**REIGATE HEATH STEERING GROUP**

**Reigate & Banstead Town Hall, Castlefield Road, Reigate**

**Wednesday, 09 January 2019 at 6.30pm**

**M I N U T E S**

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| **Membership** | **Comment** |
| **Name** |  | **Position/Representation** |  |
| Cllr Michael Blacker | **MB** | Chairman  |  (Cllr)  | Present |
| Cllr Rosemary Absalom | **RA** | Deputy Chairman  | (Co-opted Cllr) | Present |
| Cllr Christopher Whinney | **CW** | Secretary | (Co-opted Cllr) | Present |
| Mr David Watts | **DW** | Secretary | (RBBC Officer) | Present |
| Mr David Bellamy | **DB** | Reigate Heath Residents’ Association | Present |
| Mr Steve Carter | **SC** | Veterinary Adviser | Present |
| Mr Nigel Ellis | **NE** | RBBC Officer | Apologies  |
| Mr Simon Elson | **SE** | Reigate Area Conservation Volunteers | Present |
| Mr Neil Gayner | **NG** | Reigate Heath Golf Club | Present |
| Ms Elinor Leech | **EL** | Reigate Heath Horseriders | Present |
| Ms Jenny Newell | **JN** | Surrey Archaeological Society | Present |
| Ms Susan Medcalf | **SM** | Friends of Reigate Heath  | Apologies  |

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| **19/01** | **Welcome and attendance**  |
|  | See above. Also in attendance was Mr Lee Wilcox, RBBC Greenspaces Manager, Shadowing representative from Reigate Heath Golf Club Mr Dave Clarke and Mr Charles Wragg, Reigate Society.  |
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| **19/02** | **Apologies**  |
|  | Mr Graham Steven Natural England ,Miss Isobel Girvan Surrey Wildlife Trust |
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| **19/03** | **Chairman to advise on current Council position**  |
|  | MB stated that the Leader of the Council had asked Mr Chris Phelan (Democratic Services) to review the Terms of Reference for the Reigate Heath Steering Group and that review had highlighted a long-standing failure by the Council to meet its obligation to provide secretarial support; a failure that had now been corrected by the assignment of Mr David Watts (Greenspaces Team) to be Secretary to the Reigate Heath Steering Group. The members of the Steering Group acknowledged Councillor Christopher Whinney’s outstanding service as the co-opted Secretary since 2015 with a vote of thanks. |
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| **19/04** | **Minutes of the last meeting**  |
|  | The minutes for the meeting held on 19 September 2018 were partially agreed with the following comments.Item 5. It was agreed to omit the discrepancy surrounding conversations tree felling during the walk about in September 2018.Overall the residents had a pleasurable experience and are looking forward to the next walk around the Heath.Item 13. JN asked whether this item was raised out of concern for archaeological features. It was agreed that this item was for affirmation only and there are no current concerns relating to the archaeological features.  |
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| **19/05** | **Communication and Reporting**  |
|  | DW confirmed that these and future minutes of Steering Group meetings will be published on the Reigate Heath webpage of the RBBC website.SE commented that not all Steering Group members appear to be proactively communicating news/issues to their representative group and he cited recent examples of local users not being aware of conservation activities. DB and EL suggested that although a range of media streams such as email and Facebook are used to inform it cannot be guaranteed that everyone uses them on a regular basis. As such all Steering Group members are asked to maintain their input into communicating to their respective groups. It was suggested and agreed that the improvements to the notice board at Flanchford Road will provide space for information to be made available as this will be beneficial in assisting communications. CW commented that the information given about operational works should make reference to the work programme and Management Plan and readers should be directed to both documents.  |
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| **19/06** | **Terms of Reference** |
|  | The revised Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Reigate Heath Steering Group was circulated to all members during the meeting. After discussion, it was agreed that the documents will not be presented at the next Executive meeting (24 January 2019) as it would have to have been submitted in November. For it to be presented at the **18th of March** Executive it will need to be submitted by the **31st of January** with the Steering Group’s recommendation that it be included in the Reigate Heath Management Plan 2019. The protocol of appointing a Chairman of the steering group was questioned, RA clarified that any decision on the appointment is governed by the current council constitution.It was discussed whether the Friends of Reigate Heath still held any monies set aside for Heath maintenance activities, MB agreed to make contact about this and about seeking clarification about their membership status. RA made a suggestion that Steve Carter be co-opted into an Veterinary advisory role; this would have to be clarified in advance of the TOR being submitted to the Executive in March.DB questioned why the Reigate Society was no longer represented. SE commented that historically they were a group to represent residents living on and near the Heath before the Reigate Heath Residents Association had been formed for conservation purposes. It was agreed that they should be added to the membership list. This request needs to be submitted to Chris Phelan, RBBC Democratic Services together with a list of people that steering group recommends being co-opted.   |
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| **19/07** | **Work Programme**  |
|  | DW announced that since October RBBC have allocated 17 days of labour (119 hours per man) on Reigate Heath. He reported that operations have been carried out in Areas 1, 1A, 2, 5, 7 and 8. The remaining areas are scheduled for this winter period. SE and NG also reported the areas that RACV and the Golf club have been carrying out operations in – Area 1, 1A, 3 and 4. EL questioned when horse ride widening as per Area 5 will be addressed. EL also offered assistance with cutting back horse rides in the summer; DW thanked her for this offer and will determine in the summer whether this would be required. JN questioned the cutting regime of the highway verges that run along Buckland Road (A25) and those leading into Flanchford Road, DW and LW commented that these were cut for sightline reasons and traffic safety. SE asked whether the HLS agreement has now started, DW confirmed the new agreement began January 2019. CW commented that areas on Reigate Heath outside of the HLS agreement should not be excluded from any works. All agreed.  |
| **19/08** | **Management Plan**  |
|  | DW confirmed that the Management Plan will not be presented at the next Executive meeting (24 January 2019) as it would have to have been submitted in November. For it to be presented at the 18th of March Executive it will need to be submitted by the 31st of January. Prior to the meeting all members were asked to submit their feedback on the Management Plan to be discussed during the meeting. It was agreed that the document needs to be proof read and corrected whilst incorporating feedback from members before it is submitted Surrey Wildlife Trust will be contacted to ask if they can make the changes, if they cannot then RBBC will commission another qualified person to carry out the required work.A meeting to discuss the changes made to the Management Plan was agreed to be held on the 13th of March at the Town Hall.   |
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| **19/09** | **AOB** |
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|  | **a) Use of Single-seater Buggies on the Heath** |
|  | NG updated the group on the Golf Club’s proposal to pilot the use of single-seater buggies on the Golf Course, a briefing paper setting out the rationale was submitted to the group in advance and a plan outlining the proposed route was distributed during the meeting. Concerns that were raised are as follows: * Buggy users not adhering to the route potentially damaging areas of the Heath.
* Capacity to store buggies onsite and would additional space be required?
* Do they breach Byelaws as an unauthorised vehicle? Doubt as to whether could be classed as invalid carriages which are not prohibited under the Byelaws.
* Potential conflicts with horse riders and other users.
* Attracting other off road vehicles such as quad bikes to use the Heath.
* The use of buggies could lead to further urbanisation of the Heath.
* The ageing membership is not addressed by the provision of buggies.
* Ability to police correct and proper use of buggies.

