**BARLING MAGNA PARISH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF THE WILDLIFE RESERVE COMMITTEE** Meeting held on Tuesday, 5th September 2017 in the Barling Magna Parish Hall, Little Wakering Road, Barling Magna, Essex, commencing at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Cllrs. S. Bond, M. Clark, M. Cohen (ex officio), R. Gardiner, M. Pearmain, M Steptoe (ex officio).

In attendance: Cllr. A. Ashdown, Mr. P. Shaw (Volunteer) and I. King (Parish Clerk). One member of the public.

Apologies: Cllr I. Knight

**MINUTES**

1. **The Chair to declare the meeting open.**
2. Councillor Gardiner, acting-chair, declared the meeting open at 7pm.
3. **To appoint a Vice-Chair for the committee for the year 2017-18**
4. Councillor Gardiner declined to stand again as Vice-Chair.
5. Proposed by Councillor Gardiner, seconded by Councillor Pearmain that Councillor Bond be elected Vice-Chair for 2017-18. For 6; against 0; abstentions 0.
6. Councillor Bond took the chair from this point forward.
7. **To receive apologies for absence.**
8. Apologies were received from Councillor Knight.
9. **To receive Declarations of Interest in accordance with the Council’s Code of Conduct and with section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.**
10. Councillor Steptoe declared an interest in any matters relating to Rochford District Council or Essex County Council.
11. **To agree the Minutes of the Wildlife Reserve Committee held on 6th June 2017.**
12. Proposed by Councillor Cohen, seconded by Councillor Pearmain that the minutes of the meeting held 5th June 2017 be agreed. For 6; against 0; abstentions 0.
13. **The meeting will stand adjourned to permit Parishioners of Barling Magna to address the Committee** *(maximum 15 minutes).*
14. Mr Shaw asked whether there had been any further communication with the ecologists acting for developers in Shoeburyness, seeking to relocate a protected species of lizard to the Reserve. The clerk responded that he had had a telephone conversation with one of their staff and we were awaiting further developments. The applicant had asked for a development plan from the Council but it had been agreed previously that we would expect them to supply this, as well as a donation towards the costs of the Reserve before giving permission to go ahead.
15. On behalf of the volunteers, Mr Shaw thanked the Council for resolving the mechanical issues relating to the tractor mower.
16. **Equipment**
17. To discuss equipment renewals, replacements and consumables for recommendation to the next Full Council. At this stage no items had been brought forward for recommendation to the Council.
18. Councillor Steptoe asked about the location and currency of the latest review of Care of Substances Hazardous to Heath (CoSHH) at the Reserve. It was believed that this was housed in the barn at the Reserve and had been approved at the time although it now needed a fresh review. The clerk would investigate and report to the next meeting.
19. To note the current position with the ride-on mower and agree any action to be taken. Councillor Steptoe reported, including bringing the replaced parts which showed clear evidence of having sheared in two separate parts of the mechanism: the pivot above the stub axle as well as the tie-rod from the steering. It was impossible to identify the cause of the problems although the use of the mower over dips in the meadow might explain it. Councillor Gardiner asked whether, since there had been previous problems with the tractor, the supplier accepted any responsibility for recommending this machine to us some years ago. Councillor Steptoe said that they did not. The Clerk asked whether Councillor Steptoe would recommend to Council that the bill presented by the supplier be paid and this was affirmed.
20. To review the holding of keys to the Wildlife Reserve. Mr Shaw was gathering a list of those people known to him to hold Reserve keys and he would share this with the Clerk, who now held a set. Mr Shaw kindly offered the use of a key-safe which could be kept off-site; the meeting offered him its thanks for this.
21. **Discussion on encouraging wildlife and diversity at the Wildlife Reserve**
22. At the meeting of the Wildlife Reserve Committee held 6th June 2017 (item 12 b refers), on behalf of the volunteers Mr Shaw had requested a discussion about restricting a section of the Reserve where dogs must be kept on leads to protect the habitat. It was agreed that there would be a discussion on steps to encourage wildlife and diversity at this meeting.
23. Councillor Steptoe suggested that there were Council-agreed rules in place already which stated that dogs must be kept on leads throughout the Reserve. There was signage to that effect although all accepted that this was impossible to police. Councillor Steptoe advised that he had received complaints from the public about dogs off the lead at the Reserve, including one where a dog had jumped up at a visitor. There was also a concern about the increase in dog faeces left uncollected.
24. Mr Shaw raised a concern about dogs jumping in to the pond and disturbing the fragile eco-system there. He had been verbally abused and threatened by a dog-walker when challenging this.
25. The Clerk was requested to check with the Council’s insurers about the liability for adder-bites if dogs were off the lead.
26. There followed a discussion about where dogs might be exercised off the lead. It was agreed to have a trial period where dogs could be off the lead (but under owners’ firm control) in the southern end of the Reserve, up to the narrow entrance to the meadow by the horse-chestnut tree next to the barn. Mr Shaw offered to display a sign there advising that dogs should be kept on leads beyond that point and this was agreed, with thanks.
27. **To note correspondence received**
28. Email / letter received from Mr B Ashdown, regarding fencing *(circulated to all members by email).* The Clerk advised that, although the item had correctly come to the Committee as it related to Wildlife Reserve matters, he had not yet gathered all the available evidence to consider Mr Ashdown’s assertions and that the Committee would in any case have to refer the matter to the Council as it did not have the powers to respond to the letter. He recommended that the Committee took this step now. It was proposed by Councillor Bond, seconded by Councillor Cohen that the recommendation be accepted. For 6; against 0; abstentions 0.
29. **To note agreed dates for 2017 meetings of the Committee**
30. In the Council’s calendar of meetings for the year, the date of the next Wildlife Reserve Committee meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, 5th December 2017. It was noted that Tuesdays were often inconvenient for the Committee Chair and she would be asked if she wished to change the date to Monday 4th December 2017.
31. **Exchange of Information.**
32. At the Chair’s discretion, to exchange information on matters relating to the Wildlife Reserve.
33. It being some years since the last survey of flora and fauna at the Reserve, Councillor Steptoe asked that the Clerk should bring forward proposals for a new review. The scheduling would depend upon the best time ecologically for such an exercise and the Council’s finances. He offered to research the agency which had carried out the previous review.
34. Councillor Clark had previously emailed members with some ideas for Christmas community events that might be hosted at the Reserve, with sensitivity to the prime purpose of the site. These would be refined before being considered by full Council. Councillor Steptoe asked that his continuing reservations about the potential of events to disturb the wildlife should be recorded.
35. Another idea that was proposed was for seasonal talks by bodies such as the RSPB.
36. Councillor Steptoe raised a concern about the incidence of Blue-green Algae in other local ponds and asked whether this had appeared in the Reserve pond. Mr Shaw offered to check.
37. Proposed by Councillor Pearmain, seconded by Councillor Cohen that the Committee record a vote of thanks to Councillor Gardiner for his period of service as Vice-Chair. This was agreed unanimously.

**The Chair declared the meeting closed at 7:48pm**

\* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \*