

Meeting	Parks & Open Spaces
Date	22 nd November 2022
Report Title	Cliffords Meadow
Agenda Reference	15
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Officer's Recommendation:

1. To note that the Council will be proceeding with an escalation to Tier 2 of Natural England's Complaints Procedure regarding the lack of maintenance and failure to protect the SSSI status at Cliffords Meadow
2. To note a press release regarding the issue will be circulated to local press contacts
3. To note the amount of administration time that is going in to servicing this complaint and championing action at Cliffords Meadow

Background

At Parks & Open Spaces Committee on 8th November 2022, Members received an update on the response from Natural England in relation to the initial Tier 1 complaint. Members and a local group of residents felt that this response was less than satisfactory and an escalation to a Tier 2 complaint should be followed.

The local tenant farmer has been very helpful and communicative; however, the Council appreciates that funds are limited and a lot of the final decisions rest with the Landowner.

The Council is trying to spread awareness within its communications that the meadow is private and the reasons why it is important to protect its status.

Maintenance Concerns Reported:

- Lack of maintenance of the perimeter stock fencing
- Lack of maintenance of the perimeter shrub beds
- Lack of annual orchid counts (last done in 2015)
- Lack of communications or response from the Landowners

Tier 2 Escalation/ Next Steps

In the next response, the Council would like to establish if funding is received for maintenance of the meadow and if so, who is claiming this, the Landowner or the tenant farmer.

The Council has alerted Justin Tomlinson MP to the issue and will be circulating a press release to press contacts to raise awareness locally of the importance of the meadow and why its SSSI status needs to be protected.

The current lead times for a response are two working days for acknowledgment and fifteen working days for a response. The timescales on this basis will be a response in time for Full Council on 13th December 2022.

Officer Time

Please note that the Officers have spent several working hours on administering, communicating and escalating this complaint. Site visits have also been undertaken by the Deputy Clerk and Head of Parks & Open Spaces and the environmental studies have been helped by the Community Development Officer. The communications are then reviewed and signed off by the Chief Officer.