SE sought clarification if buggies were required to meet disability law requirements or more for the convenience of aging club members. NG confirmed that the proposal was more for the convenience of aging club members. SE challenged RHGC’s assertion that the buggies are permitted under the bylaws. The bylaws prohibit any use of unauthorised vehicle unless it is an invalid carriage. SE asked whether the proposed route had been trialled to which NG confirmed they had not and therefore do they not know the suitability of the route. NG confirmed that the route would not run into the disabled tees and they are now used as learner tees. It was agreed that support for the proposal at this moment in time cannot be given and that the ultimate decision will be made by RBBC. LW commented that a pilot trial would be a reasonable way of assessing the impacts of this proposal.  |
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|  | **b) Notice Board**  |
|  | MB apologised that he had not brought the correct document outlining the details of the new notice board design and that he would distribute it via email to all members.  |
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|  | **c) Goal posts on the sports pitch**  |
|  | DW read out a request that he had received from the RBBC Sports Officer asking that the goal posts are left in place at all times. The reasons for this request came from the new Youth football team who have had difficulty in safely removing them and also from Heath users who would like to have an occasional informal ‘kick around’. The groups concerns were as follows:* Leaving the goal posts in at all times would make them vulnerable to theft and increase the wear and tear.
* The SSSI status of the sports pitch could be degraded with increased informal use damaging the sward richness
* Leaving the goal posts permanently in place would have significant visual impacts and it should be noted that the area is a designated Building Conservation Area

Overall there was no support for this request.  |
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| **19/10** | **Date(s), time(s) and venue(s) for future Steering Group meeting(s)** |
|  | Additional meeting to discuss the Management Plan to be held on the 13th March 6.30 pm, Town Hall.Walk about the Heath followed by the next steering group meeting to be held at the Golf Club to be held on the 15th May at 4.30 pm.Steering Group meeting to be held on the 17th September 6.30 pm, Town Hall.  |
| **19/11** | **Actions**  |  |
|  | **Item 5. Communication and Reporting**  All Steering Group members to maintain their input into communicating with their representative groups.  DW to make reference to work programme/management plan when issuing work notifications and directing the reader to the Management Plan where possible. **Item 6. Terms of Reference** DW will forward the agreed Terms of Reference to Chris Phelan by the deadline of 31st January. MB to make contact with the Friends of Reigate Heath and establish their membership status. DW to submit the Steering Group recommendation to Chris Phelan, RBBC Democratic Services that the Reigate Society are included as a member of the Steering Group.**Item 7. Work Programme**  DW to look into widening horse rides in selected areas (area 5).**Item 8. Management Plan**  DW to accumulate feedback into one document and send to SWT.  DW to contact the Management Plan author at SWT to discuss proof reading and corrections. **Item 9. AOB** **a) Golf Buggies**  MB to get clarification from Natural England about what further information they require to give consideration to the proposal.**b) Notice Board** MB to circulate the notice board design document to all members by email. **End of actions.**  |