

Date: 04 November 2021

Title: Report Item 9a – Greensward additional information

By: K Larkin (Parish Clerk)

Purpose: To propose a re-naturing project for the Greensward

Recommendation: To consider a request from the East Dean Greensward Company Ltd for a grant of £500 to finance the creation of a renatured area on the Greensward

The clerk recommends that the council have regard to the following information in their consideration of this project:

- **Use of public money to pay for the upkeep of land which is privately owned:** - a parish council is not supposed to use public money in this way, and the Greensward is privately owned by the East Dean Greensward Company Ltd. That said, the parish council does pay for the routine mowing of the Greensward, and the same applies to the green outside The Tiger which is owned by the Gilbert Estate. When the parish council undergoes its annual audit, this is always something that has to be specially justified. This year, in the context of an Intermediate Level Review conducted by the External Auditor, the justification said: 'It is recognised that the inclusion of two privately owned village greens in the council's mowing contract is not usual. This has been queried in the past by Internal Auditors but the parish council has continued with it for three reasons: (1) it has been extensively debated in the parish in past years including at past Annual Village Meetings; (2) it has very strong popular support as it maintains the attractiveness of the village; and (3) in each case there is full public access to the land, each being a registered village green.' The External Auditors did not in fact criticise the arrangement in making their report.
- **Location of the project area:** - this is said to be at the southern end of the Greensward, though no plan is yet available. There is a detached triangle of land at the southern tip of the Greensward with mature trees upon it, whose ownership has been disputed. At least part of the triangle is claimed by the owner of an adjacent property on Deneside. It appears that the re-naturing is not intended to include this area, but if the council approves the expenditure it may want to check this with the Greensward Company.
- **Budgetary implications:** - there is no budget automatically available for this project. However, the parish council does have an East Dean in Bloom budget of £700 in 2021/22, which was intended to be spent in the shopping precinct and partly funded by £200 of contributions from other organisations including the shopkeepers. However, in the difficult circumstances of this year, the council has not asked for contributions. A sum of £291 has been spent. The council could consider part-funding the project from the remains of this budget, and topping it up by virement from another budget head.
- **Ongoing maintenance:** - it is not expected that the council will be asked to contribute to any ongoing maintenance. The directors have said: 'As far as we are aware there will be no on-going costs since this area will need to be mowed less frequently than other areas of grass.'

- **VAT:** - the Greensward Company will not be able to reclaim VAT on the project, which will be charged at 20% (i.e. total cost £600 incl. VAT) nor will the council be able to reclaim it on their behalf.
- **Asset of Community Value:** - it would in future be possible for the parish council to apply to Wealden District Council to have the Greensward registered under the Localism Act 2011 as an Asset of Community Value. This would mean that if it were put up for sale, the parish council would have first refusal. At present this is not under discussion, nor is there any intention that the property should be sold.