

REPORT OF THE OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE
HELD ON 13th JANUARY 2015

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
Laura Hamilton – Admin Officer

There were three members of the public present.

In the absence of the Chairman, Cllr Trevett chaired the meeting.

Cllr Trevett wished to minute the Committees congratulations to Cllr Green on the birth of her first grandchild.

14/51 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were apologies for absence from Cllrs Barbara Green and Raj Khiroya.

14/52 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

14/53 APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The Committee
RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11th November 2014 which had been discussed at Full Council with no changes made, be approved as a true and correct record.

14/54 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

14/25 Nature Trail: The Clerk updated Members that the re-application for funding had started, but would not be completed until after her return in the spring.

14/39 Information Lecterns The Clerk advised that the Chilterns Conservation Board had offered money for an additional information board which the Parish Council had accepted. The third lectern

depicting the social history of the Common was currently being designed, with the words provided by the former Chairman of Open Spaces Margaret Jarrett. The other two, on the ponds and Larks Meadow were expected to be delivered and installed by the end of the month, weather permitting.

14/55 FINANCIAL COMPARISON STATEMENT 2014/15

The Committee
RESOLVED
To note the report.

14/56 OPEN SPACES OFFICER'S REPORT

May Bushes -Concern was expressed with the work being carried out at the top of the May Bushes with the fact that there was no publicity on why the trees were being felled and the process. The Parish Ranger explained that the work was part of the grassland restoration project being funded by Natural England. The stumps would be ground out in the spring when all the work was completed. The core timber was being stored outside the Stewardship Area and the Ranger was investigating the possibility of a PR exercise during the Easter Holidays using a local saw mill and publicity on what we are doing and why. It is likely that if this can be arranged officers will organise a scavenger hunt with prizes of Easter Eggs etc to encourage the Children to come along.

The Clerk confirmed that the winter work had been approved prior to commencement by the Committee.

Cattle Signs -A Councillor asked if the Cattle signs could be removed when cattle were not grazing. The Ranger advised that most were proper road signs and would need to be cut of and new brackets used each time. Officers were therefore asked to investigate if covers could be purchased to hide the signs whilst grazing was not taking place.

Stress Testing of Memorials in Christ Church – The process and number of grave stones affected was noted by Members. The Clerk advised that this would be a costly exercise which was likely to increase over the next few years. She suggested that Members may wish to consider putting in a budget item for future years. Cllr Trevett suggested that as some of the graves marked soldiers resting places from the First World War that the Royal British Legion may be able to source funding from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission for help towards the costs.

Snow & Ice – Members noted and accepted the advice from the Council's Insurers.

The Committee
RESOLVED
To note the report.

ALLOTMENTS

14/57 OCCUPATION

The Committee
RESOLVED
To note the occupation

14/58 WAITING LISTS

The Committee

RESOLVED

To note the details on the waiting list.

14/59 BEEHIVES AT ALLOTMENT SITES

Members were pleased that bees could be introduced to the Swillett allotment site but asked that when a suitable area had been agreed between officers and the beekeeper that plot holders in the near vicinity were notified.

The Allotment Administrator advised that she would report back to a later meeting and if the scheme was successful it may be possible to put hives at Copmans Wick allotments as well.

The Committee

RESOLVED

To allow two beehives to be placed at the Swillett Allotment Site and for officers to report back to a later meeting on the success of the project.

This was proposed by the Chair and unanimously approved.

LAWN CEMETERY

14/60 INTERMENTS

The Committee

RESOLVED

To note the number of interments that had taken place.

COMMON AND GROVEWOOD

14/61 LETTER FROM THE RURAL PAYMENTS AGENCY

Members were informed that the Clerk had been dealing with this problem for some considerable time. At some stage in 2009/10 an inspector visited Chorleywood Common. They did not make their visit known nor did they advise the Council what part of the Common they inspected. It was the inspector's view that no grazing had taken place. The Clerk has responded several times giving evidence of grazing, including invoices from contractors, farmer transportation licences and photographs proving that the areas had been grazed and also that a cut a lift scheme was undertaken annually. This evidence has never been acknowledged by the RPA nor has there been any evidence of the inspection record or where and when the common was visited. Thus far the Clerk has not paid back any money and had appealed the decision. However as this had been going on for some time, she wanted approval from the committee to keep pursuing the case.

The Committee

RESOLVED

That the Clerk continue to negotiate with the Rural Payments Agency on the alleged overpayment of funding.

14/62 WAR MEMORIAL HALL PERMISSIVE PARKING AREA

Members discussed the issues mentioned in the Letter from NADFAS and sympathised with the sentiment. However it was noted that this area is Common Land and a permissive parking area, in a conservation area and therefore even as land owners the Parish Council is unable to lay a hard surface or Supply Street lights in the area. It was noted that a letter had been received to the WMH Administrator advising that from June NADFAS were cancelling their booking. It was agreed that the Rangers would inspect the surfaces of all the parking areas and the entrance to Cherry Tree Dell with a view of getting a quotation for remedial works to scrape up the surfaces, relay the materials and roll them in. It was confirmed that this work was carried out every 2 – 3 years and whilst not perfect was the best that could be done under the legislation.

The Committee

RESOLVED

That the Clerk write a polite response to NADFAS explaining the legal constraints on the Council and the legislation surrounding Common Land Law.

14/63 PURCHASE OF A 4 WHEEL DRIVE DIESEL FRONT MOWER

The Chairman of the Council wish to note and give credit to the Ranger for looking after the equipment in such a way that the part-exchange value was more than the Council had paid for the machine in the first place. The Parish Ranger explained what the machine could do and how it would improve work to be carried out not only on the Common but in the allotments and cemetery as well.

The Committee

RESOLVED

To the Purchase of a 4 Wheel Drive Diesel Front Mower at a cost of £13598.00 plus the part exchange of the Major Topper.

This was proposed by Cllr Edwards, seconded by Cllr Preedy and unanimously approved.

GENERAL

14/64 HEALTH AND SAFETY

Members noted that there was nothing to report

14/65 CLOSURE

The meeting having commenced at 8.00 pm closed at 9.20pm.

SignedAgreed Via email. Date23.1.15.....

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

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