



Brighton & Hove
City Council

Overview & Scrutiny

Title:	Environment & Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Committee Call-in Meeting
Date:	6 October 2009
Time:	1.00pm
Venue	Council Chamber, Hove Town Hall
Members:	Councillors: Morgan (Chairman), Janio (Deputy Chairman), Davey, Davis, Drake, Rufus, Smart and Wells
Contact:	Mary van Beinum Overview & Scrutiny Support Officer 01273 - 29 - 1062 mary.vanbeinum@brighton-hove.gov.uk

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AGENDA

Part One **Page**

21. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS **1 - 2**

22. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

**23. CALL-IN REQUEST: PEDESTRIAN NETWORK, PHASE 2 - 17
SEPTEMBER 2009 CABINET DECISION**

Report of the Director of Strategy and Governance (copy attached).

Contact Officer: Tom Hook *Tel:* 01273 - 29 - 1110

Ward Affected: Regency;

**24. CALL-IN REQUEST: DOWNLAND MANAGEMENT - 24 SEPTEMBER
ENVIRONMENT CMM DECISION** **3 - 44**

Report of the Director of Strategy and Governance (copy attached).

Contact Officer: Tom Hook *Tel:* 01273 - 29 - 1110

Ward Affected: East Brighton; Hangleton
& Knoll; Hollingdean &
Stanmer; Moulsecomb &
Bevendean; North
Portslade; Patcham;
Rottingdean Coastal;
Withdean; Woodingdean;

25. ITEMS TO GO FORWARD TO CMM, CABINET OR COUNCIL

The City Council actively welcomes members of the public and the press to attend its meetings and holds as many of its meetings as possible in public. Provision is also made on the agendas for public questions to committees and details of how questions can be raised can be found on the website and/or on agendas for the meetings.

The closing date for receipt of public questions and deputations for the next meeting is 12 noon on the fifth working day before the meeting.

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Meeting papers can be provided, on request, in large print, in Braille, on audio tape or on disc, or translated into any other language as requested.

For further details and general enquiries about this meeting contact Mary van Beinum, (01273 - 29 - 1062, email mary.vanbeinum@brighton-hove.gov.uk) or email scrutiny@brighton-hove.gov.uk

ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Publication – Thursday 01 October 2009

Agenda Item 21

PROCEDURAL BUSINESS.

A. Declaration of Substitutes

Where a Member of the Commission is unable to attend a meeting for whatever reason, a substitute Member (who is not a Cabinet Member) may attend and speak and vote in their place for that meeting. Substitutes are not allowed on Scrutiny Select Committees or Scrutiny Panels.

The substitute Member shall be a Member of the Council drawn from the same political group as the Member who is unable to attend the meeting, and must not already be a Member of the Commission. The substitute Member must declare themselves as a substitute, and be minuted as such, at the beginning of the meeting or as soon as they arrive.

B. Declarations of Interest

- (1) To seek declarations of any personal or personal & prejudicial interests under Part 2 of the Code of Conduct for Members in relation to matters on the Agenda. Members who do declare such interests are required to clearly describe the nature of the interest.
- (2) A Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, an Overview and Scrutiny Committee or a Select Committee has a prejudicial interest in any business at meeting of that Committee where –
 - (a) that business relates to a decision made (whether implemented or not) or action taken by the Executive or another of the Council's committees, sub-committees, joint committees or joint sub-committees; and
 - (b) at the time the decision was made or action was taken the Member was
 - (i) a Member of the Executive or that committee, sub-committee, joint committee or joint sub-committee and
 - (ii) was present when the decision was made or action taken.
- (3) If the interest is a prejudicial interest, the Code requires the Member concerned:-
 - (a) to leave the room or chamber where the meeting takes place while the item in respect of which the declaration is made is under consideration. [There are three exceptions to this rule which are set out at paragraph (4) below].
 - (b) not to exercise executive functions in relation to that business and
 - (c) not to seek improperly to influence a decision about that business.

(4) The circumstances in which a Member who has declared a prejudicial interest is permitted to remain while the item in respect of which the interest has been declared is under consideration are:-

(a) for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence relating to the item, provided that the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose, whether under a statutory right or otherwise, BUT the Member must leave immediately after he/she has made the representations, answered the questions, or given the evidence,

(b) if the Member has obtained a dispensation from the Standards Committee, or

(c) if the Member is the Leader or a Cabinet Member and has been required to attend before an Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Sub-Committee to answer questions.

C. Declaration of party whip

To seek declarations of the existence and nature of any party whip in relation to any matter on the Agenda as set out at paragraph 8 of the Overview and Scrutiny Ways of Working.

D. Exclusion of press and public

To consider whether, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, or the nature of the proceedings, the press and public should be excluded from the meeting when any of the following items are under consideration.

NOTE: Any item appearing in Part 2 of the Agenda states in its heading the category under which the information disclosed in the report is confidential and therefore not available to the public.

A list and description of the exempt categories is available for public inspection at Brighton and Hove Town Halls.

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY SAFETY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 24

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Request for Call-in of the 24 September 2009 Environment CMM Decision on Cityparks Downland Management
Date of Meeting:	6 October 2009
Report of:	The Director of Strategy and Governance
Contact Officer:	Name: Tom Hook Tel: 29-1110 E-mail: Tom.hook@brighton-hove.gov.uk
Wards Affected:	East Brighton; Hangleton & Knoll; Hollingdean & Stanmer; Moulsecoomb & Bevendean, North Portslade; Patcham; Rottingdean Coastal; Withdean and Woodingdean

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 To determine whether to ask the Environment Cabinet Member to reconsider the decision in relation to the proposed plan to increase the grazed area of council land managed by Cityparks which was taken at the 24 September 2009 Environment Cabinet Member meeting.
- 1.2 The following information is contained in the appendices to this report:
 - (a) **Appendix 1** to the report contains the Call-In request;
 - (b) **Appendices 2 and 3** to the report contains a letter from wildlife groups and officer briefing considered at 22 June Environment and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee (ECSOSC) meeting
 - (c) **Appendix 4** to the report contains the extract from the 22 June ECSOSC meeting
 - (d) **Appendix 5** to the report contains the letter from ECSOSC Chairman and further comments from Councillor Sven Rufus to 30 July Environment CMM meeting
 - (e) **Appendix 6** contains an extract from the minutes of the 30 July CMM meeting

(f) **Appendix 7** to the report contains the report from the Director of Environment which was agreed at the 24 September Environment CMM meeting and **Appendix 8** contains the appendix to the CMM report.

(g) **Appendix 9** to the report contains an extract from the draft minutes from the 24 September Environment CMM meeting

(h) **Appendix 10** to the report contains the official record of the Environment CMM decision on this matter

(h) **Appendix 11** to the report contains further information on this issue supplied by the Director of Environment.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 (a) To note the letter from wildlife groups, officer briefing and extract from the minutes of 22 June ECSOSC
- (b) To note the subsequent letter from ECSOSC Chairman and additional information from Councillor Rufus to the 30 July Environment CMM and extract from the minutes
- (c) To note the decision taken by 24 September Environment CMM in relation to Cityparks Downland Management
- (d) To note the subsequent Call-In request
- (e) To note the additional information supplied by the Director of Environment
- 2.2 Having regard to the grounds for Call-In, to determine whether to refer the decision back to the Environment CMM for reconsideration.

3. **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 On 22 June a letter from wildlife groups and officer briefing were considered by ECSOSC. Following discussion it was resolved that the Chairman write to Environment CMM on behalf of the Committee with a request urgently to review the downland mowing policy on a site by site basis. **(Appendices 2-4)**
- 3.2 On behalf of ECSOSC, Councillor Rufus provided additional information and presented the letter to 30 July Environment CMM where the letter was noted and Councillors Morgan and Rufus were offered a meeting with the Assistant Director, City Services. **(Appendices 5, 6)**
- 3.3 At 24 September Environment CMM agreed a report on the proposed plan to increase the grazed area of council land managed by Cityparks.

This report is reprinted in **Appendices 7,8**. An extract from the draft minutes is printed as **Appendix 9** to this report, and the official record of the CMM decision is printed as **Appendix 10**.

