

REPORT OF THE OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE
HELD ON 10th NOVEMBER 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
Laura Hamilton – Admin Assistant

There were four members of the public present.

15/47 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were apologies for absence from Cllr Martin Trevett

15/48 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

15/49 APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The Committee

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd September 2015 be approved as a true and correct record.

15/50 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

15/37 Officers Report
Recommendation 1 Travellers

Cllr Edwards asked for an update – the Clerk advised that a meeting had been held with the Church who was generally in favour of a height barrier; however they felt that the responsibility for opening and closing the barrier should rest with Christchurch School. Unfortunately no representative from the school was able to attend.

It was also noted that the width of the road may be an issue when looking at ordering a barrier as the cross arm may be too heavy when open for the downward post to support, however this would be looked into in more detail during the winter months.

The Clerk also advised that she had attended a meeting with other Clerks and TRDC to discuss a protocol for the removal of travellers from land within the Three Rivers District. A further meeting was scheduled to look at the legal situations and then a local solicitor will be engaged to work through the protocol for eviction of travellers. All the Parishes will be working on the project for economies of scale and once a protocol has been put together this will be forwarded to this committee for approval.

15/43 Signage on the Common

Cllr Barbara Dickens advised that she has been in contact with the British Horse Society with regard to the route and signage relating to the permissive horse track, and they said they were reluctant to come out to review the signage as the legal status of the horse track was, in their opinion, still unclear. We await further input from them.

Cllr Barbara Dickens also asked for an update on the saw mill. The Parish Ranger advised that it was still a plan to use the saw mill but a different contractor would probably have to be found.

15/51 FINANCIAL COMPARISON STATEMENT 2014/15

The Clerk explained why the miscellaneous budget was larger than expected. She advised that the insurance money had been received following the accident involving Christchurch wall but the works were yet to be carried out. Due to the nature of the work it was unlikely that the repairs would be done until the spring and therefore the money would be carried over to next year.

The Committee

RESOLVED

To note the report.

15/52 OFFICER'S REPORT

Allotment meeting – it was agreed that the allotment holders meeting would take place at 7pm before the March Open Spaces meeting. In the meantime a site visit would be arranged to inspect the problems at Copman's Wick.

Japanese Knotweed and Bamboo – the Parish Ranger advised that there were two areas of Japanese Knotweed on the Common, which had been treated, but it may need additional treatment in the future to eradicate it.

Events on the Common - The Parish Ranger updated members with regard to requests for events on the Common. It was decided after careful consideration that the MENCAP 10K run would not happen on the Common as the route followed the horse track and could be potentially dangerous. We were waiting for the Park Run organisers and the Nordic Walking Group to come back to us following site meetings.

Grazing – The Parish Ranger advised that the cattle had knocked over some of the wooden fencing around the Railway Field, an area used to contain the cattle. This would require repair before the cattle returned next year. Quotations for repairs to the fencing would come back to a future meeting.

Hanging Baskets – Cllr Tony Edwards wished to thank the Rangers for all their help with the ‘Chorleywood in Bloom’ project.

Cllr Barbara Green thanked the Rangers and Officers for a very comprehensive report

The Committee

RESOLVED

To note the report

ALLOTMENTS

15/53 OCCUPATION

It was noted that the Allotment income was more than budgeted.

The Committee

RESOLVED

To note the occupation

15/54 WAITING LISTS

The Committee

RESOLVED

To note the details on the waiting list.

LAWN CEMETERY

15/55 INTERMENTS

The Committee

RESOLVED

To note the number of interments that had taken place.

COMMON AND GROVEWOOD

15/56 FOUR YEAR VISION

The Committee considered all the areas within the Four Year Vision - it was felt that a budget should be added to the revenue for surveys as this was likely to be ongoing. The Committee agreed to include £500 in the revenue budget for the forthcoming year towards surveys on the Common.

Cllr Barbara Green suggested that the surfacing of the permissive parking areas should be included in the Four Year Vision as the committee had discussed this in previous meetings. The Clerk also advised that in the next four years the parking surface at Christchurch was likely to need replacing. She told the committee that the current surface had been laid 18 years ago at a cost of £60,000 and advised that a budget should be set aside for this.

Members discussed the possibility of Christchurch and the School making a financial contribution toward the cost of replacing the carpark surface. The Clerk advised that as a formal parking area the Council could charge for parking if they wished.

It was felt that a meeting should be arranged between the Parish Council, the Church and the School in the New Year to discuss both security and parking with the possibility of parking fees to help cover the costs of refurbishment.

It was agreed that the priorities for the Four Year Vision would be as follows,

1. Security Improvements to the Common
2. Parking Area improvements
3. Copmans Wick Allotment improvements
4. Surveys
5. Signage improvements
6. Investigation of a Leisure Trail (possible CIL Funding)
7. Allotment water harvesting and storing.

