

# Six councils pool cash to save Tice's

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A JOINT bid by six councils to purchase £1 million-valued Tice's Meadow in Badshot Lea has been 18 months in the making, according to council papers.

Farnham town councillors are expected to sign off a "contribution" towards the purchase of the meadow in a behind-closed-doors session at their meeting tomorrow.

And in papers released ahead of the crunch debate, Badshot Lea councillor Mark Merryweather "commended the work that had been done in the background over the previous 18 months by the town clerk [Iain Lynch] and Surrey County Council officer Simon Elson, in maintaining a positive working relationship and credibility with Hanson".

The *Herald* understands Cllr



Tice's Meadow is one of the best birdwatching sites in the South East

Merryweather played a key role in bringing together Surrey, Hampshire, Waverley, Rushmoor, Guildford and Farnham councils to save the meadow from the threat of housing.

But each council's financial contribution must first be agreed by councillors before a final agreement can be reached with land owner Hanson.

Mark Elsoffer, of the Tice's Meadow Bird Group, which was the first to sound the alarm bells when the site was put up

for sale, said: "We understand that a consortium of local councils, led by Surrey County Council, are the preferred bidder for the nature reserve.

"Should the bid be successful, we look forward to working closely with the new owners to build on the years of good work already undertaken, and to continue to provide a haven for wildlife and the local community."

Councillor Paul Follows, leader of Waverley Borough

Council, said: "From the moment we became aware that Tice's Meadow had been put up for sale, we were determined to do everything we could to protect the site, and if at all possible, bring it into public ownership. After all, it would never have been restored to the extent that it has, without the huge input from local volunteers and the support of the local community."

Cllr Merryweather, who is also Waverley's portfolio holder for finance, assets and commercial services, added: "That's why we bid (unsuccessfully) for the site in 2019 and stayed in close touch with Hanson since, laying the groundwork which led to the current deal.

"We are very thankful that our partners and colleagues have joined us and have worked so hard together to get to the point where we are able jointly to purchase the site and safeguard it for future generations."