

**Henstridge Parish Council**  
**Clerk: Zöe Godden, Ashbourne House, Marsh Lane,**  
**Henstridge, Somerset, BA8 0TG, Tel: 01963 362937**  
**e-mail: [clerk@henstridgeparishcouncil.org.uk](mailto:clerk@henstridgeparishcouncil.org.uk)**

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**Draft minutes of the Special Parish Council meeting held at the Henstridge Village Hall Lounge on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2011.**

**Present**

**Councillors:** Adam Temperton (Chair), Simon Cullum, Paul White, Caroline Rowland, Peter Crocker, Dave Nichols, Jim Fitch, Carolyn Nichols, Sue Place

**Clerk:** Zöe Godden

**There were 10 members of the public in attendance.**

The meeting commenced at 19:00.

**1. To confirm that a quorum is present.**

The clerk confirmed that there were enough councillors present to represent a quorum.

**2. Apologies and to approve reasons for apology as seen fit.**

Apologies had been received from Geoff Jarvis, Paul Brighten and Jean Oswick.

**RESOLVED: It was proposed and agreed to accept the reasons for absence as given.**

**3. Declarations of Interest.**

No declarations of interest were given.

**4. To suspend standing orders**

**RESOLVED: It was proposed and agreed that, as the business to be conducted may involve rescission of previous resolutions, that in accordance with SO 31a, the standing orders should be suspended for the duration of item 5(iv).**

At this point, the chair opened the meeting to allow public comments and questions. All members of the public were happy that they had nothing more to add to those comments made at the previous meeting on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> September. The meeting was closed to the public.

**5.**

**(i) To advise of details received from the Woodland Trust regarding the contractual arrangements required in taking on the lease of Oak Vale Woodland, Henstridge.**

The clerk advised the council of the following points regarding the contractual arrangements that would be relevant in taking over Oak Vale Woodland:

- Term to be a 25 or 99-year lease, non-assignable, at a peppercorn rental.
- User clause to be restricted to maintaining a native amenity woodland: no structures or buildings or 'gardenification' to be permitted. No trade or business to be carried out. Full public access to be maintained.
- Public liability insurance to be at a minimum of £5m. The council's current public liability covers for claims up to £13 million so is more than adequate.
- To maintain (and replace) all trees and hedgerows present as at the date of lease commencement other than is necessary for conservation of the site as an amenity woodland, public safety or to prevent physical damage to buildings, and to maintain at least 90% canopy cover at any one time – all in accordance with good silvicultural practice.
- To maintain all site boundaries, gates and public entrance furniture for which the Trust has legal responsibility.
- All mineral and sporting rights to be retained by the Trust, with a covenant that sporting rights will not be exercised.
- The wood to continue to be named 'Oak Vale Woodland'.
- The lease to be completed by 1st December 2011.
- Each party to be responsible for own legal fees.

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(ii) **To advise of changes to the council insurance policy that would be required in taking on the lease of Oak Vale Woodland, Henstridge.**

There would be no additional cost for the acquisition of the woodland. There will need to be an assessment of the value of the fencing at either end of the wood as the insurer would need to increase the premium to cover the replacement cost of any such assets. However, as the fencing is quite minimal, it is thought that the council would be able to arrange for any repairs to take place locally, without having to claim from the insurance.

(iii) **To discuss the financial and management implications of taking on the lease of Oak Vale Woodland, Henstridge**

The clerk gave an overview of the kind of work that would be involved in maintaining the wood and the costs involved:

- The pathway that runs through the middle of the wood would have to be strimmed at least twice a year to keep it clear. This would take approximately one hour each time and can be achieved within the current salary budget.
- The roadside hedge would have to be trimmed. The Woodland Trust currently carries out this work every other year at a cost of £120. However, the parish council is likely to be able to fund this much more cheaply by incorporating the work into the regular maintenance of other parish land.
- Litter picking would have to be carried out regularly. Anyone who uses the wood can do this, although the council is in the process of organising a litter picking day soon and the woodland could be included in this.
- Some tree thinning is required now, as stated on particulars of sale. The clerk has requested details from the Woodland Trust as to which trees need thinning and is awaiting a response. If they cannot guide us, further costs may be incurred in engaging a tree surgeon/woodland management contractor to do a survey and carry out the work.
- It was pointed out that some red or pink markings have been made at various places in the woodland. The clerk also needs to ask the Woodland Trust about these to find out if they indicate any further work that may be required.
- More major remedial works will occur in the long term, for example, removal of large branches, tree felling etc. This sort of problem must be reported to the clerk who will arrange for the work to be completed by a contractor to avoid public liability claims in the event of an accident.
- To cover maintenance of the wood, the parish council would have to set aside £120 per year.
- The cost of legal fees from the council's usual solicitor have been quoted at £825 plus VAT. The clerk informed the council that she would source quotes from other firms, as the budget for legal costs would not cover this quote.

(iv) **To decide if the council wishes to enter into the lease agreement with the Woodland Trust.**

There was some discussion surrounding the length of the lease being offered by the Woodland Trust and the council requested that the clerk contacts the trust to enquire if they would be willing to extend the length of the lease.

**RESOLVED:** It was proposed and unanimously agreed that the parish council wishes to enter into the lease on a minimum of 99 year basis, and that the matter will be completed by 1<sup>st</sup> December.

Meeting closed at 19:17



**Zöe Godden  
Parish Clerk**