

REPORT OF THE OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE
HELD ON 14TH JULY 2015

MEMBERSHIP & ATTENDANCE

Chairman: * Barbara Green

Councillors Jo Clark
* Barbara Dickens
* Tony Edwards (ex officio)
* Raj Khiroya
* Jill Leeming
* Alison Preedy
Martin Trevett
Jane White (ex officio)

* Denotes members present

Officers present Yvonne Merritt – Clerk
Claire James - Deputy Clerk
Laura Hamilton – Admin Officer

There were two members of the public present.

15/15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were apologies for absence from Cllrs Jo Clark, Martin Trevett and Jane White.

15/16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

Standing orders were suspended to allow a Member of the Public to address the Committee.

Greg Hill Chairman of Friends of the Common addressed the Committee on Village Day – Thanking the Council, Officers and Rangers for a highly successful day, Agenda Item 6 Recommendation 3 Disposal of timber, Agenda Item 11 Park Run, Agenda Items 13 & 14 assuming the subject to be the permissive Horse track and The Glowworm surveys.

Standing orders were re-instated at the end of the address.

15/17 APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The Committee

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19th May 2015 which had been discussed at Full Council with no changes made, be approved as a true and correct record.

15/18 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

15/04 **14/71 Re-surfacing works:** Cllr Barbara Green advised Members that she had written an article for Chorleywood Matters on this subject and also one on **15/10 Public Space Protection Orders**.

15/07 Copmans Wick: Cllr Barbara Green requested that the visit to Copmans Wick to review the significant issue of fly tipping at this site be set up over the summer.

14/80 POND CREATION – The Clerk updated members on the progress being made with the pond creation plan for Darvells Pond. The office had received a letter from Open Spaces who were happy that the pond creation would not impede access as they also believed it was a site that had previously been a pond. Natural England also had no objection to the plan. The next step was to put together a formal bid to put out to Contractors with quotes coming back to the next meeting. In answer to a question on whether it would have any effect on the newt population, the Clerk advised that it should have a positive effect as it would be next to Darvells pond which currently contains fish which eat newt larvae and the new pond would therefore provide an alternative breeding area. The Plan would be to cease to maintain Darvells pond. It was stated that methods of removal of the fish at Darvells Pond were still being investigated.

15/19 FINANCIAL COMPARISON STATEMENT 2014/15

Item 232 Parking Meters – it was confirmed that there was no income from the parking meters but it was explained that the company operating the scheme undertook the whole process from inspection, issue of tickets through to the appeals process with no officer involvement.

Item 27 Wayleaves/Easements – The significant figures in this line were explained to be an easement for development at Qualicum Lodge. The Clerk advised that such monies are ring fenced and can only be used for work/projects on the Common. She also advised members that she was awaiting a quote for kerbing of the Common at Clements Road to stop the encroachment of cars. There was also another area suffering water erosion in Common Gate Road which would, in the future need attention.

Item 220 Maintenance of the Horse Track – the Clerk confirmed in response to a member's question, that this budget could be used for signs on the horse track.

Item 224 Refuse collection – it was confirmed that the two six monthly payments had been made as one and that therefore there would be no further expenditure under this item.

15/20 OPEN SPACES OFFICER'S REPORT

Recommendation 1 – To consider the request from a resident of Darvells Yard for the reduction of a large sycamore tree on the boundary of her property at her cost and the subsequent conservation consent required. Members agreed to the work being done at her cost on the understanding that she would seek the necessary conservation consent and provide the public liability insurance documents of her contractor for the Clerk to inspect. The Committee noted the more general issue of encroachment of the hedgerows surrounding the common into prime areas of unimproved grassland and agreed that this could be considered for inclusion in the next Common Management plan which work would commence on next year. The Clerk suggested that Members may also wish to review this issue as part of Rogation Sunday next year when the Beating of the Bounds could once again take place. Members to the note the date for their diaries - Rogation Sunday is on the 1st May next year.

Recommendation 2 – To consider the removal of the dead oak tree at the entrance to the fire ride – Members were advised that it had originally been hoped that this tree could be used for a sculpture. However as honey fungus had now been found this made it unsuitable. It was agreed that it could be removed with quotes to come back to the next Committee.

Recommendation 3 – To consider a process for the removal of the excess timber from the annual felling, as part of the Stewardship agreement and Common Management Plan, of trees on the Common and the possible financial benefits that might be available. Discussion covered the possible

use for the timber, how to deal with the volume of timber and methods of getting it off the Common. The wisdom of undertaking the Spring felling given the issues of removal was questioned but Members were advised that this was part of the Stewardship Programme and if it was not undertaken the Stewardship money would not be forthcoming. If the Rangers undertook the removal by logging etc, this would take them away from an already heavy programme of work. The possible sale of firewood was discussed but previous experience had not been good and the practicalities of such a scheme would be difficult. It was suggested that other areas must also have this problem and that perhaps Officers could consult with the likes of Ashridge. It was also suggested that approaches are made to TRDC, Timber yards and CMS for ideas and to see if other mobile saw mills were available.

Cattle – it was noted that the cattle had now been removed from the Common, but that there was nothing on the website to inform parishioners of this and the fact that they would be back. Officers would get this corrected.

Flower bed outside the Parish Office – Members asked whether the Rangers could do something with this flower bed. The Clerk advised that something more long term than bedding plants needed to be thought of and a number of ideas were discussed.

