

REPORT OF THE OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE
HELD ON 11TH NOVEMBER 2014

MEMBERSHIP & ATTENDANCE

Chairman: * **Barbara Green**

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

14/34 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were apologies for absence from Cllrs Tony Edwards and Raj Khiroya.

14/35 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Martin Trevett declared a pecuniary interest in Agenda 14 Fees and Charges as an allotment holder.

14/36 APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The Committee

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 9th September 2014 which had been discussed at Full Council with no changes made, be approved as a true and correct record.

14/37 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

14/25 Nature Trail: The Clerk updated Members that the re-application for funding had started.

14/26 Request for Permission to run outdoor fitness sessions with equipment on Chorleywood Common: Members were advised that the six week trial that had been agreed at the previous meeting with a number of caveats was about to conclude. During that time no adverse reports or complaints had been received by the Office or by Councillors. The company concerned were interested in continuing with the classes at the same times as the in the trial but had asked whether a discount could be given if payment was made annually.

The Committee

RESOLVED

That a licence be granted for the company to use the Common for Fitness Classes subject to the same conditions and 2 of the three caveats as for the trial i.e.:

- Areas to be used to be limited to the Fire rides
- To exclude any equipment which is dragged along the ground e.g. Car tyres.

The third caveat in place for the trial - to limit the number of people in any one session to ten plus the trainer - was removed.

With no discount for the remainder of the financial year but that this aspect would be reviewed for the next financial year.

It was also agreed that users continue to be encouraged to use the Lorry Permissive Parking Area to minimise disruption to other users of the Common. It should also be advised that the Council reserved the right to give advance notice of any closures due to filming or ground condition concerns. All would be subject to the provision of suitable risk assessment, public liability and First aid documentation.

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

14/38 FINANCIAL COMPARISON STATEMENT 2014/15

In response to a Member's question the Clerk advised that the Income budget line 22 Interment Charges was based on historic data for the Lawn Cemetery and forecast information taken from statistical records.

The Committee
RESOLVED
To note the report.

14/39 OPEN SPACES OFFICER'S REPORT

Recommendation 1: Allotments – It was noted that a number of local schools already have provision for an allotment type area within their grounds which are not fully utilised and therefore the take up of the offer of an allotment plot at one of the sites nearest to the school may not be taken up.

The Committee
RESOLVED
That local schools are approached and given the opportunity to pick up a spare allotment plot but that it would be on the understanding that if they were not cultivated they would be taken back

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

Recommendation 2: Lawn Cemetery Compound – Members were advised that the revised quote had come in the same as the original quote.

The Committee
RESOLVED
To go ahead as per the original Resolution from Open Spaces 11.3.12 Minute 13/100

Recommendation 3: Suggested Lighting of Cattle Creep – Concerns of Officers outlined in the report were discussed with additional concerns of the possible vandalism that lighting of this area may bring being raised by Members.

The Committee
RESOLVED
That a letter be written to Transport for London expressing concerns over the proposals and seeking information on the details and basis of their plans.

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

Recommendation 4: 10th Anniversary of the Local Nature Reserve – Members agreed that the Photographic competition be publicised in the forthcoming issue of Chorleywood Matters, the Parish Council Website, Late Night Shopping, Social media and via Friends of the Common with quarterly returns sought for the submission of photographs.

Information lecterns: The final drafts of the maps complete with the artwork produced by the Chorleywood Community Arts Centre to be used on the two information lecterns, funded by the Chiltern Conservation Board through funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, were presented at the meeting. The basic map would be made available to the Parish Council for a cost in the region of £100 which could then be overlaid with other information, e.g. memorial benches on the Common, for a nominal fee. In response to a Member's question the Clerk advised that as the boards are interpretation boards, they were being placed near the areas they give information on i.e. Larks Meadow and Christchurch Pond and not at entry points on to the Common. Comments on the maps were generally very positive with a suggestion that 'Local Nature Reserve since 2004' be added to the title on both. Concerns over the colour of the type would be passed back to the illustrator. For the ponds board the option of the pond titles in boxes was chosen. The Clerk advised that the Lecterns should be in place by the New Year.

The Committee

RESOLVED

To note the information provided and suggestions made and that a letter of thanks be written to the Chiltern Conservation Board (CCB) for funding the lecterns.

This was proposed by Steve Watkins, seconded by Martin Trevett and carried unanimously.

ALLOTMENTS

14/40 OCCUPATION

The Committee

RESOLVED

To note the occupation

14/41 WAITING LISTS

The Committee

RESOLVED

To note the details on the waiting list and congratulated the Allotments Administrator on the reductions that had been made.

14/42 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE ALLOTMENT MEETING

Dog Signage- notices were being sourced to advise dog walkers and tenants to keep dog on leads whilst on the Allotment sites.

New tenants – The question as to whether the Council could trim plots for new tenants had been raised by a new allotment holder. In response to a direct question the Ranger gave a personal view that if a new tenant was prepared to take on a plot in a bad state, they were likely to become a good tenant.

Members discussed the need to educate prospective tenants on the time required to keep a plot in a good state of cultivation which they were assured was already done. Strimming by the Rangers also took up time that was therefore not available for other tasks. It was also noted that the allotments brought in very little income compared to the costs of servicing and maintaining them and that this would be another drain on that income.

SKIPS: The provision of skips for a limited time period, a day or a weekend had been discussed at the allotment meeting. Funding of these was an issue with neither the Council nor the allotment holders being likely to want to fund. The Allotment administrator was asked to approach Three Rivers District Council to see if a one off rubbish collection might be possible.

