

**EXTRACT FROM THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 22 JUNE 2009**

ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4.00PM 22 JUNE 2009

BANQUETING ROOM, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

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

**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.