis, presented an overview of the new TWCC website. While still under development, the presentation highlighted the proposed style and layout with emphasis on significant use of images to capture the feel of the Commons, to excite and engage the audience.

The design focuses on three key categories, explore, enjoy and protect. The sections covering events, fauna and blogs were presented as examples to demonstrate how the pages would look and interact.

The site is based on WordPress, a universal platform, but with a unique build and development. The pages have a uniform presentation style and templates. All care has been made to ensure that the site is future proofed, having capacity to add additional technology and services e.g., interactive map, webchat etc.

Cordis have created a new logo and icon, to note it now includes Rusthall.

Following questions from those attending, the subsequent points were noted:

- When the website goes live, all images will be of the Commons, not stock images as shown in the presentation.
- The colour of green used in the logo was very pale and might be difficult to see by those with poor eyesight.
- Diversity will be reflected through imagery. The community will also be asked for their own images to demonstrate this.
- Explore, enjoy and ensure was proposed, due to the good use of alliteration. This will be discussed by the working party.
- Website users will be able to provide feedback through the contact page and social media connections.
- The site was well received by all, with many encouraging comments. It was a significant improvement on the current website.

The site is due to go live in mid-January.

The Chairman thanked the Committee and Clerk for all of their work on the project.

4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 17th September 2020 were considered and approved. A copy to be signed by the Chairman and returned to the Clerk.

5. MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE MEETING

The minutes of the Committee meeting held on 30th November 2020 were considered and approved and would also be signed by the Chairman.

6. MATTERS ARISING

Storm drainage

The Kent County Council Highways team have now incorporated their ecological review, arboricultural research and topographical and geological survey work, into a proposed outline design for the Major York's Road surface water drainage improvements. Most of the work in

terms of laying drains and pipework is within the highway, but the soakaways proposed are off the highway edges and in areas of the Commons. Both the Warden and Chairman have reviewed the proposal to assist with the final design, which is to follow.

Directors Report

A meeting with William Benson and the Clerk, Warden and Chairman is scheduled for 18th December 2020.

Proposed zebra crossing on London Road

The Warden reported that the project was scheduled for February 2020. JP noted that the planning notifications were on display.

Ash trees on Still Green

The Warden reported that the work on the ash trees had been completed last week.

Volunteer work parties

The Clerk reported that the first work party of the season, scheduled for 7th November, had been postponed due to Lockdown 2.0. However, the arrangements were rescheduled for 5th December. The Clerk led a team of 5 other volunteers who litter picked on Rusthall Common, focusing on Bulls Hollow, Toad Rock, along Rusthall Road and the Bumps. Equipment had been kindly funded by the Friends. It had been a very successful session with approximately 15 bags of litter collected and very positive feedback from people walking and cycling past. The Clerk has already been contacted by a further 6 people wanting to volunteer. Posts on Facebook regarding the event had inspired other members of the community to organise their own litter picks, with the Warden observing a flurry of activity.

At the same time, the Warden led a team of 3 other volunteers working on birch scrub and seedling clearance on the Marshall plan area on Tunbridge Wells Common. The Warden reported that the work had been completed.

Actions

All meeting actions were reviewed and closed.

7. MEMBERSHIP

The under mentioned Conservators were appointed by the bodies specified to serve for the period indicated.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council – one-year term end 31 December 2021

Councillor Barbara Cobbold
Councillor Joy Podbury
Councillor James Scholes
Councillor Chris Woodward

Freehold Tenants – 3rd year of three-year term until 31 December 2021

John Barber
Stephen Lacey

Ian Marshall
Chris McHugh

Manor of Rusthall – 2nd year of three-year term until 31 December 2022

Paul Burnett
Ewen Cameron
Antony Moore
Corin Thoday

8. WARDEN'S REPORT

The Warden reported that the annual clearance of tracks, paths and glades was almost complete. It had taken longer than usual as the new contractors, Honnington, had had to learn the geography of the Commons.

The unusually high number of unplanned safety issues with trees had continued throughout the period. Although the budget is stretched it would be desirable to implement a programme of proactive works to create safe, veteran trees.