Use of carpet to suppress weeds: Members were advised that the rule had been brought in the previous years to prohibit the use of carpet on allotment plots. It was felt that that this needed to be re-enforced by notices at the three sites.

Sheds: The Council had been asked whether the tenancy rules could be changed to allow sheds on Allotments. Tenants at the allotment meeting had been mixed in their views on the subject with some suggestion that they might invite vandalism and the current rule for a small tool box being sufficient. Members agreed that sheds could not be allowed at Dog Kennel Lane due to the fact that it is part of the Common. For the other two sites, when Allotment Representatives had been appointed at these sites, the Allotment Administrator would liaise with them to find out what is wanted and bring the information back to the next committee.

Dog Kennel lane Allotment Gate Padlock: Dog Kennel Lane Allotment holders had requested a padlock be installed on the vehicle gate. As access for pedestrians was still maintained this was agreed.

Gates at Dog Kennel Lane Allotments. Members agreed to a request to install two kissing gates, currently in storage, at the top on Dog Kennel Lane allotment site as a prevention measure for a possible repeat of the single occurrence of the cattle getting into the allotments through the gaps in the fence at the top of the site.

LAWN CEMETERY

14/43 INTERMENTS

The Committee
RESOLVED

To note the number of interments that had taken place.

14/44 PROPOSED CHANGE TO CEMETERY RULES TO ALLOW POTTED PLANTS ON GRAVES IN WINTER

Members were advised of the background to this request and shown two examples provided by a local fabricator and advised of the costs of the options. It was suggested that the money raised by the disposal of the unclaimed plaques agreed previously (Minute 14/24) be used to fund the pot holders.

The Committee
RESOLVED

That 50 x 5inch flat sided pot holders be purchased which would then be available to purchase at cost plus VAT by visitors to the Cemetery. These holders would be numbered and the purchaser's details kept on record. The pot holders would be left in place until the end of February when it would be expected that the owners would remove them for storage. The rule amendment was agreed with the addition of a reference to the purchase and removal at the end of the winter of the pot holders by the owners. The originator of the request would be advised by letter of this resolution.

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

COMMON AND GROVEWOOD

14/45 GREEN FLAG AWARD

Members considered the idea of investigating further an application for a green flag award for the common. Members expressed concern over the costs involved, that planning permission would be needed for the flag if successful and that improvements to the area awarded green flag status year on year were required. It was noted that Chorleywood House Estate had been awarded a green Flag and

that this had given them access to funding opportunities but views were also expressed that funding sources were already being tapped into for the Common and that the Common already has plenty of awards.

The Committee

RESOLVED

To reject the idea at this stage.

This was proposed from the Chair by Barbara Green and carried with 6 in favour and one abstention.

GENERAL

14/46 REVISED BUDGET 2014/15

Members discussed the grazing balance sheet produced by the Clerk and in response raised by a member regarding the sunk costs were advised that these had been identified in a paper provided to an earlier committee. In response to a question on the number of cattle, members were advised that there had been six grazing this year with the training of the cattle with the collars taking place over winter. The aim was to get to twelve eventually. It was agreed that the trial this year was not without incident and the collars and fencing issues needed to be resolved with the manufacturers but that overall the trial had been successful. It was noted that the use of a camera loaned from TRDC would be considered if further vandalism of the wire was experienced.

The Committee

RESOLVED

To agree the revised budget.

This was proposed by the Chair and unanimously agreed.

14/47 FEES AND CHARGES 2015/16

The Chairman stated that it had been helpful to have a comparison of fees and charges in other areas for both the Cemetery and the allotments.

Cemetery: Members discussed the possibility of a three tier system for charges and were advised that about 80% of the interments that took place had some connection with Chorleywood. However a more detailed analysis would be undertaken for the Fees and charges exercise the following year.

The Committee

RESOLVED

That

- the increase of 2% (rounded) for the Lawn Cemetery
- the two stage increase for the Foundry increase effective from the 1st January 2015 and the 2% (rounded) with effective from the 1st April 2015 for the Memorial Plaques
- the 2% (rounded) increase to allotment rentals with no increase to the key charge and new tenant admin charge but with the addition of a non refundable key charge for Dog Kennel Lane when the padlock was installed
- The increase of the licence fee for use of the Common for business purposes (not including filming) be rounded to £12.15

As detailed in the report to the committee be agreed

NOTE: Martin Trevett left the Council Chamber whilst the Allotment Fees and Charges were being discussed.

14/48 DRAFT CAPITAL AND REVENUE BUDGET 2015-16

The Clerk advised that the Rangers had requested a replacement item of machinery with an unused item being offered in part exchange and outlined the benefits of the proposed piece of machinery. However as only one quote was available at the meeting the request would be brought back to the next meeting with further quotes available for comparison.

The Committee
RESOLVED
To approve the draft capital and revenue budget 2015-16

14/49 HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Committee
RESOLVED
To note that

- the annual review of the provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) has taken place and the appropriate items under Health and Safety requirements placed on order and
- Disclosure Barring Scotland (DBS) checks which replaced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks had been undertaken for the Rangers.

14/50 CLOSURE

Before the Chairman closed the meeting, Barbara Dickens had attended an event run by the Chilterns Conservation Board regarding Commons and wished other members to be aware that compared to many others the Common had an 'A' team in place with respect to the Common and wished to thank everyone involved on the team.

The meeting having commenced at 8.00 pm closed at 10.30pm.

SignedAgreed via Email..... Date01.12.14.....

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

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