The Committee

RESOLVED

To approve the Four Year Vision

That officers look into surfacing for the Permissive parking areas by contacting other common land owners

To arrange a meeting with Christchurch and the school to discuss security of the Common and parking arrangements.

15/57 REVISED BUDGET 15/16

The Committee

RESOLVED

To approve the Revised Budget for 2015/16

15/58 DRAFT FEES AND CHARGES 2016/17

Members discussed the report and noted that a comprehensive comparison had been carried out the previous year. It was also noted that the Officer had collated information with regard to addresses of deceased people to ascertain if a three tier system may be required. It was noted that this would probably confuse the issue and acknowledged it would make very little difference to the income.

It was also agreed that the licence for using the Common should be rounded to £12.25 per hour.

The Committee

RESOLVED

To approve the fees and charges as per the report with the exception of Common licensing which would be rounded to £12.25 and that a two tier system for internments remains, one price for parishioners and one for non-parishioners.

15/59 DRAFT REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET FOR 2016/17

Members discussed the report and looked at the capital machinery budget. The Clerk advised that the only piece of equipment in need of repair currently was the rough terrain vehicle. She advised that she had got a replacement cost of £11,000 but felt that it would be better in the short term to repair the current one.

The Parish Ranger suggested that it may be beneficial to purchase another RTV as the current one was constantly in demand in the cemetery which then meant it prohibited him from carry out work on the common when it was wet, as the tractor was too heavy and caused damage to the common. The Clerk asked if there was space in the tractor sheds for storage. The Ranger advised that in his view to release capital and create space perhaps the second tractor could be sold as the new front end mower was doing the work more effectively at the allotments and was also being utilised on the Common and in the cemetery. The Chairman was concerned that the tractor was purchased quite recently on the advice of the Rangers and that Councillors relied on their advice as to what was required. The Chairman was concerned that we were committing large sums of public money into equipment which then wasn't being used.

The Clerk suggested that she should speak to all the Rangers to audit all the equipment and ascertain what was needed and what was required. She would report back to the next meeting with the information for further consideration.

The Committee

RESOLVED

To approve the Revenue and Capital budgets for 2016/17 with the exception of the following

- To set up a new budget line in the revenue budget for surveys £500
- To set up a new budget line in the Capital budget for carparks £20,000

This was proposed by the Chair and carried unanimously.

15/60 WINTER WORKS 2015-16

The Parish Ranger advised that whilst the list was fairly comprehensive, it was not likely that all the work could be carried out in one year. Options were open to carry out works from all three categories dependent on weather.

The Clerk advised that scheduled works would be publicised on the website and whenever possible signs would be put up on the common explaining the works and why they were being carried out.

The Ranger went on to explain that there was currently only one task allocated to the Volunteers however this covered a large area and would take some time. If however the Volunteers wanted to be involved in other areas, this could be accommodated.

The Committee

RESOLVED

To approve the winter works programme for 2015-16

15/61 REQUEST FOR TREE WORKS TO BE CARRIED OUT ON CHORLEYWOOD COMMON FROM CHORLEYWOOD GOLF CLUB.

Following consultation with the Parish Ranger who did not have any objections or concerns with the proposed works

The Committee

RESOLVED

To approve the proposed tree works from Chorleywood Golf Club.

15/62 SHEPHERDS BRIDGE

The Clerk asked Members to ignore her report as she had received a revised plan that afternoon. However this plan required the barrier to be placed 1.2m from the fence line, which would impede access and create a corridor effect, basically taking a substantial area of land out of the common. The revised plan also included a chevron sign which would be adjacent to the bridge which again could impede access and make the bridge more dangerous for pedestrians. Finally there was an issue that LUL wishes to change the layout of the road, which would encroach onto Common land, creating additional highway. The Clerk advised that to give away part of the common for highway was not within our gift and if HCC and LUL proved there was no alternative, a S16 application would be required for land exchange.

With this information
The Committee
RESOLVED

To reject the current proposals from LUL and ask them to rethink the scheme.

15/63 PARKING OUTSIDE THE OLD SHEPHERD

Members looked at the photographic evidence and conceded that the Parish Council had to do something to protect residents who had paid an easement to park their cars outside their residences. The Clerk explained that the problem was caused by commuter parking as there was insufficient parking in the station carpark. She had asked people to lobby LUL for additional station parking, which no doubt the parish council would support. However it was not the responsibility of the Parish Council to provide off street parking for commuters.

The Committee agreed and
RESOLVED

That the Officers organise a parking meter scheme for the Old Shepherd permissive parking area, to operate at the same times as the rest of the area.

As residents and the Old Shepherd pub had paid easements, two parking permits would be issued to each property to allow them to continue to park without having to obtain a parking ticket.

GENERAL

15/64 HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Committee noted the report.

15/46 CLOSURE

The meeting having commenced at 7.30 pm closed at 9.30pm.

Signed Agreed Via Email Date 16th November 2015

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

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