

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 the 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