- 3.4 Further information relating to this matter has been provided by the Director of Environment. This is contained in **Appendix 11** to this report.
- 3.5 On 24 September 2009, Councillor Gill Mitchell wrote to the Chief Executive, requesting that the CMM decision be called in. The Call-In request forms **Appendix 1** to this report.
- 3.6 The Chief Executive accepted the Call-In request on 25 September 2009 and asked for a Call-in Meeting of the Environment and Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be called within seven working days.
- 3.7 Call-In is the process by which Overview & Scrutiny Committees can recommend that a decision made (in connection with Executive functions) but not yet implemented be reconsidered by the body which originally took the decision.
- 3.8 Call-In should only be used in exceptional circumstances, for instance where there is evidence that an important decision was not taken in accordance with the Council's constitution.
- 3.9 An Overview & Scrutiny Committee examining a decision which has been Called-In does not have the option of substituting its own decision for that of the original decision. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee may only determine whether or not to refer the matter back to the original decision making body for reconsideration.
- 3.10 In determining whether to refer a decision back to its originating body for reconsideration, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee should have regard to the criteria for Scrutiny reviews, as set out in the Council's constitution (Part 6.1: paragraph 4.2). In addition, the Committee should take into account:
 - Any further information which may have become available since the decision was made
 - The implications of any delay; and
 - Whether reconsideration is likely to result in a different decision.
- 3.11 More information about the Call-In process is contained in the Council's constitution (Part 6.1: paragraph 16).

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 No formal consultation has been undertaken in regard to this report.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

5.1 The financial implications remain the same as those detailed in the initial report to Environment CMM (24.09.09).

Legal Implications:

5.2 If, having scrutinised the Environment Cabinet Member's decision, ECSOSC is still concerned about, it may refer the decision back to the Cabinet Member for reconsideration, setting out the nature of its concerns. Were this to happen, the Cabinet Member is required to reconsider, either at his next programmed Cabinet Member meeting or at a special meeting called for the purpose, whether to amend the decision or not before reaching a final decision and implementing it.

Lawyer consulted: Oliver Dixon Date: 1 October 2009

Equalities Implications:

5.3 There are no direct equalities implications to this report, although the 24 September 2009 CMM decision was made with regard to the equalities implications contained within the original report of the Director of Environment (see **appendix 7**).

Sustainability Implications:

5.4 There are no direct sustainability implications to this report, although the 24 September 2009 CMM decision was made with regard to the sustainability implications contained within the original report of the Director of Environment (see **appendix 7**).

Crime & Disorder Implications:

5.5 There are no direct crime & disorder implications to this report, although the 24 September 2009 CMM decision was made with regard to the crime & disorder implications contained within the original report of the Director of Environment (see **appendix 7**).

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

5.6 The Call-In procedure seeks to provide a system via which important decisions can be re-examined in a timely fashion, so as to ensure that the Council is not unnecessarily exposed to risk associated with taking decisions contrary to established procedure, whilst also minimising risk inherent in unduly delaying the decision making process.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 Chalk grassland supports up to 40 species of plant in one square metre. It is internationally rare and local authorities are expected to prioritise its management as part of their duty to further biodiversity.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. The request for Call-In;
2. Letter from wildlife groups and officer briefing considered at 22 June Environment and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee (ECSOSC) meeting;
3. Officer briefing considered at 22 June Environment and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee (ECSOSC) meeting;
4. Extract from minutes of 22 June ECSOSC meeting;
5. Letter from ECSOSC Chairman Councillor Warren Morgan and further comments from Councillor Sven Rufus to 30 July Environment CMM meeting;
6. Extract from minutes of 30 July CMM meeting;
7. Report from the Director of Environment which was agreed at the 24 September Environment CMM meeting;
8. Appendix to the 24 September CMM report;
9. Extract from the draft minutes from the 24 September Environment CMM meeting;
10. Official record of the Environment CMM decision on this matter;
11. Further information on this issue supplied by the Director of Environment

Documents in Members' Rooms:

There are none.

Background Documents:

1. The Council's constitution (May 2008).

Mr Alex Bailey
Acting Chief Executive
Brighton & Hove City Council

24th September 2009

Request for call-in of Environment Cabinet Member's decision 24th September 2009. Cityparks Downland Management

Dear Mr Bailey,

I would like you to consider my request for a Call-in to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the decision taken by the Cabinet Member for the Environment in relation to agenda item 43, Cityparks Downland Management.

My reasons for this request are as follows;

The report that was before the Cabinet Member did not accord with the statement made by the council's Countryside Manager at the June 22nd meeting of the Environment and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee as recorded in the minutes of that meeting at point 4.6;

"The Countryside Manager welcomed the opportunity to thank volunteers for their hard work and said that issues raised by the increase in costs of cutting and composting sites, together with opportunities for increasing grazing of many sites along with continued mowing of others would be addressed in due course by the proposed draft grazing plan to be considered by the Cabinet Member."

The report considered and decided on by the Cabinet Member on 24th September did not contain any information relating to the cutting and composting of sites or any details about plans for the continued mowing of areas not to be grazed.

There was no proper consultation in relation to this report with local conservation and wildlife groups who state they had been promised prior sight of the report for discussion at three separate meetings they had attended. The Wildlife Advisory Group, one of the council's key advisory bodies, was not consulted.

The report does not acknowledge or make any reference to the letter sent by the Chair of the E&CSOSC and put on the agenda of the

Agenda Item 24 Appendix 1

Environment CMM 30th July containing a request for an urgent review of the Downland mowing policy on a site by site basis that was supposed to be incorporated in the report.

Finally, I would emphasise that the council relies on the help of the voluntary efforts of the 'Friends of' groups and other local conservation and wildlife advisory bodies to conserve and enhance the chalk grasslands surrounding the city and a Call-in of this decision would enable their voices to properly be heard as they should have been initially. It would also enable the information to be given in relation to proposed mowing schedules that is currently missing.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Gill Mitchell
Labour Led for Environment
Leader of the Labour Group

Agenda Item 24 Appendix 2

Letter from wildlife groups to 22 June ECSOSC

Don't lets bash nature conservation in Brighton

Briefing notes on the cessation of conservation mowing grass collection on City wildlife sites

Brighton and Hove Wildlife Groups Forum Spring 2009

The decision to end the grass collection service on mown conservation grasslands is a big blow to nature conservation in Brighton.

Maureen Connolly , of the Friends of the Green Ridge, describes it as “un-doing all the good work we have done over the past ten years”.

Many open spaces and wildlife sites have benefited tremendously from the improvements in management over the past decade and more, which have seen the introduction of grass collection with the ‘Downland cut’. Sites like Bexhill Road Woodingdean, Ladies Mile, and parts of Whitehawk Hill have seen a greater flourishing of wild flowers and butterflies than ever before.

This service has brought two different kinds of benefit.

Firstly, amenity lawns previously managed merely by regular mowing and devoid of most wildlife interest have seen a great flourishing of their wildlife, to obvious public enjoyment. (We think of sites like The Green Ridge, parts of Shepcote Valley, and Bexhill Road).

Secondly, previously under-managed sites have seen hope of a revival of their core wildlife assemblages. (We think of the crown of Race Hill, where the old chalk grassland interest was only recently widely recognised, and which has the best City site for rare ‘old meadow fungi’).

The facts...as far as we have been told them

Grass collection was stopped last year on these wildlife sites because it had become more expensive and because of the problems of disposal of the cut product.

Thus, the budget for conservation mowing last year (2008) was £15,000, whereas Council officers estimated a cost increase to between £28,000 and £48,000 (depending on the weather) “due to increased fuel and composting costs”.

The Environment Agency have vetoed the Council’s past messy practice of dumping the baled grass at Stanmer, because the cut material rots and the leachate soaks into the chalk aquifer.

This means that the Council must compost the baled material or expensively dispose of it to land fill.

The council is currently seeking a composter, and is looking at 2 businesses: KPS (at Scaynes Hill and two other sites) and one other near Littlehampton.

Additionally, the Council rejected out of hand an application to compost the material from Brighton Community Compost Centre (BCCC), at Upper Lodges, Stanmer Park, who have done some of the Council's composting till recently.

Rodaways of Chailey, the past contractor, gave up last year for personal and business reasons. The Council bought a mower of their own and mowed very late last year 'in house', without collecting.

The cut grass is not readily marketable because it is low in nutritional value due to its mostly late summer harvesting (known in council practice as a 'Downland cut'). It could be cut at hay time (May/June) and perhaps have more saleability, but such a date would affect the flowering and seed setting of the grass and herbs, and their invertebrate assemblages.

The Council's argument

The council argues that the conservation grass collection service will be adequately replaced by the new, extended, Grazing Project.

This Project will work at a much wider, agricultural scale of grazing. At present grazing has been experimental only, covering sites of not more than a few acres for very limited periods of time.

The Council is applying for Higher Level Stewardship funding, which is a new government agro-environmental support scheme. Local councils can now apply for this funding on land they manage, which they have not been able to do before.

The Council argue that the cessation of this service "is not a cut", because the expenditure overall is rising.

