

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 12 January 2016

Agenda at <http://www.chorleywood-pc.gov.uk/pdf/agendas/CWPC-Open-Spaces-Agenda-2016-01-12.pdf>

Supporting papers at <http://www.chorleywood-pc.gov.uk/pdf/agendas/CWPC-Open-Spaces-Agenda-Committee-Reports-2016-01-12.pdf> [not including *Open Spaces Officers Report*, Agenda item 6; GH has a scan and can supply copies by e-mail.]

Cllr Trevett in the chair; apologies received from Cllr Green

Matters arising from Minutes of meeting on 10 November 2015: *dealing with incursions by travellers:* there has been a meeting with Abbots Langley and other Hertfordshire clerks, when the problem was discussed in some detail; no firm conclusions have yet been reached, but the principle of cooperation between authorities is agreed.

Financials: are healthy; the budget includes the insurance money for repairing the wall at Christchurch - it has not yet been spent because the work should not be done during the winter.

Open Spaces Officers' Report; five recommendations.

1 *Dog Kennel Lane* Instead of a 40 mph speed limit, Hertfordshire Highways have now proposed giving priority, at the narrow point by South Cottage, to traffic coming up from Berry Lane. Their proposals for signage would involve greatly reducing the height of the hedge between the road and the allotments, almost down to the top of the bank, and the Committee considered that this might create a danger for pedestrians walking between the hedge and the allotments. It was suggested that the signs might be raised in height and the hedge might be cut back along its length and only reduced in height close to the signs. After discussion, the Committee decided to reply saying that the proposal for altered priority is acceptable in principle but the hedge should be retained as far as possible, and suggesting a site meeting to discuss details.

2 *Top Common Pond South: proposed works* Two quotations have been received for dredging the vegetation and silt and temporarily stacking it in a straw-and-membrane bund until it has dried out and can be removed (possibly in April). Similar work to that pond was last done about 20 years ago and is needed under the terms of the Stewardship agreement, in particular because Great Crested Newts need a significant area of open water. It may be necessary to test the silt for contamination and deal with it accordingly. The Ranger had checked whether there were newts in the pond at present and would check again; if there were none, the work could go ahead on seven days notice. The Council had used both the quoting companies in the past, though not company A for pond work; the Ranger would supervise it. Natural England was comforta-

ble with the proposals. The Committee decided to accept company A's quote (the lower by about £1000). [*Note: the work has now been done.*]

3 *Trees by the railway* It is necessary to remove or reduce some of the trees growing on the Common near to the railway, to ensure that they do not fall, or drop branches, onto the tracks. Two of the three companies asked to quote for the work had done so; they were both recommended and used by London Underground. Some of the work would be close to the badger sett [*east of the railway field*] and company A [*not the same company A as in the previous item*] had recommended obtaining an ecological report and investigating whether 'badger licences' would be needed; even so, that company's quote was considerably lower, and the Committee decided to accept it.

4 *Bee Orchids in the lower chalk slope below Larks Meadow* The Ranger has identified 52 Bee Orchid plants in part of the lower chalk slope, and there are more elsewhere. They show signs of trampling and rodent damage, and the question arises whether they should be protected. They have seeded successfully largely because of the trampling of the ground by the grazing cattle, and protecting them with (say) chicken wire would not be helpful and would tend to draw attention to them. After discussion the Committee decided to place notices at the entrances to the relevant area along the lines of 'Please be careful of rare plants' and to review what happens. The Clerk noted that the positions of the plants can be plotted on the new digital mapping system.

The Clerk reported that an inspector from Natural England had attended and looked at the Common in detail, and was pleased with the state of the heather, the ponds and the Common generally; everything was well maintained and important habitat was being protected. These favourable comments will be recorded on the website and in the newsletter.

5 *Golf Club: new tee markers* The Golf Club has asked permission to install new and more substantial tee markers, let into and flush with the surface of the ground, one per tee, to comply with new rules introduced by the R & A. The Ranger reported that this would not be problematic and would be an improvement on the present red and white markers, which are held down by nails that are sometimes pulled out and create a danger to pedestrians and to machinery. The Committee agreed to the request.

Other matters: *parking at the Old Shepherd* The ticket machine &c has now been installed; the Clerk reported that the residents accept the system, and the company enforcing it will work with them and the landlord of the pub.

Scrub clearance and hurdle opposite War Memorial Hall were noted.

A cedar tree had been planted near Old Common Road The Ranger explained that this had been done without any authority and the tree had been removed.

The felled timber at Larks Meadow has been removed; the price received for it is £600, which will be ring-fenced for the Common.

A request for filming has been received; it will involve the Larks Meadow area and some parking facilities will be needed.

One of the horse track signs has fallen; those remaining should be tested for safety, and the public informed that this is what is happening.

Four Year Vision The Auditor has suggested that all Four Year Vision items should be referred to Policy and Resources Committee for incorporation in the Council's Strategic Plan. One of Open Spaces Committee's items is signage; the Committee agreed that the Clerk should investigate possibilities for new signs for the Horse Track (including asking the advice of the Country Landowners' Association) and report to the next meeting.

Website All Committees are being asked to consider improvements to the Council's website. It was suggested that Open Spaces' activities could be reported in a 'Ranger's Blog', and a 'Frequently Asked Questions' section would be useful. Cllr White offered to prepare a first draft, and indicated that she would be willing to consider suggestions from members of the Council and from residents.

Butterfly survey It has been a mixed year for butterflies; the Ranger and the volunteers between them have seen 23 species of butterfly and 4 species of day-flying moth (not including, this time, the Five-Spot Burnett).

Request for footpath from Colleyland to Darvells Yard A resident had asked the Council to install edge-boards and gravel to make up the path across the Common from the top of Colleyland to opposite Darvells Yard, saying that it is muddy and water-logged. Several members of the Committee had recently walked that path; they considered that it was not particularly bad and other areas were worse. The Clerk advised that making up such a footpath would be contrary to the Commons Act 2006 because imported materials are not permitted; would also be contrary to the Stewardship Agreement; would tend to suggest, wrongly, that pedestrians ought to keep to that route; and would be a precedent for other requests for made-up paths. The existing hard surface opposite the top of Colleyland and opposite Darvells Yard was not imported gravel, but the natural subsoil where the turf had worn away. After discussion, the Committee decided to refuse the request; the Clerk would prepare a letter for Cllr Trevett to send to the resident, explaining the reasons why it is not possible to make up a footpath on the Common.

Rough terrain vehicles A quotation had been received for supplying two rough terrain vehicles, part-exchanging the existing RTV and the small tractor (at values reflecting the high standard to which the rangers maintain them). It was considered that the transaction would be desirable, and the Committee decided to go ahead, and to accept the quotation received unless a better one could be obtained, the decision being left to the Chairman.

Health and safety Personal protection equipment for the Rangers was on order.

GH