Footfall on the Commons had remained high contributing to the deterioration of the surface of the car park, which requires repair. Litter volumes remain higher than in previous years, not helped by a period of contractor unreliability which is being managed by the Warden.

The second Marlpit ponds have now been completed with a series of three ponds flowing from one to the next. To the side of the ponds two reptile and amphibian hibernacula have been created. This project was jointly funded by the Friends and Freehold Tenants. With funding from the Sussex Lund, the Friends have also funded a series of shallow, interlinked scrapes at Bull's Hollow. Both sites will be sown with an appropriate wildflower and grass seed mix in early Spring.

A number of groups have volunteered to help with project work on Rusthall Common. The British Mountaineering Council's sandstone volunteers have offered to clear scrub and bramble from the rock faces at Bulls Hollow and Happy Valley. The Community Payback team have been given the initial task of bramble and scrub clearance at Toad Rock. A Denny Bottom based group will be re-commencing clearance of the rocks after lockdown while a group from Upper Street have started work clearing the rocks outside their homes.

Routine ditch clearance and path edging work will be starting shortly.

The large, sweet chestnut outside the Spa Hotel that was due to be pollarded, according to the work schedule, has now been delayed.

9. ASSISTANT CLERK'S REPORT

The Facebook group has now reached the milestone of over 1,000 members with over 2,000 reactions during the month of November. The current top posts provide valuable insight into what matters to our community and cover the following topics:

1. Deer spotted on Rusthall Common.
2. Discarded fireworks.
3. Images of the view over Happy Valley.
4. Removal of litter bins at National Trust properties.
5. Images of sunrise.
6. Restaurant waste oil drums dumped on the Common.

The office now benefits from a new Office 365 subscription administered by the Clerk and the linked OneDrive has been imported over from the office computer in the Town Hall.

The Assistant Clerk's report collated all Conservator requests since the last meeting as follows:

Date of request	Detail	Outcome
16/10/20	Request from Alex Orrow to use a drone on TW Common for commercial photography and for images to be made available to the Conservators.	Permission declined; existing policy upheld.
26/10/20	Request from Rusthall Cubs to host a Christmas party (x2) on Rusthall Common.	Permission granted subject to no vehicles being taken onto the Common, no sound system and that litter is collected at the end. Post decision, the event is on hold pending Covid guidance.
11/11/20	Request from King Charles the Martyr Church to use the area around the Forum for their scratch nativity on Christmas Eve.	Permission granted, on the understanding that there is a wet weather cancellation plan, and that caution is exercised on potentially slippery ground. Post decision, TWBC have expressed concern with the Covid management plans for the event, it has now been cancelled.
23/11/20	Request from Camilla Bellamacina Productions for a commercial photoshoot for Hunters boots on Wellington Rocks on Wednesday 2 nd December.	Permission granted with a donation of £175 to the Friends.

10. FINANCIAL PROCESS & SIGNING AUTHORITIES

Due to the recent office restructure and resignation of the Treasurer, the signing authorities needed to be reassigned.

The Chairman proposed authorisation should be from a representative from each of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, the Freehold Tenants and the Manor of Rusthall. Signatories were proposed and agreed as the Clerk, SL and JP.

Conservators approved the new financial process and signing authorities.

11. BUDGET REPORT AND PRECEPT 2021/22

SL was thanked by the Chairman on behalf of the Conservators and officers for spending a significant amount of time working, at short notice, on the budget, writing the budget report and precept for 2021/22.

Forecast Net Expenditure for 2020/21

The forecast shows that a net nil income balance for 2020/21 is achievable, even after allowing for the exceptional costs resulting from the recent management restructure. It will require good cost control as there is no contingency to allow for unexpected events.

Budget Expenditure for 2021/22

The budget also shows a net nil income balance for the year to March 2022. This carries more risk principally around the precept, recruitment and litter management as well as the vagaries of the weather. There is a contingency of £4,500 to allow for unexpected events.

The precept is adjusted in accordance with the annual change in the Retail Price Index for the year to the previous September. The RPI for September 2020 was 1.1%, on this basis the Precept income for next year should be £167,674.

Conservators approved the budget and precept for 2021/22.