A win-win solution to a very solvable problem

1. "Horses for courses": re-jigging existing budgets to maximize benefits

At the same time as this service cut has taken place the Council has voted a very welcome £100,000 increase in the budget for mowing of the City's amenity grasslands – verges, parks, greens and so on - which will be mown to a new regime, as required to keep them 'in good order', rather than on a three weekly cut, as has been the case heretofor.

Yet on some sites user groups have been arguing for years for a *less* intense mowing regime to increase wildlife interest. There will be many urban parks and green spaces that do not need *comprehensive* additional mowing and some will need *less* mowing in parts.

There is lots of room here for the careful working out of the new mowing regime, so that *both* the concerns of neatness and good order and the concerns for biodiversity and traditional Downland sites are addressed.

Thus, the Friends of Withdean Park have been arguing for years for *less* mowing of part of the Park. The Brighton Urban Wildlife Group, has, too, over decades, been arguing for a more flexible approach to Park and amenity mowing to increase the wildlife interest and visual variety of our grassed areas.

2. Saving money: composting

The cost of grass collection and composting does not have to rise as has been predicted. Brighton Community Compost Centre (BCCC) could undertake the composting service much

cheaper than a distance composter can do. They are a not-for-profit business with an existing track record of working for the Council and have the skills, experience and willingness to undertake the work.

The Council's rejection of them was contrary to government guidelines encouraging the use of social enterprises. It showed an over-caution which is likely to cost the Council dearly in service delivery or in cash.

If the Council rejects the use of this on-hand local solution they can still undertake the composting in-house. They have the land and they can easily commission the expertise if they feel they do not have it already.

3. Saving money: mowing and collecting

Other local contractors are available to tender for the conservation mowing and collecting service at economic rates. One local farmer described the argument that local farmer-contractors were not interested as "nonsense" and expressed his own eagerness to tender.

The argument that farmers' use of cheap red farm diesel was no longer possible is also not correct. There is no reason why contractors cannot use red farm diesel for this service.

It may be possible, in any case, to use the collected cuttings as an agricultural field dressing.

Myths

The Council has argued that the **proposed Grazing Project** will replace grass mowing and collection. However, the Grazing Project - to make any sense - will have to concentrate on those old Down pasture sites that are too steep to mow (such as Whitehawk Hill slope and Moulsecomb Wild Park slopes). It would make no sense to focus on flat, tractor-accessible areas which can – in the immediate term – be mown, when these steeper areas have been without conservation management sometimes for 80 years and more !

The two management tools complement each other. They do not duplicate each other.

Furthermore, the Grazing Project will have to be introduced very carefully, on a site by site basis, as a result of consultation and negotiation with local communities, and with the mobilization and training of whole tranches of new volunteers. There will also be infrastructure to construct – new fencing, water supplies, and so on, and new scrub control to complete (so as to reduce risk of sheep entanglement and enable easy shepherding of the flock). The Grazing Project will also take time to gather a new flock(s) and to expand from its current very tentative and small scale experiments.

Conservation grazing is not profitable, overall, despite producing valuable premium meat products. If the council put resources into grazing the nutritionally better, more commercially viable grasslands (such as 39 Acres) they will detract from the task of grazing long-neglected high biodiversity sites. (This is exactly what happens on many private farms under the recent ESA and Countryside Stewardship agro-environmental schemes).

The council has set aside **no** budget of its own for the Grazing Project. It is entirely reliant on the success of its forthcoming bid for Higher Level Stewardship funding. There is no guarantee that this bid will succeed.

The Council has thus cut one service without any guarantee that any part of it can be replaced by any new source of funds. Yet this has not prevented them from arguing that the new Grazing Project will do just that.

There is absolutely no way that the Grazing Project can fully substitute for the mowing service on urban and urban fringe Downland. This is a complete smokescreen.

The management of chalk grassland valued for wildlife

Conservation grass mowing and collecting of the cut material is one of the core management techniques for maintaining and enhancing the biodiversity of chalk grassland, which is the City's primary wildlife resource and the one for which they have the clearest international responsibility (for it is both globally a very rare ecosystem, and a very threatened one).

Grazing and scrub control are the other main techniques.

Without the use of all these techniques the more delicate herbs and grasses are out-competed by the more vigorous species, and diversity steeply declines. Swards in which 30-50 herbaceous species and many more lower plants and old meadow fungi grow are replaced by one or two tall grasses, at the base of which a nutrient-rich 'thatch' of dead material accumulates.

Grazing is by far the best technique in most cases. Sheep grazing has been the traditional management of most species-rich chalk grassland from medieval times onwards, with cattle grazing on a small fraction of the Down pastures.

Mowing-and-collecting will always be an essential tool on many urban and urban fringe sites, on very fragmented and small sites, and on parts of other sites subject to heavy public usage. It does not require fencing or water supply, is less labour-intensive, and does not raise animal welfare issues or conflict with user groups.

Each kind of grazing, together with mowing, encourages a different sward type. Thus, sheep grazing encourages a closed, flower-rich sward, which is also good for many emblematic old Down pasture butterflies, like the Blues. It is also good for most lower plants, like mosses, and lichen. More intensive grazing is essential for many species that depend on an open sward with some bare ground, like some rare moths. Cattle grazing is best for some threatened molluscs, like Heath Snail and Carthusian Snail. **Mowing creates a range of different micro-habitats (because it passes an even cut over uneven ground) which can be good for some invertebrates. It can also be modulated more readily (for instance, by close-mowing walkways and leaving adjacent areas for an annual or twice-annual cut).**

Grassland which is cut and the cuttings **NOT** collected loses its biodiversity value over time (as on the Benfield Hill LNR west slope when it was managed in the past by the West Hove Golf Club).

Grassland which is **NEITHER** cut **OR** collected loses value much quicker (as on the Woodvale 'meadow' site).

LIST OF AFFECTED SITES

1. **Waterhall 19 Acres (south valley, south side plateau grassland, alongside Devil's Dyke Road)**

Urban fringe. Heavy public usage. Part of the 2 mile long walking route to the Devil's Dyke. (See 2 below). Fully accessible because on level ground. Dramatic viewpoint. Part of a very important wildlife site: - the Waterhall complex of old Down pasture, re-established chalk grassland, and old and new scrub thickets. Part of a deeply neglected area that has a 70 year deficit of conservation management.

2. **Devil's Dyke Road roadside strip (between Saddlescombe Road turnoff and Devil's Dyke Farm)**

Part of the 2 mile long walking route to the Devil's Dyke. (See 1 above). Heavy public usage. Important introductory site for many walkers to Downland wildlife. Fully accessible because on level ground. Dramatic viewpoints. Part of two very important wildlife sites with mixed grassland, bare ground and scrub (Waterhall and the Dyke Golf Course). Has some Waxcap old meadow fungi species.

3. **Waterhall north valley (north of Golf Clubhouse)**

Urban fringe. Heavy public usage. Fully accessible because on level ground. Moderate views. Important piece of chalk grassland restoration in a very neglected complex which has been deteriorating for 70 years.

4. **Beacon Hill LNR, Rottingdean.**

They make their own arrangements because they have generated their own funds.

5. **Bevendean Down LNR**

Urban fringe. Heavy public usage. Relatively accessible, though a minority of the mown ground is on steeper contours. On high ground with good views of Bevendean Valleysides. Part of a very important Local Nature Reserve complex of old Down pasture, re-established chalk grassland, old and new scrub thickets. Part of an area that has a 30 year deficit of conservation management.

6. **Bexhill Road Open Space, Woodingdean**

Urban fringe. Heavy public usage. Fully accessible because on level ground. Dramatic viewpoint. Very exciting site with steep increase in attractive butterflies and grasshoppers and Downland herbs, since the excellent new wildlife-friendly management came in.

7. **Braeside Avenue Open Space (alongside the A27 Bypass, and adjacent to Ladies Mile Open Space, Patcham).**

Urban fringe. Heavy public usage. Relatively accessible, though the mown ground is on a slope. A greatly welcome extension of the chalk grassland fragments islanded at Ladies Mile Open Space.

8. **The Chattri**

Heavy public usage. Very important cultural monument. Relatively accessible because on level ground. Dramatic viewpoint. It's grounds should be tended with the same reverence as the Pavilion's grounds. Its excellent plantings have been of heathy plants which reflect the

site's past history as 'chalk heath'. Such plants, of course, are intolerant of nutrient enrichment, which uncollected cuttings cause.

9. Cliff edge grasslands: western clifftop and eastern clifftop (from Ovingdean to East Saltdean), Marine Drive orchid site, and Roedean carpark.