Top Gates at Copmans Wick Allotments – it was noted that quotes for the repair for the gates that had been damaged by an unknown vehicle were being sought.

Common Crab Spider – it was noted that this species of spider, new to the Common, had been spotted on the Common.

Christchurch Cemetery - The current situation regarding the damaged wall was noted. The Clerk advised that the work to lay down the headstones that had failed the stress testing will be a significant cost but the Council had no choice. Any critical ones have been laid flat. The process for laying down the others would be discussed at a meeting to be set up with Christchurch with work to take place outside the school holidays.

The Chairman thanked the officers for a full and comprehensive report.

The Committee

RESOLVED

To note the report.

ALLOTMENTS

15/21 OCCUPATION

The Committee

RESOLVED

To note the occupation

15/22 WAITING LISTS

The Committee

RESOLVED

To note the details on the waiting list.

LAWN CEMETERY

15/23 INTERMENTS

The Committee

RESOLVED

To note the number of interments that had taken place.

COMMON AND GROVEWOOD

15/24 PERMISSIVE PARKING AREA TICKET MACHINES

The background to the original purchase of the second hand machines was discussed. Second hand machines had been purchased as the Council were reluctant to invest in new machines at a considerable cost on a scheme that it was unknown whether it would address the problem of parking. In fact the scheme had been very successful and reduced the incidence of commuter parking in the War Memorial Hall and Shepherds Bridge parking areas and addressed a number of concerns. It was understood that there had been around 26 callouts over the last year which ranged from repair due to vandalism to general faults arising with the machines. The question was raised as to whether the Golf Club would contribute to the maintenance costs although it was noted that they already make a contribution towards the running costs of the scheme.

The Committee

RESOLVED

To accept the annual maintenance contract at £1000 (£500 per machine) per year with the following caveats:

- 1) The Parish Office to continue to monitor call outs and the reasons for them
- 2) The Golf Club be asked whether they would be prepared to make a further contribution towards the maintenance of the ticket machines
- 3) That the repair of the machine at Shepherds Bridge be covered under this maintenance contract.

This was proposed from the Chair by Cllr Barbara Green and carried unanimously.

15/25 FOUR YEAR VISION

It was suggested that the investigation and costing of options for the longer term improvement of the parking area surfaces could be part of the four Year Vision. It was noted that we had reached the limit for the number of benches that were allowed on the Common. Signage was becoming a key issue particularly on the permissive horse track and with respect to cycling, the latter being the fact that it was not allowed under the byelaws but many cyclists were unaware of this as there was no signage informing them of this.

It was also suggested that Welcome signs would be a useful additional at entrance points to the Common and perhaps some of the timber discussed earlier in the meeting could be used. The use of the four year vision to give targets to Officers as part of their Performance Development Review (PDR) was noted, also the need to work the ideas into the budgets for the next year which would be set in November. It was agreed that to fit in with the budget timetable, the next Open Spaces meeting would need to discuss a comprehensive list of ideas and prioritise the list. This would also need to be done with recognition of what was coming out of the Community Plan. As a number of the Committee were unable to be at the meeting, the Chairman of the Committee would write out to all Open Spaces Committee members asking them to send all ideas to her for collation and discussion at the September Open Spaces Meeting.

15/26 PARK RUN

It was noted that the report had been written by the person making the application and not Officers and therefore the reference to the Bridle Path had been a mistake as no such path obviously existed on the Common. It was also noted that whilst the Common was not a Park, 'Park Run ' was a generic name given to these events and it was not being suggested that the Common was a park. There were views expressed for and against the idea, with considerable concern at the suggestion that the permissive horse track possibly be used. Members were in general agreement that this route option was not a good idea and the Clerk advised that there were other options for a 5KM route of the Common that would also avoid key stewardship areas.

It was suggested that the new mapping tool recently purchased by the Council would come in useful in planning an appropriate route. Several Members expressed the view that the Common was there for air and exercise and this fitted into that definition. It was also suggested that this was a great way to raise the profile and enjoyment of the Common. An idea of getting people to comment on the idea via the website was rejected as it was felt there was insufficient audience of the website to make this worthwhile. Possible damage to the Common during wet weather was discussed and it was agreed that the Council would need to reserve the right to either change the route or cancel an event if the Common Ranger felt there was a maintenance issue. This is the same caveat that other licensed users of the Common operate under.

The Committee

RESOLVED

That the Park Run be allowed to operate on the Common on a six month trial subject to the Council having the right to either divert the route or cancel an event subject to ground conditions. At the end of the Trial the committee would review any feedback and issues raised during the six month period.

This was proposed by Cllr Alison Preedy, seconded by Cllr Raj Khuroya and carried unanimously.

GENERAL

15/27 HEALTH AND SAFETY

Members noted that there was nothing to report

15/28 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Committee

RESOLVED

That in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest, that the press and public be temporarily excluded for agenda item 14 and they are instructed to withdraw.

This was proposed from the chair by Cllr Barbara Green and carried unanimously

The two members of the public present left the meeting

15/29 LEGAL ADVICE REGARDING THE COMMON BYELAWS

Access to the minutes of this agenda item is denied until further notice.

15/30 CLOSURE

The meeting having commenced at 7.30 pm closed at 10.30pm.

Signedagreed via emailDate20th July 2015.....

These minutes were agreed as a true and correct record at the Open Spaces meeting and signed by the Chairman.

Signed..... Date.....