It was noted that the budget was severely constrained and that without support from the Friends and Freehold Tenants there would be no project work undertaken, only maintenance. Ideally, we would be asking TWBC for a formal review of the precept mechanism and requesting to increase funding to meet the needs of the community. It was acknowledged that this was an extremely financially challenging time for TWBC, with a reported economic deficit. Instead, it was agreed that the Chairman would introduce the idea with William Benson during the meeting on the 18th December for possible implementation from 22/23.

ACTION: The Clerk to communicate the precept request to TWBC.

ACTION: Chairman to discuss the precept with William Benson and report back to Conservators.

12. LITTER CONTRACT

At the September TWCC meeting the Clerk was given permission from the Conservators to progress plans for a 12 month extension with Oakbourne from 1st April 2021, with removal of waste disposal and litter picking.

It was noted that the quality of service provided by Oakbourne is inconsistent, predominantly as Bryan is now located in Scotland and is relying on his brother. The Warden is working hard to address these issues.

The Clerk's proposal for renegotiation with Oakbourne for the Conservators' consideration is as follows:

- Disposal of black sacks to be into the 1,100 Litre wheeled bins and disposal will be the responsibility of an as yet unidentified third party and will no longer be the responsibility of Oakbourne. Estimated as a cost to the Conservators of approximately £3k incl VAT (although this is based on Oakbourne data which is not highly accurate).
- Litter picking on a day-to-day basis to be removed, only to be completed prior to grass cutting.
- Litter picking to be carried out by community volunteers.
- Bin emptying will be as per the existing schedule, as the bins simply can't cope being stretched for longer periods and the community are vocal when the system fails.
- We would like to propose financial penalties for contract failures (tbc with the Warden and Committee).
- Annual cost for 2020/21 is £25,502 which is invoiced monthly at £2,125. We would like to propose to Oakbourne that Conservators will continue to pay the current 2020/21 rate for the extension, despite disposal and litter picking being removed. We would however not pay any increase for the double bins recently installed on Wellington Rocks and the Lower Cricket Pitch.

Permission was also sought to select a third-party waste management company within the following terms:

- Pricing from three companies to be collected during January 2021, with selection of the best option during February 2021. Wheeled bin site to be arranged during February/March, anticipated at 2 on Tunbridge Wells and 1 on Rusthall. The latter will likely require the cost of a concrete base, with a contribution from the Friends.
- Fixed price for 12 months from 1st April 2021.
- One bin lift per week (all three bins at the same time) with an option to increase lift frequency if required.
- Full health and safety documentation and insurances (liability and fleet) provided.
- Full duty of care waste transfer note and waste carriers license provided.

The existing contract has been edited to reflect the changes proposed.

The budget for 2021/22 has identified the litter contract as a risk and a small contingency has been applied.

Conservators gave approval to negotiate with Oakbourne under the revised terms and to organise the 1,100 Litre bin contracts.

ACTION: Clerk to progress.

GRASS CUTTING CONTRACT

The Warden is proposing that from 1st April 2021 the contract with Bridgland is rolled on for 12 months, with a reduction in the number of core cuts from 12 to 6, with additional cuts as required at a set price.

There are two proposed caveats to protect both parties as follows:

- The grass must not be allowed to grow too high, so a maximum grass height should be included in the specification.
- Bridgland must provide an agreed notice period to come and commence work.

Conservators gave approval to commence this arrangement from 1st April 2021.

Action: Warden to progress the arrangements with Bridgland.

13. FREEHOLD TENANTS AND FRIENDS PROJECTS

The proposed projects were listed as follows:

1. Reedmace removal at the original Marlpit pond in Rusthall, which is becoming choked with vegetation. This is the pond with a Great Crested Newt population, so the Warden will ensure that the work follows expert conservation guidance to avoid any disruption.
2. Reedmace removal at Bracken Cottage pond next to the path between Nevill Park and Hungershall Park. This is another site where the regular pond survey has identified the need for remedial work this year.
3. Construction of a bund and ditch at the edge of Fir Tree Road car park. A number of the wooden posts marking the edge of the car park need replacement, which is very costly. The Warden has proposed adopting the approach taken on Ashdown Forest of building a bund and ditch to prevent vehicles moving from the car park onto the Common.
4. Holly clearance behind Fir Tree Road car park between the bat cave clearing and the path to the Spa Roundabout.
5. Holly clearance on a knoll between the paths going down from Wellington Rocks toward Castle Road and the Lower Cricket Pitch. This will reveal a group of oak trees which were a commemorative planting for George VI's coronation in 1937.
6. Two further days of cherry laurel clearance.
7. Remedial work on a very rutted stretch of track near Wellington Rocks.
8. Contributions to cover the great majority of the Tunbridge Wells & Rusthall Commons website development project.

