

Ide Parish Council

Weir Meadow Working Group and Ide Joint Projects Fund Raising Group

**Minutes of a combined meeting of the two working groups held remotely on Zoom
on Monday 13 June 2022 at 8 pm**

1. Present: Richard Cottle (Chair), Mel Liversage, Rachel Herbert, Rich Cloke, Cheryl Haddy, David Howe, Charlotte McGregor, Phil Willcock, Pete Skinner, Stuart Brooking and Nick Bradley.

2. Apologies: Mark Thomas, Peter Cloke and Trevor Gardner.

3. Draft minutes of combined WMWG and JPFRG meeting held 9 May 2022 were approved.

Action: Mel to post on website.

4. The chair reported that Trevor Gardner has stood down from the group; and thanked him warmly for his tremendous contributions to the project.

5. Action points from last meeting:

5.1 Opening ceremony for Orchard - Noon 5 June – NB reported on the successful opening ceremony, attended by over 100 residents.

5.2 Card reader: Mel bought a card reader from PC funds which was used successfully at the fete.

5.3 Fete: CH reported that the fete on 4 June had raised in region of £2,000 for the Weir Meadow fund at the bar and Pimms tent. Members expressed v warm thanks to all those involved.

5.4 Football Club: Stuart B reported on progress.

- The FA website remains out of action. The FA contact is Chris French: there will be grants available for drainage and improvements up to £25,000 once we own the land, provided the club plays in a league – which it does.

- Ide Rovers FC had raised £313 for the WM fund at a game against Tedburn.

- SB plans to take soil samples, but needs the FA website in operation to do so.

- SB would like to stay on the group as the football club representative; members expressed how pleased they were to hear that.

Action: SB interrogate the FA website as soon as possible

5.5 June 2023 Police Dog Hogan gig. Richard Sharman reported as the lead for this item to the last Orchard group about plans for a fund raising gig for the Orchard on either 6, 7 or 8 June 2023 at Westown Farm. A firm date will be announced asap.

Action: Orchard group

5.6 National Lottery Community Fund. Planned application on ice for now.

Action: R Cottle to keep item alive and on the agenda.

5.7 Forestry Commission. No further updates to report.

Action: R Cottle keep in close touch w Forestry Com.

5.8 Guidelines for Use. P Cloke has circulated the guidelines used for the Orchard.

5.9 Funds and borrowing

NB reported that the IPC had received final approval from the PWLB for their loan of £152,282, and were due to receive the funds into the IPC account on 16 June. The interest rate is now fixed at 3.45% for 50 years. This meant that the annual repayments would be about £1,000 more than predicted when the application was made in February, when the rate was 1.98 %. However, the PC has amended its 2022/23 spending budget to absorb this additional cost.

Post meeting update: the funds did indeed arrive in IPC's account on 16 June 2022.

6. Northern Fields.

6.1 Pete S presented the draft set of particulars circulated before the meeting. He drew members' attention to some key points:

- There is no water or fencing in the N Fields – a significant fact when looking for a tenant
- He has tried to make the particulars as broad as possible to encourage tenders
- He has excluded the steep, rough section (c 3 acres) overlooking the cricket pitch
- Access from College Lane is relatively tight for modern contract machinery
- He would welcome a tenant grazing horses in the western field, and making hay in the eastern field
- He does not recommend letting to multiple private owners – eg several different horse owners
- Fencing the fields ourselves would be expensive at £5 a metre, though grants could be available to a tenant.
- He has included a perimeter band for walkers and dogs
- We can choose whomsoever we like, without stating criteria or reasons. We do not have to take the highest bidder.
- He advises that we prohibit the planting of maize because it needs large machinery to harvest it, which wld need to come in across W Meadow; and maize harvest is in the autumn, when conditions are wet risking damage to the Meadow.
- The fields are steep and better suited to pasture than to arable crops because of run off and soil erosion.

6.2 RH reported that the PC could not enter into a stewardship agreement: you have to be an active farmer to do so and to attract grant funding. But a tenant farmer with a lease on the land from us could apply for a fencing grant.

6.3 DH made the point that, while fencing would be needed for stock, environmentally we might not want fencing.

6.4 CM asked if we might extend the term beyond 3 years to allow a tenant who wished to stockproof the fields longer to recoup their outlay.

CM also asked what we would do if we get no interest.

CM also suggested we remove mention of using Weir Meadow for access.

Discussion followed about the pros and cons of a longer tenancy term; inviting applicants to suggest their own length of term, leaving the period open in the particulars; a five year break in a ten year tenancy.

6.5 Members discussed the possibility of getting no tenant, and whether it would be prudent to delay exercising the option agreement until PS had sought informal expressions of interest in the tenancy, to test the market.

The advantage of this would be that, if there was delay in leasing the fields (PS said he had never faced a situation where he was unable to let land at all), the PC would not face a period of time in which it would have to spend money looking after the fields as owner without an income from them. NB observed that a tenant who paid minimal or even no rent would be preferable to no tenant at all in that regard.

6.6 It was decided –

6.6.1 to delay exercising the option agreement until we have informal tenders in. In recognition that this is not in line with letter of the resolution passed by IPC on 30 May, NB undertook to write to councillors explaining this change of plan to the order of events.

Action: NB write to councillors

6.6.2 Pete S will amend the letting particulars as agreed; and reduce the length of the tendering process to four from six weeks. This will allow him to set the deadline for tenders at 15 July, in time for the next WMWG meeting on 18 July to decide on its recommendations, in time for next IPC meeting on 20 July to decide on its choice of tenant.

Action: PS

6.6.3 that the wording in the particulars will suggest a five year tenancy, but that other lengths of term will be considered depending on the applicant's proposals.

Action PS

6.6.4 that the text at para 8, line 5, referring to access across Weir Meadow, will be amended to read "may" not "will".

Action: PS

6.6.5 PS advised we'll need the permission of the current tenant (Richard Parr) and the Church Commissioners (via Strutt & Parker) to allow potential tenants to walk the ground.

Action: NB to obtain such permissions.

6.6.6 PS will go ahead now to advertise the tenancy, drawing up a list of possible tenants to whom he will send the particulars; and will employ social media to spread the word.

Action :PS

7. Next combined meeting of WMWG and JPFRG: Monday 18 July 2022, 6pm (Please note different time) on Zoom.

NCAB 23 June 2022

Approved 18 July 2022