

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 10 November 2015

Agenda at <http://www.chorleywood-pc.gov.uk/pdf/agendas/CWPC-Open-Spaces-Agenda-2015-11-10.pdf>

Supporting papers at <http://www.chorleywood-pc.gov.uk/pdf/agendas/CWPC-Open-Spaces-Agenda-Committee-Reports-2015-11-10.pdf>

Matters arising from the Minutes of the Meeting on 22 September.

- **Proposed barrier at Christ Church:** the officers have discussed the proposal with the Church; it will probably not be a problem with them. The School has not yet been consulted. Any barrier will have to be in a position which enables the delivery lorry to get completely off the road and if necessary to back out again. The exact form of the barrier needs further consideration: the access is so wide that an overhead barrier might be too heavy; but lockable bollards, the alternative, would be liable to seize up (and travellers might simply cut off the padlocks). TRDC say that travellers are unlikely to come back before next spring; the District is planning to make arrangements before then to deal with any repeated incursions, including instructing a solicitor with offices near the Court building to be ready to make urgent applications. There are possible economies of scale if all the parishes in the District join in making preparations.
- **Horse track signage:** the local representative of the British Horse Society is unwilling to come to advise whilst (as he considers) there is “a dispute” between CWPC and some riders as to the extent to which riders are allowed to use the Common. The Society’s headquarters is obtaining counsel’s opinion on that question. Cllr Dickens will follow up with the BHS in two weeks time.
- **The mobile sawmill:** the Ranger indicated that it will be necessary to find another sawmill.

Financials: there are negotiations in progress for two easements over the Common; proceeds will be “ring-fenced” for use in connection with the Common. The figures include £10,000 more “miscellaneous” income than projected: that represents the proceeds of an insurance claim for the Christ Church wall, which will have to be spent on repairs when weather permits (lime mortar is needed, but cannot be used in cold weather).

Open Spaces Report. [*Agenda papers pages 8-12; what follows is a summary of the main points of the Report and the Committee’s discussions.*] Mowing and cut-and-lift are now complete. The Ranger, with some help from FoCC volunteers, has cut some of the hawthorn saplings in Larks Meadow - but there are still many left, and further work now would be a risk to the orchids’ growth cycle. The Ranger has met representatives

of parkrun and of Mencap, who were both offered the use of, principally, the fire rides for their running events: Mencap considered the areas offered were not suitable for their needs; parkrun have not yet replied. The Ranger has arranged to meet the person proposing to use the Common for “Nordic walking”. The Ranger has also met the Weed Control contractor, who is dealing with one area of Bamboo and two of Japanese Knotweed - some further treatments may be required. The grazing has gone well considering the number of cows (five); it is possible that eight will come next year, and that the chalk grassland will then be grazed to the optimum extent. The cattle have now left, after some difficulty because the stockman’s trailer got bogged down in soft ground near the railway field; also because of the soft ground, the fence posts at the railway field and the corral have rotted and as a result have suffered damage from the cattle. It is not cost-effective to put those posts in sockets; a quotation for their replacement will be obtained and considered at the next meeting of the Committee. The Ranger has noted Wasp Spider eggs in the heather along Common Road. A visit from CMS in connection with the suggested new pond is still awaited. There has been a “habitats” walk and talk with Christchurch School, much appreciated.

The Committee thanked the Rangers for their help with ‘Chorleywood in Bloom’.

Four Year Vision. The Open Spaces Committee’s projects include -

- signage (including the Horse Track); there are Health and Safety considerations;
- Copmans Wick allotments: clear fly-tipping; tree work; discuss with TRDC a new fence on the boundary with their land;
- surveys of flora and fauna on the Common: consider what is the best frequency and time of year for each survey; use the mapping system to record results; a budget of £500 a year was suggested;
- a Nature Trail is an ongoing project [*see previous Notes*]: ‘community infrastructure levy’ funding may be available;
- water harvesting, and mapping existing water pipes to avoid damaging them;
- security for the Common [*see ‘proposed barrier’ under Matters Arising, above*];
- permanent improvements to the surfaces of the permissive parking areas, and renewal of the Christ Church car park: past repairs to the permissive areas have not been long-lasting; the possibility of more permanent repairs is under investigation (the topic has been raised in Commons Forums); the ‘grasscrete’ at Christ Church, which is an official car park, is coming towards the end of its life and any replacement is likely to be expensive, so it is desirable to start making provision in CWPC’s budget, and to ask the Church and the School to contribute (in the past they have said they cannot afford to do so - it may therefore be necessary for the Council to recoup some of its expenditure by charging for the use of that car park, perhaps with the first half hour free so that parents on the school run are not charged); it will be necessary to meet the Church and the School.