All projects have the approval of the Warden and are linked to the Management Plan.

The Friends and Freehold Tenants were thanked for their generosity, the Warden noted that project 4 and 5 were particularly appealing to him. The Warden also thanked the Friends for the funding of the clearance of rocks at Happy Valley.

External sources of funding will continue to be investigated, once appropriate projects are identified by the Warden.

14. POLICIES

i. Health and Safety

A revised document was presented to the Conservators for their approval.

Conservators approved the document.

Action: Clerk to update the job title on page 2.

ii. Review of Open Spaces

Targetfollow proposed a change to the current Open Spaces policy, to reflect income to be received by Targetfollow, rather than a donation to the Friends.

CT expressed concerns about implied rights and specifically boundaries and health and safety.

It was agreed that in the case of commercial activities, such as filming and photography, following Conservator approval, Targetfollow would manage the administration, documentation and legality of the arrangements. If the Warden and Clerk were required to become involved with logistics and on-site support, their work would be financially charged separately.

ACTION: Clerk to revise the Open Spaces wording.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

i. Linden Park Cricket Club

A request was received from Mike Taylor of Linden Park Cricket Club asking permission for a storage container to be installed alongside the clubhouse and nets. The container would be used to store their new lawn mower.

There was concern that there was no clear methodology included for the locating of the container into position. With a crane or rollers there would be significant damage done to the ground. The request was rejected as incomplete.

ACTION: Clerk to contact Linden Park Cricket Club to request further details and plans on their proposed method.

ii. Feedback on process and procedures

The Chairman noted that a question had been raised regarding the appropriateness of appointing a non-Conservator to the committee. Having reviewed the legal position based on the County of Kent Act 1981 as well as that applying in comparable organisations, it had been confirmed that this is permissible and appropriate under the circumstances. There were no questions or comments raised and the matter was considered closed.

A further question had been raised on the rules governing exempt sessions, and how feedback from them was conveyed to the Officers. It was noted that the Conservators had followed the Government guidance regarding exempt sessions. Feedback is provided to Officers as and when required, although it was acknowledged that there might be scope, going forward, to look at ways of systematising the feedback process and/or improving its timeliness. Following discussion, it was agreed that these proposals would be followed up with the Clerk and an improved process developed.

ACTION: Chairman and Clerk to discuss and propose an improved feedback process.

16. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

4 Onslow House

BC left the meeting temporarily as she sits on the TWBC Planning Committee.

An application for an extension at 4 Onslow House has been prepared, the owner has contacted TWBC Planning prior to application for planning consent.

Following discussion of the various maps and meeting minutes, it was agreed that the land is registered village green and Common, as such when the application is submitted the Conservators will respond appropriately.

JP suggested that contact be made with Catherine Rankin, a Kent County Council Councillor and a former Conservator, if further legal guidance was required.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – 25th March 2021 at 2pm, via videoconferencing.

Agreed Actions

Agenda Item	Detail	Responsibility
4&5	Chairman to sign the minutes of the previous meetings and send to the Clerk.	Chairman
11	To communicate the precept request to TWBC.	Clerk
11	To discuss budget constraints and the precept with William Benson.	Chairman
12	Progress the litter contract.	Clerk and Warden
12	Progress the grass cutting contract.	Warden
14	Edit the H&S policy.	Clerk
14	Edit the wording of the Open Spaces policy for Targetfollow approval.	Clerk
15	Contact Linden Park to request further detail on methodology for siting the container.	Clerk
16	Discuss improvements to feedback from exempt sessions to officers.	Chairman and Clerk