Over 3 miles of nationally important cliff edge, plus a major wild orchid site (with Autumn Ladies Tresses). SSSI and adjacent to SSSI. (These are nationally important statutorily protected sites). Urban & urban fringe. Heavy public usage. Fully accessible and often on level ground. One of the best and most iconic Brighton sites. A mixture of relict maritime grassland, old chalk grassland and restored chalk grassland.

10. Foredown allotments, Portslade.

Urban fringe. A flagship accessible allotment site for the disabled (who are so often excluded from wildlife sites by access problems).

11. The Green Ridge, Patcham

Urban fringe. Heavy public usage. Fully accessible because on level ground. Dramatic viewpoint. Gateway site to the open Downs. Lovingly tended by one of the oldest community 'Friends' groups. Has been consistently managed to a high standard for many years - and seen a major rise in its biodiversity.

12. Happy Valley, Woodingdean

Urban fringe. Heavy public usage. Fully accessible because on level ground. Adjacent to an old, farm-grazed chalk grassland site to which its present wildlife conservation management is re-connecting it.

13. Moulsecoomb Wild Park

Urban fringe. Very heavy public usage. Heavily compromised as a site for children's free play by the extensive scrub cover and the busy A270, which both create child safety problems. A nationally famous lepidopterists (moths and butterflies) site a century ago, now reduced to the edge of extinction, but remarkably clinging on to its core old Down pasture interest against all the odds. Been neglected by the Council for the whole 80 years of its existence. Needs an expansion of BOTH mowing and grazing management, not a contraction.

14. Hollingbury Hillfort

Urban fringe. Heavy public usage. Fully accessible because on level ground. Highly dramatic viewpoint. A first class wildlife site, continuous with the Wild Park old Down pastures. Very important acid grassland habitat with an excellent old meadow fungi (Waxcap) assemblage, with species more typical of the Wealden heaths. Wonderful spring orchid display (Early Purple Orchids). Important Gorse thickets. Old and very under-managed chalk grassland on the earthworks.

15. Hollingbury LNR - 39 Acres.

Urban fringe. Heavy public usage. Fully accessible because on level ground. Dramatic viewpoint. Part of a very important wildlife site: - the Hollingbury Castle-Moulsecoomb Wild Park complex of old Down pasture, re-established chalk grassland, and old and new scrub thickets. Part of a deeply neglected area that has an 80 year deficit of conservation management.

16. Hollingbury Park, Ditchling Road.

Urban fringe. Heavy public usage. Fully accessible because on level ground. Dramatic viewpoint. Adjacent to a major orchid site (Early Spider Orchids) to which the present Downland management will - in time - reconnect it. This is a model initiative to render an important and very rare Downland Orchid population more sustainable.

17. Chelwood Flats Open Space, (north of Stanmer Heights Estate, Hollingbury)

Urban fringe. Heavy public usage. Relatively accessible, because on gently sloping ground. Fine long views. An area that has been increasing in wildlife importance, with good displays of orchids.

18. Ladies Mile Open Space, Patcham

Urban fringe. Heavy public usage. Almost all fully accessible, because on level ground. Fine viewpoint. This is one of the top old Down pasture sites on the urban fringe: - remarkable for preserving a large extent of intact *plateau* chalk grassland. (Plateau chalk grassland is nearing extinction through loss to ploughing and chemical sprays). Large swarms of Yellow Rattle, Dropwort, and Harebell. These species are particularly vulnerable to loss from mulching by grass cuttings. Good archaeology (Iron Age field lynchets and Bronze Age burial mound).

19. Varncombe Barn Model Aircraft Site, Saddlescombe Road.

Regular public usage. Fully accessible because on level ground. A small site near to other relict old Down pasture sites, which its current wildlife-friendly management helps to move towards sustainability.

20. Sheepcote Valley

A very major chalk grassland restoration site which is increasingly at risk even with current levels of management. Urban fringe. Heavy public usage. Fully accessible because on level ground. Dramatic viewpoint. Its interest almost entirely lies in its *early successional stage* wildlife – ‘arable weeds,’ which need disturbed ground (like Venus’s Looking Glass), open chalk grassland (which the Bee Orchids and the famous swarms of Creeping Bellflower need), and ground nesting birds (Skylarks and Meadow Pipits).

21. Stammer Park LNR - Great Wood archaeological sites.

Important woodland glades, which are already greatly more attractive with their better Downland management. Urban fringe. Heavy public usage. Fully accessible because on level ground. Provide important variation in relatively structurally similar woodland.

22. Stanmer Park LNR - Great Wood and Marquee Brow.

Urban fringe. Heavy public usage. Fully accessible because mostly on a gentle slope. An important area of chalk grassland restoration. Important, too, for providing structural variation to the Great Wood vegetation, and important nectar sources. Has many important species on site and close by, such as Adder’s Tongue Fern and Orchids.

23. Whitehawk Hill LNR – Wilson Avenue old allotments: Compartment 3 of the Local Nature Reserve Management Plan.

Urban fringe. Heavy public usage, particularly by children. Would be fully accessible if present management improved because on level ground. Good viewpoint. Very under-managed even with present arrangements. Only British site for the Whitehawk Soldier Beetle. Needs *more*, not less management.

24. Whitehawk Hill LNR - Tenantry Down: Compartment 2 of the Local Nature Reserve Management Plan.

Urban fringe. Heavy public usage. Fully accessible because mostly on level ground or gentle contours. Arguably the best and most dramatic viewpoint on the entire urban fringe. At least 10 prehistoric camps visible from it. The best old meadow Waxcap fungi site on the urban fringe, with at 14 species recorded, including Pink Gills and Fairy Clubs. A rare piece of (almost extinct) plateau Down pasture. Present management is inadequate. Need increasing to at least two cuts and collection annually.

25. Whitehawk Hill LNR – Neolithic causewayed camp: Compartment 7 of the Local Nature Reserve Management Plan.

Urban fringe. Heavy public usage. Important view both for amenity and archaeological landscape interpretation. Fully accessible, because mostly on level ground or gentle contours. Definitely the most important archaeological monument Brighton has. One of the ten best preserved causewayed camps in Britain. Camp ramparts have a good old down pasture flora, and enclosure area is greatly improving with current cut-and-collect regime. The area south of Manor Hill has good open and semi-open ground with good displays of characteristic short-lived herbs.

26. Whitehawk Hill LNR - Hilltop overlooking Craven Vale: Compartment 9 of the Local Nature Reserve Management Plan.

Urban fringe. Heavy public usage. Important view both for amenity and archaeological landscape interpretation. Fully accessible because mostly on level ground or gentle contours. Important mixed areas of grassland and scrub with good invertebrates and colourful wild flowers. Under-managed at present. This currently makes it at risk of occupation by homesteaders.

27. Withdean Woods

A small area which provides important structural variation in this largely woodland site.

Agenda Item 24 Appendix 3

Downland Mowing; Information from the Countryside Manager to 22 June ECSOSC

11 June 2009

1. Summary

1.1 The change from mowing to conservation grazing the council downland sites has been underway for some time, but has been hastened by a substantial increase in the cost of cutting, baling and composting since 2007. If the council continued cutting, baling and composting there would have to be a substantial reduction in the area of downland managed to stay within the same budget. Grazing results in an improvement to the quality of chalk grassland management and will also cover a considerably greater area than could ever be achieved by mowing. A Grazing Plan to will go before Environment CMM in due course.

2. Background

2.1 The Downs around Brighton and Hove were grazed by sheep for many hundreds, probably thousands of years. This traditional management technique was instrumental in creating and maintaining the species-rich turf. Chalk grassland supports up to forty different species of plant in one square meter and many of these are chalk specialists, which require a 'high stress' environment (very low soil fertility and regular browsing) to survive.

2.2 Sheep grazing began to decline towards the end of the 19th Century and this decline accelerated from the Second World War. As grazing reduced, sward height and soil fertility on many sites increased, which favoured an 'invasion' by scrub and coarse grasses at the expense of the classic downland species. During the 1950s, the decline was accelerated by a reduction in rabbit grazing (due to myxomatosis) and by artificially fertilising many of the old pastures to increase their yield. Many of the old downland pastures were also destroyed by ploughing.

2.3 Today chalk grassland is internationally rare. It is recognised in the EC Habitats Directive as a habitat of 'Community Interest' and is included in the UK List of Habitats that are of principal importance for the purpose of conserving English biodiversity. These are the habitats local authorities are expected to prioritise as part of their duty to further biodiversity, set out in Section 40 of the Natural Environment and and Rural Communities Act 2006.