The Committee considered that the **priority items** were Copmans Wick allotments; parking; and security for the Common.

Fees and charges 2016/17: the Committee approved the increases in the agenda papers [*pages 20-21*] in the charges for the cemetery, the allotments, and licences to use the Common, designed to implement Policy & Resources Committee's advice to adopt increases of 1%, approximately the current rate of inflation.

Budget 2016/17: the Committee **decided** to suggest, for consideration by Policy & Resources, an item of £20,000 to start making provision for parking works [*see above*], and £500 for surveys. There was also a discussion of the Council's rough terrain vehicle, tractors, mowers and other machinery: the question whether the machinery is appropriate for the work needed should be kept under review. Leasing does not provide value for money: the way the council's machines are used and maintained means that they hold their value and achieve substantial trade-in prices when replaced.

Winter works 2015-16 [*agenda papers page 29*]: the Rangers have listed works that need doing, subject to resources and weather conditions, and ranked them as high, medium or low priority. They will not all be completed in one winter - the list needs to include different types of work to suit varying weather and ground conditions. One bench is to be moved out of danger, at the Golf Club's suggestion, to a place which has been agreed with the family who provided it. The particular work suggested as suitable for volunteers is coppicing the bushes along the bank between the bottom of Larks Meadow and the lower chalk slope, and using the cut wood to repair the hedge between the Common and the Railway Field. (The list also includes work on heather and gorse which may be suitable for any volunteers who are particularly interested.) The work done, and the reasons for it, will receive publicity. The Committee **approved** the list.

Golf Club's request for tree works: the Ranger had no problem with the Club's request; the work could be justified on conservation grounds. The Committee **agreed** to the request, subject to the Club being responsible for the contractor, risk assessment, insurance &c.

LUL's proposals for Shepherds Bridge: LUL had fundamentally altered the proposals in the agenda papers [*pages 32-33 and supplementary material*] - they had been proposing a low safety barrier (wooden rails on steel supports) half a metre from their fence on the north side of the railway, from the bridge for about 30 m towards the cattle creep; what they now wanted was to put the barrier on the Common 1.2 m (4 feet) from the fence, to put a chevron sign on bollards across the gap between the bridge masonry and the end of the barrier, and to move the carriageway at the approach to the bridge away from the railway to create a less sharp corner onto the bridge - which would involve taking part of the Common, at the entrance to the Shepherds Bridge parking area, into the highway. (Apparently LUL wanted to protect their fence and railway against the possibility of an articulated lorry coming down the slope at 40 mph and overshooting the bridge.) The Clerk reported that she had spoken to Defra, who considered that permission for that work would be required under Commons Act 2006 section 38; for planning

purposes it might be permitted development, or planning permission might also be required. The Committee **decided not to accept** LUL's request, and to ask them to reconsider, because of the impact of their proposals, as revised, on the Common. Cllr Dickens commented that a model or detailed graphic would make such proposals easier to understand.

Parking outside the Old Shepherd: since the ticketing system was introduced at the Memorial Hall and Shepherds Bridge, commuters have started leaving their cars outside, and obstructing vehicular access to, the Old Shepherd and adjoining cottages - and some of those properties have easements for access by car. It was therefore proposed that the ticketing system should be extended to that area; it would require another ticket machine and suitable notices, and would cost about £1200. The Committee **decided** that the system ought to be extended in that way; residents who had easements entitling them to leave cars there could be given passes, and customers of the pub would be on the spot to obtain tickets when the machine was in operation. It was also suggested that the problem would be obviated if LUL could be persuaded to build another layer on the station car park. [*Thought: what about using the area on the west, Amersham, side of the existing boundary of the car park?*]

Health and safety: there was a health and safety audit in October, which indicated that certain actions were required; the urgent matters had been dealt with and the others would be put in hand.

GH