

Chorleywood Parish Council: Open Spaces Committee -

**Notes by GH (in attendance as a member of the public)
of matters relevant to Chorleywood Common
raised at the meeting on 6 March 2012**

Matters arising from Minutes –

Play Area Committee – the office has not yet heard whether the availability of grant funding has actually been confirmed by TRDC; and the Committee's Report has not yet been sent to TRDC, though this will shortly be done. Cllr Watkins reported that the Chiltern Open Air Museum had acquired various items of play equipment, including an Anderson shelter, a replica caravan and a log swing, at considerable expense (£56,000 was mentioned). [*See also "Four Year Vision", below.*]

Grazing Working Party –Cllr Mrs Worrall thanked the members of the Council and of the staff who attended the site meeting on 29 February, and particularly Cllr Mrs Hayward, for keeping control of what at one stage threatened to become an acrimonious discussion, and the Rangers for the practical information they supplied. The meeting was intended principally for residents who were opposed to, or had concerns about, the grazing proposal, and turned out to be a useful one: it appeared that the information provided had gone some way towards meeting the concerns of at least some of those attending who had opposed the grazing project or been doubtful about particular features of it. (Three of the residents who had signed the petition opposing the section 38 application said they wished to withdraw their opposition.) A considerable proportion of the remaining opposition is based on what the parties concerned consider to be a loss of visual amenity, rather than objections to grazing in principle.

There will be a further site meeting on Thursday 15 March, starting at 10:30 a.m. outside the Black Horse pub, intended principally for residents who support the project; thereafter public meetings for further consultation and discussion will be held, probably in April; and details of the revised grazing proposals will be published in Chorleywood Matters and put on the Council's website. Additional information on the cost of temporary fencing is being sought but has not yet been received. It was explained that if the revised proposals comply fully with the relevant exemption from Commons Act 2006 section 38, in particular by utilising temporary, not permanent, fencing within the Common, and by leaving an interval of at least six months between periods of grazing, those who continue to disagree will be entitled and able to publicise their disagreement, but will not be able to ask Defra to intervene.

The Management Plan Update is being prepared for publication; the next stage will be proofreading.

Ranger's Report –

Trees – scrub removal has continued; tree surgeons' work is nearly complete; [*at the time of writing these Notes, the work on the ash trees at the Kennels complex appears to*

have been finished;] dangerous dead trees near the Fire Rides have been removed (dead trees which are not hazardous to users of the Common are left as wildlife habitats); and stumps at the Top Common Ponds and elsewhere will be ground out, probably, in March;

Ponds – the silt in Christchurch Pond has been tested and shows high levels of contamination; the Environment Agency will advise on how best to dispose of it.

Miscellaneous – the parking areas at Christchurch and adjacent to the Old Shepherd pub have been successfully resurfaced; three replacement benches have been installed; and a French drain has been dug outside the Cricket Club to deal with run-off from the parking area – though the Club reports that the problem has simply been moved, not solved; there will be a further inspection in rainy conditions.

Oral history of the Common –

The Chiltern Conservation Board has approached the Council, suggesting the collection of oral histories from local residents; there is a volunteer who is prepared to make contact with people who have stories to tell, and conduct interviews and write them up, for preservation or publication. The Committee considered that such a project did not need the Parish Council's permission; if thought appropriate, it could be given publicity in Chorleywood Matters. Cllr Mrs Jarrett said she believed the suggestion was part of the Conservation Board's project on the history of Commons; she would make enquiries at the Commons Forum and report to a future meeting. Cllr Dr Eve said that any history of the Common needed to be done fully and thoroughly, and should not be confined to such interviews.

Residents' Association offer of dog bins –

The Residents' Association has offered to purchase two additional dog bins for the Common; they will have to be placed somewhere on the perimeter (rather than in the Fire Ride as suggested by the Association) because the collection services will only collect from perimeter locations. The Rangers suggest one bin near the Alms Houses and the other at the "Lorry" permissive parking area (between the cricket club and the traffic lights).

The Clerk has made enquiries about the charges made by different contractors for emptying dog bins; there is a contractor recommended by other Parish Councils who would charge very considerably less per bin than Three Rivers, currently used; even with two additional bins in use, it would be possible to make a significant saving by changing the contractor, though if the system works as hoped, that will be partly offset by an increase in the number of bags used (the Council pays for them and they are free to dog owners). The Committee decided to accept with thanks the Residents' Association's offer, and to authorise the officers to change the contractor. It was noted that ordinary litter (such as beer cans) was sometimes placed in dog bins; but the collection service had not noted it as a particular problem, and it was undesirable on health and safety grounds to put open litter bins next to covered dog bins (because then people would be likely to put dog bags in with the ordinary litter).

Ice cream concession –

The concession had been put out to tender and two bids had been received. The Committee decided to accept the higher bid (not from the current operator) for a licence to trade seven days per week (though the operator may not be present for the whole of the time permitted; weekends and holidays are apparently the most profitable times).

“Four Year Vision” –

The Full Council had invited the Committee to put forward up to 5 items for consideration for inclusion in the Council’s forward planning; after discussion, the Committee unanimously resolved, on Cllr Mrs Jarrett’s proposal from the Chair, to suggest –

- the Hollybush Hall field study centre project (in conjunction with the Village Halls committee);
- a calendar of plant and wildlife surveys to be undertaken;
- an invitation to Bill Cattle to train volunteers to assist with, and eventually continue, his very valuable annual butterfly and moth surveys; [*I undertook to raise this for discussion at the next Friends of the Common Committee meeting, Monday 12 March;*]
- the creation of an informal leisure trail on the Common, details to be considered and the Rangers to be asked to put forward ideas, but possibly using available natural materials for younger and older childrens’ play items, or exercise items for all ages;
- water harvesting and other ways of providing irrigation for the allotments.

Possible Farmers’ Market –

Since the agenda for the meeting was sent out, the Clerk had been approached with a suggestion to hold a Farmers’ Market at the cricket club or “Lorry” permissive parking area: the promoter suggested a one-off 25 stall market, on a date in April to be arranged, promoting local produce. After discussion, the Committee considered that the proposal raised practical difficulties, including the amount of necessary licensing, the restricted area available (it was thought that neither of the locations suggested would be big enough for 25 stalls plus stallholders’ vehicles plus customers’ vehicles), and the possible effect of bad weather on customer turnout and on conditions underfoot; and the Committee further considered that allowing this proposed Farmers’ Market might set an undesirable precedent. The sense of the meeting was that the Clerk should inform the applicant that the proposal was not considered appropriate for the Common, but the appropriate Committee would consider any application which might be made to book the Memorial Hall for that purpose.

GH