3. Chalk grassland management in Brighton & Hove

3.1 About twenty years ago, Brighton Borough Council introduced grass cutting and baling on some chalk grassland sites under its control. This 'emergency management' was a reaction to the serious decline in the quality of the remaining chalk grassland, most of which had received little or no grazing for many years. However cutting is an inferior management technique to grazing for a number of reasons, including:

- It is catastrophic method which can cause severe disruption to grassland invertebrates and ground nesting birds;
- It cannot be used on the steeper slopes (where much of the remaining chalk grassland is found);
- It is uniform in its application and therefore prevents the establishment of swards of varying height, which are favoured by some chalk grassland species and
- It damages chalk grassland features such as ant hills and some archaeology.

3.2 Reintroducing sheep grazing on the council's chalk grassland sites was therefore always desirable and ten years ago, Brighton & Hove Council reintroduced sheep to a few key sites, working with a local grazier and in close liaison with the local community.

3.3 Further incentives have developed for accelerating the move towards sheep grazing. It is now possible (under the DEFRA Stewardship Scheme) to attract external funding for the reintroduction of grazing but this is not available for cutting and baling. The council has also successfully established a grazing partnership with the Sussex Wildlife Trust and the South Downs Joint Committee (which both fully support the grazing option). Extensive pre-publicity is needed to ensure that people understand the reasons for the reintroduction, which takes time.

3.4 No problems have been encountered with the reintroduction of grazing to date and the educational and community benefits of reintroducing grazing on the urban fringe are just beginning to be recognised. The Ranger service has so far trained over 50 volunteer 'lookers' (to help check on the sheep) and has a further 38 people on a waiting list for the next training course. The city's grazing project has also received national and international press coverage and it clear we are amongst the lead local authorities in this important area of work.

3.5 From last year the costs of cutting and baling have multiplied. The main reason for the increase is that grass bales are now defined by the Environment Agency as 'waste' and therefore the council has to pay to have them removed. There has also been an increase in fuel costs because DEFRA has decided that moving bales is not an agricultural operation and therefore ordinary diesel has to be used rather than the cheaper, red (agricultural) diesel.

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

**EXTRACT FROM MINUTES ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY OVERVIEW &
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 22 JUNE 2009**

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Morgan (Chairman); Davis, Drake, Rufus, Wells, Older and Kitcat

PART ONE

1. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

1a Declarations of Substitutes

Councillor Averil Older was acting as substitute for Councillor Tony Janio; Councillor Jason Kitcat was acting as substitute for Councillor Ian Davey. Councillor Smart gave his apologies.

**4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS/LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS/NOTICES OF MOTION
REFERRED FROM COUNCIL**

4.1 The Chairman stated that this was the first letter that the Committee had received and said he had asked officers to prepare a brief response in time for this meeting. Councillor Morgan invited the wildlife group representatives to speak about the letter.

4.2 Mr Bangs said in his opinion the decision to end the grass collection service on mown conservation grasslands was a stealth cut related to increasing costs, which had been expected to be a one-off only. The increase in budget for mowing amenity grasslands was welcomed but the reduction in downland conservation management had adverse implications for core wildlife sites; however 'the circle could be squared.' National policy encouraging social enterprises had not been taken into account in tendering for composting services and the City's application for Biosphere reserve status would be badly affected, he said.

4.3 Ms Taylor of the Friends of Hollingbury and Burstead Woods referred to the internationally rare chalk grassland supporting a wonderful biodiversity. She said for 20 years the Council had worked with the voluntary local conservation groups to conserve and enhance this but grazing was not suitable for every situation. Ms Taylor highlighted some problems of conflicting interests for example separating sheep and dogs, costs of fencing, shepherding, moving sheep, removal of droppings and questioned whether costings for grazing had been compared with other options.

4.4 Ms Taylor said the issue needed to be addressed urgently as biodiversity would reduce as a thatch of uncollected mowings built up. Ms Taylor outlined a composting service used on the Isle of Wight and handed details to the scrutiny support officer.

4.5 Councillor Rufus commented that continuity of care was important and individual management plans were needed for each site. He remarked that the City did not have a biodiversity action plan.

4.6 The Countryside Manager welcomed the opportunity to thank volunteers for their work and said that issues raised by the increase in costs of cutting collecting and composting sites, together with opportunities for increasing grazing of many sites along with continued mowing of others would be addressed in due course by the proposed draft grazing plan to be considered by the Cabinet Member.

4.7 **RESOLVED** That the Chairman write to Environment CMM on behalf of the Committee with a request urgently to review the downland mowing policy on a site by site basis.

ITEMS TO TAKE FORWARD TO CABINET MEMBER, CABINET OR COUNCIL

Item 4 – Downland Mowing, would be taken forward to Environment Cabinet Member Meeting.
Item 6 would be taken forward for inclusion as the Committee's response to the Waste Management Strategy and Consultation Plan.

**Agenda Item 24
Appendix 5**

Brighton & Hove City Council

Councillor Warren Morgan

Brighton & Hove City Council
King's House
Grand Avenue
Hove BN3 2LS

To
Cabinet Member for Environment
Councillor G Theobald

Date: 13 July 2009
Our Ref: WM/MvB
Your Ref:

Dear Councillor Theobald

I write as Chairman of Environment and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

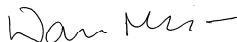
ECSOSC on 22 June received a letter from Wildlife Groups and an Officer briefing regarding downland mowing, enclosed. Following discussion the committee resolved to write to you as Environment Cabinet Member.

The Committee agreed to ask Councillor Sven Rufus as specialist ecologist, to add further comments which are included with this letter.

Attached also is the extract from the draft minutes with the resolution to request an urgent review of the mowing policy on a site by site basis.

I would like to speak at Cabinet Member meeting about this request.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Warren Morgan
Chairman (ECSOSC)

Additional Comments from Councillor Sven Rufus to 30 July Environment CMM

My comments at the last ECSOSC emphasised the importance of a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) which currently BHCC has not got one of its own. We are partners in the Sussex BAP process, but as a distinct urban area and Unitary Authority we should have our own, with our own objectives and targets specific to our own conditions embedded within it.

The BAP would underpin all other nature conservation and management work, and hopefully lead seamlessly on to developing a coherent, comprehensive and costed set of management plans for all sites of conservation interest in the City. The work within them would need adequate resourcing to ensure delivery. The importance of proper management plans cannot be overstated as it ensures that continuity of management, and avoids ad hoc decisions being made for financial or other transitory reasons that could result in loss of biodiversity. Continuity of management is vital – even one year of different (or absent) management practice could result in a species being unable to breed, and possibly become extinct from a site.

The move to grazing on sites as discussed in the last ECSOSC can be a very beneficial thing, although it presents all sorts of practical (animal welfare, access to water for livestock etc) and cost implications. However, it may not be appropriate on all sites, or be the most cost effective at all times.

It is true that grass cutting has many drawbacks, as stated in the officer report, and at times grazing is clearly preferable for practical (eg steep slopes) or conservation reasons.

Given assurances that cutting continues on the downland sites, the lack of collection and composting remains of some concern and measures to address this need as part of effective downland management should be finalized as a matter of some urgency.

Where management has been undertaken on a site over many years – even where this is sub-optimal – it is important (in relation to this matter) to continue with previous practice until such a time as improved management is agreed and available. If grazing is to be introduced, the previous management (cutting) should be continued until the year in which the sheep are to be introduced to the site.

The officer's **briefing** did not address the impacts of the manner in which management changes are being implemented. The key issue **for the grazing plan** is not whether grazing or cutting is best for management, but ensuring that the shift between management methods, when such occurs, is undertaken in a considered and deliberate way.

Councillor Sven Rufus

July 2009

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

EXTRACT FROM MINUTES ENVIRONMENT CABINET MEMBER MEETING 30 JULY 2009

Present: Councillor G Theobald (Cabinet Member)

Also in attendance: Councillors McCaffery (Opposition Spokesperson, Labour) and Davey (Opposition Spokesperson, Green)

Other Members present: Councillors Barnett, Bennett, Janio, Kennedy, Kitcat, Lepper, Pidgeon, Randall and Rufus

PART ONE

18 LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

18(a) Letter – downland mowing policy

- 18.1 A letter was received from Councillor Morgan, on behalf of the Environment & Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Committee, calling for review of the downland mowing policy on a site by site basis (for copy see minute book).
- 18.2 Councillor Rufus, member of the Environment & Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Committee, and specialist ecologist spoke on behalf of the committee.
- 18.3 The Cabinet Member explained he had met with some of the members of 'Friends of groups and appreciated the support they gave the council in managing the green spaces for wildlife; he would be meeting with them again in coming months.
- 18.4 The Cabinet Member offered Councillors Rufus and Morgan a meeting with the Assistant Director for City Services to discuss the issue further.
- 18.5 **RESOLVED** – That the letter be noted.

