

**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.