

## **Haslemere Biodiversity Project response to questions/concerns raised by Haslemere Town Council members at Full Council meeting on 21 July 2022.**

### **Who/what is the Haslemere Biodiversity Project (HBP)?**

- The HBP was originally set up as a special project under Haslemere Vision to generate evidence to underpin Biodiversity Policy H12 in the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Phase 1 delivered an initial audit of the Haslemere Ecological Network (HEN) which includes around 45 internationally, nationally and locally recognized nature conservation sites and the main wildlife corridors that connect them. Phase 2 aims to further characterize the condition and functionality of the HEN and produce a formal Haslemere Biodiversity Action Plan that will guide future work to protect and enhance the HEN over the long term.
- Going forwards, it has been agreed that the HBP will become an independent 'Biodiversity Partnership' (as is the case with similar groups in Farnham and elsewhere).

### **Why do we want a Councillor to join the HBP?**

- We believe that the Council is an important stakeholder with a shared interest in protecting and enhancing Haslemere's unique biodiversity assets. The HBP's work can directly help HTC deliver its statutory and other obligations on nature conservation including its Climate and Biodiversity Emergency Motion commitments.
- We'd therefore like to invite a Councillor to join the HBP, initially as an 'Observer', to report back to HTC and advise on whether a more formal link is justified over the longer term.
- As Council has already generously provided funding for Phases 1 and 2, this arrangement will also provide an opportunity to directly input into how this funding is deployed.

### **Why does the HBP want to work with Council in helping to manage the Town Council's green spaces and what are we proposing?**

- Several of these green spaces are important components of the HEN (e.g. Lion Green, St Christopher's Green, Woodcock Green, Grovers Garden, Clement's Corner...). **We recognize that much of this land is already covered by maintenance contracts and/or legal management plans and we have no intention of trying to interfere with or undermine existing arrangements.** We are simply offering to share our ecological expertise and resources and work with the Council to review opportunities for making these green spaces more wildlife-friendly.
- We propose that this exercise could involve an initial desk review of selected sites and existing management strategies along with recommendations for possible improvements. These would clearly need to be pragmatic, cost-effective and fit with existing arrangements. The key findings will be presented in a report for Council's consideration/action.

### **What do we mean when we talk about potential collaboration with WBC?**

- Waverley is currently developing a Biodiversity Policy and Strategy covering those green spaces that are owned/managed by WBC. These include a number of sites in Haslemere that are significant components of the HEN (notably around 32 Local Wildlife Sites as well as various tracts of woodland and common land).
- The HBP is keen to open discussions with Waverley about these sites and to explore opportunities for working together on their management. We suggest that HTC may also be interested in joining these discussions. **We are certainly not proposing that WBC should get involved in the management of the Town Council's green spaces!**