Agenda Item 24 Appendix 7

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Cityparks Downland Management		
Date of Meeting:	24 September 2009 Environment Cabinet Member Meeting 6 October 2009 ECSOSC		
Report of:	Director of Environment		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Hugo Blomfield	Tel: 29 2401
	E-mail:	hugo.blomfield@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Key Decision:	No		
Wards Affected:	East Brighton; Hangleton & Knoll; Hollingdean & Stanmer; Moulsecoomb & Bevendean, North Portslade; Patcham; Rottingdean Coastal; Withdean and Woodingdean		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 This report provides information about the proposed plan to increase the grazed area of council land managed by Cityparks.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Environment approves the grazing plans for each site subject to full consultation with ward councillors and residents.
- 2.2 That the Cabinet Member for Environment approves the implementation of the grazing plans for key chalk downland sites and where feasible, subject to the above consultation being completed successfully.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION / CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The downs around the city were grazed by sheep for many hundreds, probably thousands, of years. This traditional management technique was instrumental in creating and maintaining the species-rich turf. Chalk grassland supports up to 40 species of plant in one square metre and many of these are chalk specialists, which require a 'high stress' environment (very low soil fertility and regular browsing) to survive.
- 3.2 Today chalk grassland is internationally rare and local authorities are expected to prioritise its management as part of their duty to further biodiversity, set out in Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.
- 3.3 About 20 years ago Brighton Borough Council introduced grass cutting and baling on some chalk grassland sites under its control. This 'emergency

management' was a reaction to the serious decline in the quality of the remaining chalk grassland, most of which had received little or no grazing for many years. However cutting is an inferior management technique to grazing.

- 3.4 Reintroducing sheep grazing on the council's chalk grassland sites was therefore always desirable and 10 years ago Brighton & Hove Council reintroduced sheep to a few key sites, working with a local grazier and in close liaison with the local community. Publicity is needed to generate support and ensure people understand the reasons for change.
- 3.5 Cityparks Rangers have trained over 65 volunteer 'lookers' (to help check on the sheep) and has a further 30 people on a waiting list for the next training course. The project has also received national and international press coverage and it is clear we are amongst the lead local authorities in this important area of work. No serious issues of concern have been encountered with the reintroduction of grazing to date and the educational and community benefits of reintroducing grazing on the urban fringe are now being recognised.

Recommendations

- 3.6 The following proposals are in addition to, or to improve, sites where grazing and/or conservation mowing currently takes place. Conservation mowing will continue until grazing is introduced.
- 3.7 Winter 2009/2010:

Site	Grazing plan (Appendix 1 Site maps)
Beacon Hill Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	Increase the limited area currently grazed with sheep to include most of the chalk grassland. Permanent perimeter fencing with accessible gates. Grazing by rotation around several compartments with temporary internal fencing.
Bevendean Down LNR	Small extension to north of existing grazed area.
Hollingbury Wild Park LNR	Triple the small area of chalk grassland first grazed with sheep last winter. Permanent perimeter fencing with accessible gates and clear a large area of scrub for grazing.
Sheepcote Valley	Triple the area grazed with sheep in 2008/2009 to include most of the chalk grassland slopes (also now in the National Park) with temporary fencing.
Waterhall	Increase sheep grazing to include all the meadow area with permanent fencing and accessible gates.
Whitehawk Hill LNR	Introduce sheep grazing to a small area for the first time with temporary fencing.

- 3.8 Winter 2010/2011:

Site	Grazing plan
Bevendean Down Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	Negotiate with existing farm tenant to increase the area currently grazed with sheep.

Hollingbury Wild Park LNR	Assess the feasibility of extensively grazing both sides of Ditchling Road from Hollingbury golf course to the A27, including “39 acres” and land along west side of Ditchling Road currently mown by Cityparks. To include open access on foot across the entire area with accessible gates located where appropriate and dog owners encouraged to keep dogs under close control. Clear a further area of scrub for grazing and permanent fencing with accessible gates.
Ladies Mile LNR	Introduce sheep grazing to a small area for the first time with temporary fencing.
Sheepcote Valley	Increase the area grazed by sheep to include most of the grassland with permanent fencing.
Whitehawk Hill LNR	Double or triple the area first grazed with sheep in 2009/2010 depending on the success of 2009/2010.

3.9 Winter 2011/2012

Site	Grazing plan
Green Ridge	Introduce sheep grazing to a small area for the first time with temporary fencing.
Hollingbury Wild Park LNR	Clear a further area of scrub for grazing and permanent fencing with accessible gates.
Ladies Mile LNR	Double or triple the area first grazed with sheep in 2010/2011 depending on the success of 2010/2011.
Stanmer Park LNR	Introduce sheep grazing to “Marquee Brow” (small area of chalk downland north east of main entrance at Lower Lodges) for the first time with temporary fencing.
Whitehawk Hill LNR	Assess the feasibility of extensively grazing both sides of Manor Hill. To include open access with accessible gates located where appropriate and dog owners encouraged to keep dogs under close control.

- 3.10 Sheep grazing will continue at Benfield Hill LNR (currently managed by the South Downs Joint Committee), the sheep holding field at Stanmer and Dorothy Stringer School where sheep grazed their chalk grassland re-creation site for the first time last winter.
- 3.11 Conservation mowing will continue at the following sites until grazing can be introduced where possible: 19 acres (between Devil’s Dyke Road and Waterhall golf course), Bexhill Road open space, Braeside Avenue open space, Chattri (small area adjacent to Chattri grounds), Devil’s Dyke Road strip, Happy Valley, Hollingbury hill fort, Hollingbury Park reservoir surrounds, and Tenantry Down.
- 3.12 The following sites are not considered practical to graze and will continue to be mown: Clifftop (narrow strip from Marina to Saltdean producing little grass), Roedean Golf (small area mown for Ladies Tresses), Roedean Way (small area adjacent to car park) and Withdean woods.
- 3.13 The extensive grazing plans for Hollingbury Wild Park (2010/2011) and Whitehawk Hill (2011/2012) will require further feasibility studies. Initial meetings

have been held with officers in Property Services and Sustainable Transport to agree the principle of extensive grazing.

- 3.14 Consultation and publicity for each grazing site will include ward councillors, community conservation groups, site users, local residents, recruitment of “lookerers” to assist with checking sheep, and up to ten access point information boards located at strategic locations and particularly focusing on where the above sites are gateways to the new South Downs National Park.
- 3.15 Implementation of these proposals would ensure sustainable management is reinstated onto the most important chalk grassland sites under council control. The declaration of the new National Park and the proposed creation of a green network as part of the Local Development Framework could create additional opportunities to extend grazing management to other areas. This wider grazing potential will be assessed at a later date.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Property Services and Sustainable Transport teams have been consulted.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 Funding for grazing has been identified from existing budgets.
- 5.2 With their support and advice an application has been submitted to Natural England for Higher Level Scheme (HLS) agricultural funding for ten years from 2010 to fund site improvements and facilitate grazing, such as scrub clearance, fences and accessible gates. Natural England has given the application full support and is currently funding full environment plans to accompany the application.

Finance Officer consulted: Derek Mansfield Date: 19/08/09

Legal Implications:

- 5.3 None identified at this stage.

Lawyer consulted: Alison Gatherer Date: 19/08/09

Equalities Implications:

- 5.4 Consultation is underway with existing conservation community groups, as well as developing new relationships with “lookerers”, particularly local dog walkers. All fences will have accessible gates, not stiles. Natural England “access to nature” project funding has recently been secured, in partnership with Sussex Wildlife Trust, to improve access to green spaces in the city by under represented groups and from areas of deprivation.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.5 Appropriate grazing is the most sustainable method of managing most areas of chalk grassland, as well as providing open access for people to enjoy green spaces. This is an important element of the council commitment to sustainability, reducing our carbon footprint, increasing biodiversity and moving towards Urban Biosphere status.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.6 Positive management in itself will deter anti social behaviour such as vehicle incursions. The recruitment of “lookers” will develop a community of people who understand and care for the area. Scrambler and quad bikes are particular problems on “39 acres” which experience demonstrates will be deterred by grazing.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.7 There is an opportunity for further linking local food production (ie. meat) with local markets (eg. restaurants, butchers, schools).

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.8 The project has already received national and international press coverage and it is understood the council is amongst the lead local authorities in approaching this area of work.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 Mowing is inferior to grazing:

- it can cause severe disruption to grassland invertebrates and ground nesting birds;
- it cannot be used on the steeper slopes (where much of the remaining chalk grassland is found);
- it is uniform in its application and therefore prevents the establishment of swards of varying height, which are favoured by some chalk grassland species; and
- it damages chalk grassland features such as ant hills and some archaeology.

