

Committee	COUNCIL MEETING
Date	14 August 2023
Agenda Item	16

To consider reviving the Parish Paths Partnership (P3)

The Clerk has recently been informed that there is a plan to revive P3 in Halstead. The Council was part of this in the past but has not had any involvement over the past 7 years. P3 is a scheme that ECC has run for many years.

Outline of the scheme

The aim is to maintain and improve local Public Rights of Way (PRoW) through the participation of local volunteers.

Commitment – this is not a contract. We rely on the goodwill of local people and all we ask is that your local PRoW are walked at least once a year. This is normally done by the nominated P3 Rep and/or volunteers they work with to do a general check on the overall condition and where an issue is identified, details are recorded so that we can then discuss who is best placed to deal with them. These issues will then form the details of the work proposal for the P3 group.

Work Proposal – A list of activities that have been identified that require volunteers to put right. This will be drafted by the P3 Rep using a simple template. Typical works might include:

- Replacing faded waymark discs
- Replacing rotten waymark posts
- Clearing sections of vegetation
- Repairing/replacing short ditch crossings/bridges
- With the agreement of landowners, removing stiles and replacing them with easier to use pedestrian and kissing gates

One part of the work proposal is to itemise budget/materials required. This may include basic tools, PPE such as boots, gloves and eye protection and if we have supplied a petrol driven brushcutter/trimmer, the cost of fuel and annual servicing. We will provide a brushcutter if there is a sufficient level of vegetation to be cut which justifies the expense. We will also cover the cost of someone attending an operator's course at Writtle College. On the theme of training, we would also expect the group to have qualified first aiders. We prefer at least two volunteers to attend the course (Essex Outdoors, Mersea) so that it isn't always the same person providing first aid cover for volunteer activities.

Insurance – work activities that are agreed with ECC and are delivered by P3 volunteer are covered by ECC insurance

One final and important part of P3 that may be of particular interest to the town council is the opportunity to set up a Service Level Agreement (SLA) under P3 for town wide vegetation cutting on PRoWs. We will pay a rate for both sit on mower and hand cutting with a trimmer. Whilst the sums may be modest, it gives the town council the autonomy to appoint their own cutting contractor and have a direct say in when the work takes place rather than taking your place alongside every other town council and parish across the county and waiting your turn which will be decided by the ECC contractor. Setting up an SLA is very

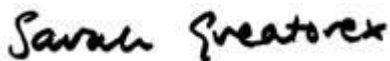
straightforward and if this sounds of interest information can be provided separately with further details so that something can be in place for next year.

To summarise, the burden on the town council is very light. Henry Rayner, who is a volunteer for Halstead Community Fridge, has offered to act as the P3 rep so he would be the normal point of contact for ECC and it will be down to him to get the ProW walked and draw up a work proposal. It will also be for him to get the necessary volunteers although it would be good for the town council to get involved. As the SLA agreement requires the town council appointing a cutting contractor it would be best to have a separate conversation about that but it really is very straightforward and those parishes that have gone down this route definitely prefer having more control over when things happen!

At an earlier Council meeting, it was suggested that HTC should become involved in publicising and promoting local footpaths, in the interests of local residents taking more healthy exercise. This is an excellent aim but the council does not itself have the manpower to do such work, and would therefore benefit from anything P3 could offer.

Recommendation

1. That HTC agrees to become part of P3
2. That HTC assists Henry Rayner in recruiting volunteers
3. That HTC enters into an SLA to manage vegetation cutting on the roads around the town more efficiently



Sarah Greateorex Town Clerk