The cost comparisons of continuing to mow our chalk grassland sites vary due to soil type and from year to year due to the weather. In total in 2007 it cost £16,000 to cut, clear and compost. In 2008 it is estimated this would have increased to between £28,000 and £48,000 - depending on the weather - due to increased fuel and composting costs (as a result sites were cut but not cleared or composted).

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 To implement a more sustainable method of managing Cityparks chalk grassland sites.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices

1. Individual site grazing plans for 2009/2010, Appendix 1.

Documents In Members' Rooms

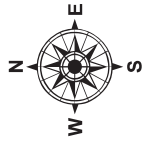
None

Background Documents

1. Downland Initiative Feasibility Study.



2009/2010 Grazing Plan



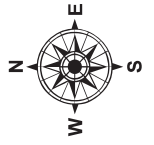
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2009/2010 Grazing Plan



Scale: 1:5,000



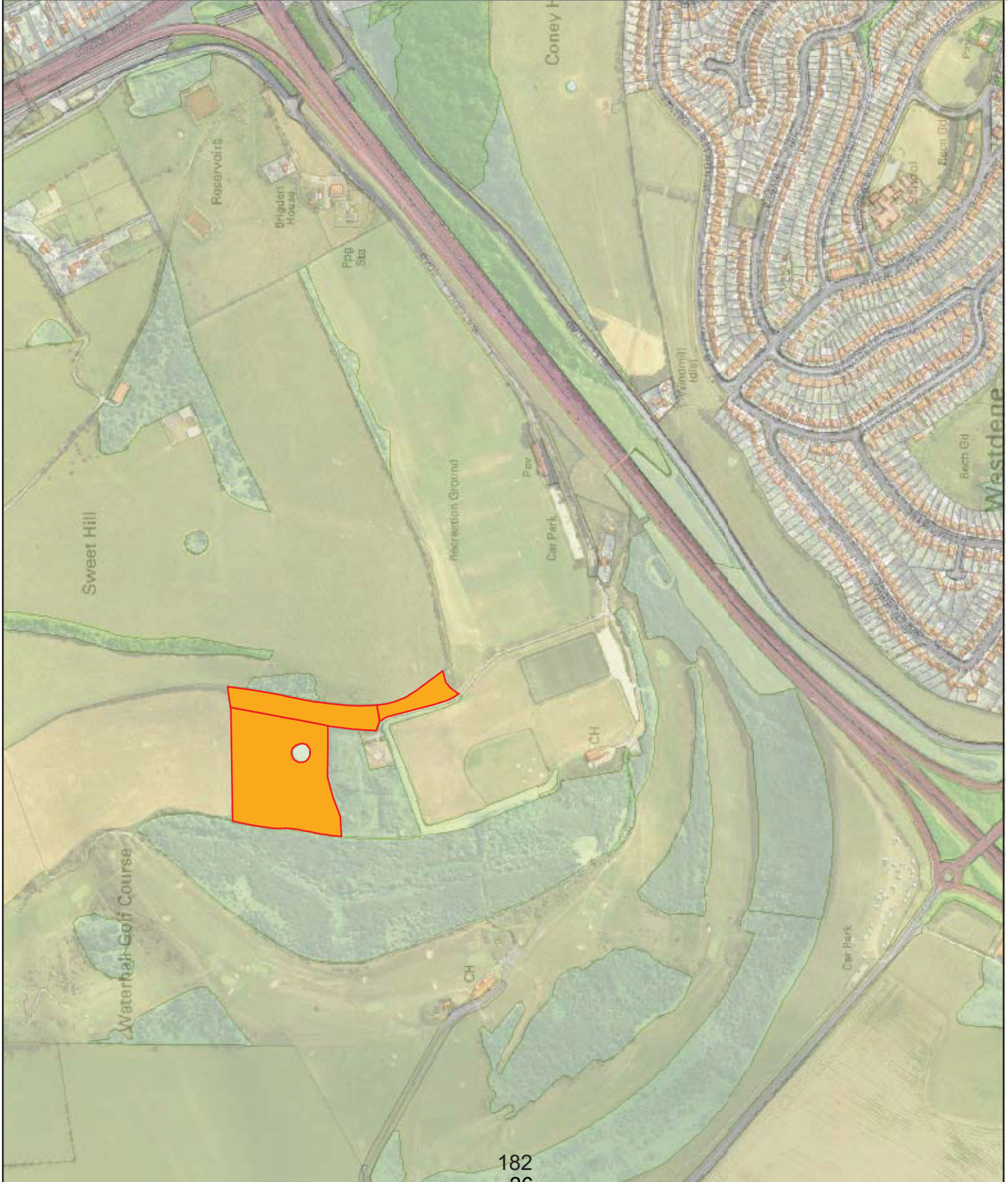
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2009/10 Grazing Plan

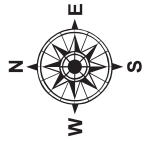
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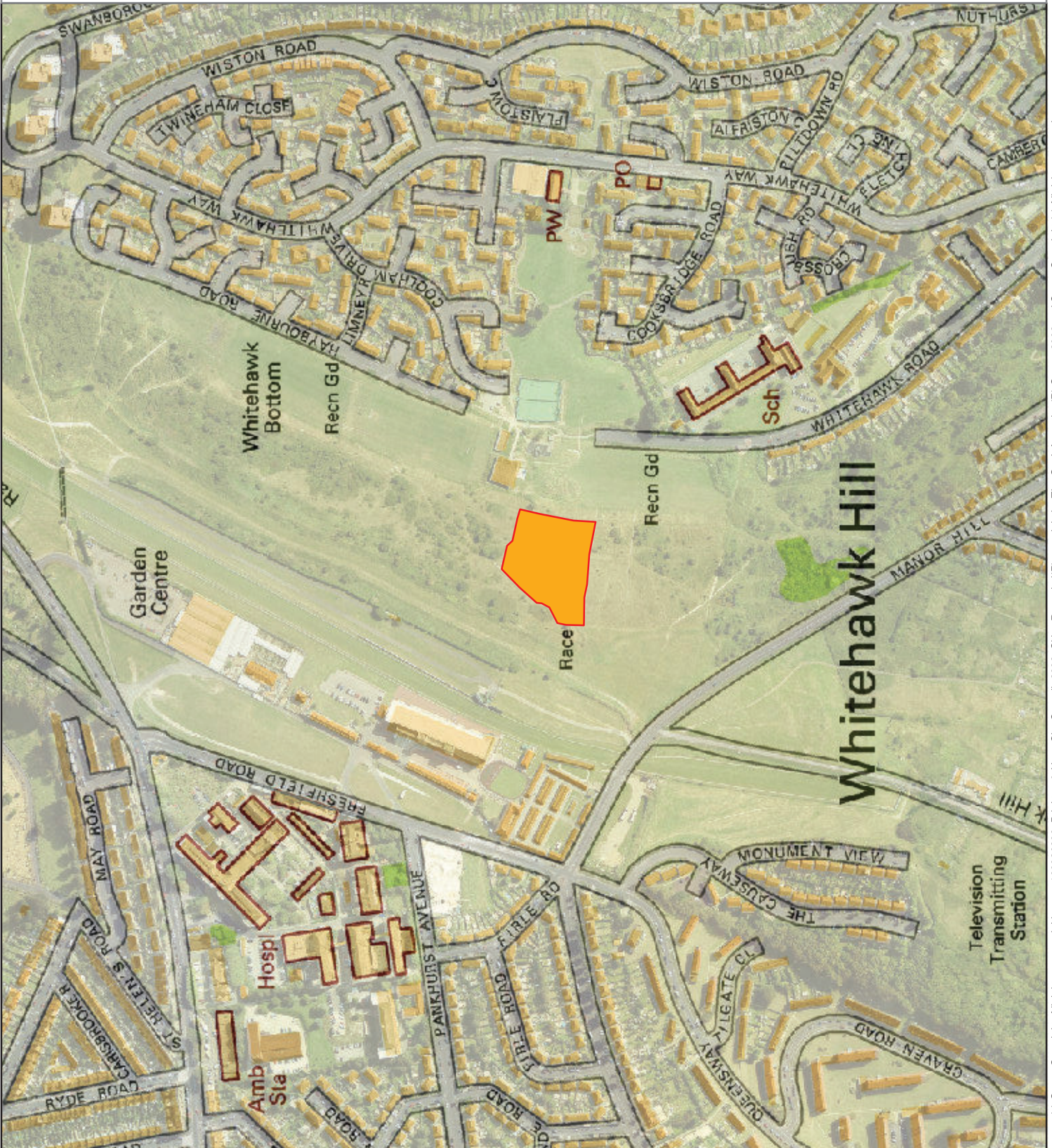




2009/2010 Grazing Plan



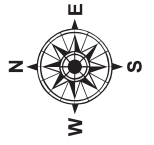
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2009/2010 Grazing Plan



Scale: 1:7,500



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**EXTRACT FROM THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE ENVIRONMENT CABINET
MEMBER MEETING HELD ON THE 24 SEPTEMBER 2009**

ENVIRONMENT CABINET MEMBER MEETING

4.00PM 24 SEPTEMBER 2009

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor G Theobald (Cabinet Member)

Also in attendance: Councillor Mitchell (Leader of the Labour Group) and Councillor Rufus (Opposition Spokesperson, Green Group)

Other Members present: Councillors Carden and Davis

49 CITYPARKS DOWNLAND MANAGEMENT

- 49.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Environment concerning proposals to increase the grazed area of council land managed by Cityparks (for copy see minute book).
- 49.2 The Cabinet Member reported a minor correction to recommendation 2.2 of the report (see resolution).
- 49.3 The Cabinet Member explained that the Council had been re-introducing sheep grazing to a number of key chalk grassland sites for a number of years. This resulted in benefits to wildlife, as well as educational and community benefits, and the Council had the opportunity to graze much larger areas with funding from Natural England. Conservation mowing would continue until grazing was introduced.
- 49.4 The Cabinet Member paid tribute to the volunteer shepherds and the wildlife groups for their participation in the initiative.
- 49.5 Councillor Mitchell welcomed the extension of grazing, but raised a number of concerns about the practicalities of the approach. She stated that the report did not address plans for the sites that would not be grazed or the decision to stop collecting grass clippings; there was also no mention of the letter from the Chairman of the Environment & Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Committee to the Cabinet Member or consultation with countryside and wildlife groups.

- 49.6 Councillor Rufus stated that the proposals in the report should form part of a framework for the management of all the sites; the Council should implement a Biodiversity Action Plan with individual action plans for each site rather than developing the proposals in the report separately.
- 49.7 The Cabinet Member reported that he had met with representatives of some of the relevant groups to discuss issues around grazing and that the report made it clear that proposals would not be progressed until consultation had taken place.
- 49.8 In response to questions from Councillor Mitchell, the Assistant Director for City Services made the following comments:
- Proposals for each site would be drawn up through the consultation and this would determine the number of sheep on each site.
 - No financial savings were expected and the Council would seek funds from the Higher Level Scheme; The cost of composting had increased, making grazing a more viable option.
 - There would be no impact on jobs.
- 49.9 The Assistant Director for City Services added that the report did not address all the conservation issues, as the report was specifically about grazing; some sites had management plans while others did not, and the intention was that these would form part of the Biodiversity Action Plan that was being developed as part of the Open Spaces Strategy.
- 49.10 The Director of Environment confirmed that further written information would be provided to Councillor Mitchell regarding the issues that she believed wildlife groups expected to see addressed.
- 49.11 **RESOLVED** - That having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendations:
- (1) That the grazing plans for each site be approved, subject to full consultation with ward councillors and residents.
 - (2) That approval be given for the implementation of the grazing plans for key chalk downland sites and where feasible, subject to the above consultation being completed successfully.

Decision No: CMM70 – 24/09/09

Forward Plan No: N/A

This record relates to Agenda Item 49 on the agenda for the Decision-Making

RECORD OF CABINET MEMBER DECISION

DECISION-MAKER: COUNCILLOR GEOFFREY THEOBALD

PORTFOLIO AREA: ENVIRONMENT

SUBJECT: CITYPARKS DOWNLAND
MANAGEMENT

AUTHOR: HUGO BLOMFIELD

THE DECISION

- (1) That the Cabinet Member for Environment approves the grazing plans for each site subject to full consultation with ward councillors and residents.
- (2) That the Cabinet Member for Environment approves the implementation of the grazing plans for key chalk downland sites where feasible, subject to the above consultation being completed successfully.

REASON FOR THE DECISION

To implement a more sustainable method of managing Cityparks chalk grassland sites.

DETAILS OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Mowing is inferior to grazing:

- it can cause severe disruption to grassland invertebrates and ground nesting birds;
- it cannot be used on the steeper slopes (where much of the remaining chalk grassland is found);
- it is uniform in its application and therefore prevents the establishment of swards of varying height, which are favoured by some chalk grassland species; and
- it damages chalk grassland features such as ant hills and some archaeology.

The cost comparisons of continuing to mow our chalk grassland sites vary due to soil type and from year to year due to the weather. In total in 2007 it cost £16,000 to cut, clear and compost. In 2008 it is estimated this would have increased to between £28,000 and £48,000 - depending on the weather - due to increased fuel and

composting costs (as a result sites were cut but not cleared or composted).

OTHER RELEVANT MATTERS CONCERNING THE DECISION

None

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None.

CONFIRMED AS A TRUE RECORD:

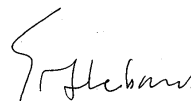
We certify that the decision this document records was made in accordance with the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2000 and is a true and accurate record of that decision

Date:

24 September 2009

Decision Maker:

Councillor Geoffrey Theobald
Cabinet Member for Environment
Signed:



Proper Officer:

24 September 2009

Mark Wall, Head of Democratic Services
Signed:



SCRUTINY

Note: This decision will come in to force at the expiry of 5 working days from the date of publication subject to any review under the Council's Scrutiny 'Call-In' provisions.

Call-In Period

25 September-1 October 2009

Date of Call-in *(if applicable) (this suspends implementation)*

25 September 2009

Call-in Procedure completed *(if applicable)*

Call-in heard by *(if applicable)*

Results of Call-in *(if applicable)*

Agenda Item 24 Appendix 11

Information supplied to Councillor Mitchell following 25 September Environment CMM

- 1) As promised at Environment CMM, I am setting out the issues raised from the increased costs in cutting, collecting and composting at sites and how grazing fits in as a response to those increased costs.
- 2) In 2007 the costs of mowing, collecting and transporting the conservation green waste was £16,000. As an example Beacon Hill cost £1,860.
- 3) In 2008 the costs of mowing, collecting and transporting had increased to cover fuel costs. As an example the cost for Beacon Hill went up to £4,500 – a 41% increase. Although costs have to be calculated on a site by site basis, a 41% increase is significant.
- 4) In addition to this increase in cost, the cost of treating the green waste has risen significantly. For Beacon Hill alone an additional £10,395 would be needed to compost the green waste taking the total costs from £1,860 to £14,895 – nearly the whole citywide budget for conservation mowing. Citywide, the total costs for conservation mowing would be in the region of £28,000 to £48,000.
- 5) To try to contain the rising costs, the council bought specialist mowing equipment for £10k and brought the mowing operation in-house. However, bringing the service in-house does not cover the increased cost of composting and the budget would be fully spent on conservation mowing (including collection and composting of grass) for one or two sites leaving all other sites with a mowing only operation.
- 6) Instead, the £16,000 conservation mowing budget can be used to extend sheep grazing across five existing grazing sites (reducing the amount of conservation mowing taking place) plus one new one site per annum. Once sheep grazing is extended, we can draw down funds from the Higher Level Scheme to cover revenue costs above £16k.
- 7) This leaves nine sites which will continue to receive conservation mowing undertaken by our in-house mowing teams until grazing can be introduced should resources become available. These sites are 19 acres (between Devil's Dyke Road and Waterhall golf course), Bexhill Road open space, Braeside Avenue open space, Chattri (small area adjacent to Chattri grounds), Devil's Dyke Road strip, Happy Valley, Hollingbury hill fort, Hollingbury Park reservoir surrounds, and Tenantry Down.

8) A further four sites which are not considered practical to graze will also continue to be managed for conservation by in-house mowing (this includes the cliff tops where grass collection is unnecessary as the wind blows the grass cuttings away).

9) A meeting with Cllr Geoffrey Theobald, myself, Hugo Blomfield and Dave Bangs, Phil Belden, Gill Taylor of Friends of Hollingbury and Burstead Woods and Maureen Holt of Keep the Ridge Green took place on the 28 May to discuss conservation mowing and at this meeting it was agreed that a report would be presented to the Environment CMM in September proposing the extension of sheep grazing.

10) Further site by site consultations will need to take place as mentioned in the recommendation of the 25 September CMM report before sheep grazing is introduced. This consultation process will follow that established for the other sites where sheep grazing takes place or is about to take place (Whitehawk Hill, Beacon Hill, Wild Park.)

Assistant Director, Cityclean and Cityparks
29 September 2009