

**Date: TUESDAY 17<sup>th</sup> MAY 2016**

**Subject: OPEN SPACES OFFICERS REPORT**

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**Committee Member:**

**Officer Contributors:** Andrew Goddard Parish Ranger, Claire James Deputy Clerk

**Status (public or exempt):** Public

**Wards affected:** All

**Enclosures:** Appendix 1 Ash Dieback Advice  
Appendix 2 Christchurch Churchyard Tree Survey & survey of tree at Cedars Cottage  
(due to size of document sent separately to all Councillors)

**Contact for further information:** Parish Rangers, Deputy Clerk

## **1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1 Licence to run fitness classes on the Common:**

Members are asked to consider a new request for a licence to run fitness classes on the Common ***(See 5.5.9 - last paragraph)***

### **2 Common Management Plan Review**

Members are asked to consider the involvement of Countryside Management Services (CMS) in the Review of the Common Management Plan ***(See 5.5.10)***

### **3 Allotments – Copmans Wick Fencing**

Members are asked to consider the two quotes which will be available at the meeting for the fencing at Copmans Wick Allotments. ***(See para 5.7)***

### **4 Allotments – Wooded area at edge of Copmans Wick Allotments**

Members are asked to consider an approach from a nearby resident regarding the wooded area at Copmans Wick between the Allotments and TRDC land with an offer to either purchase the area or let long term, should the Council be so minded with a view to assisting with the upkeep of the area. ***(See Para 5.7)***

## **5 PARISH PATHS**

Members are asked to consider the proposal of the production of a Parish paths Leaflet with an inaugural meeting held with local community interest groups and a number of Councillors from the Open Spaces Committee. ***(See Para 5.9)***

## **2. RELEVANT PREVIOUS DECISIONS**

None

## **3. FINANCIAL, STAFFING, ICT AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 None Specific

## **4. LEGAL ISSUES**

4.1 None Specific

## **5.BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **5.1 CEMETERY**

5.1.1 Grass cutting has commenced and will now continue throughout the season.

5.1.2 Planting of the low growing hedge around the children's section in the Cemetery has now been completed and two larger specimen plants have been planted to create an entrance to this section from the path. The replanting of the old rose bed at the end of Section B has also now taken place. Watering of both has been taking place due to the weather and the need to get the plants established. It will take time for the replanted bed to match the bed opposite but it has been planted in the same manner.

5.1.3 Weeding and general maintenance of all the other planted areas has taken place.

5.1.4 Additional grave shores have been purchased to ensure that when shoring is required there is sufficient to completely shore a grave. New Cemetery Greens have also been delivered. These have eyelets that allow them to be anchored down when in use.

5.1.5 Topping up and seeding of graves continues, often with the fine soil provided by the moles.

### **5.2 CHRIST CHURCH CEMETERY**

5.2.1 Emergency works to two trees identified in the tree survey of Christchurch Churchyard have been completed. Quotes for the remedial works that need to be undertaken in the next year according to the survey will be sought later in the year and brought to the appropriate meeting of Open Spaces Committee for approval. An electronic copy of the Survey Report is being sent to all Councillors.

5.2.2 Quotes for laying down the gravestones that failed the stress testing are still being sought. In parallel the Office at Christchurch has been advised of those memorials that have failed and families are being contacted.

5.2.3 Repairs to the wall at Christchurch damaged eighteen months ago are being progressed. It is hoped that the repairs will take place later this month. We are currently negotiating with the company to try to ensure that the majority of the works take place during the school half term, although as the estimate for the works is approximately two weeks, some inconvenience can be expected. The office is in touch with both the Church and school to try to minimise this.

### **5.3 GROVEWOOD**

Litter picking continues to take place regularly.

## 5.4 TREWORK

Tree work has taken place as follows::

- Removal of Oak Tree at the Cricket Club – trunks have been used to block the Village Day Fire rides against illegal incursion. Logs left following the works were gone the next day.
- Hanging Branch on a tree at Lorry permissive parking area (out of safe working reach of Rangers) has been removed
- The Railway contractors have been back to finish the tree work next to the Railway line in accordance with the specification agreed.
- The Common Ranger has felled some minor scrub trees and saplings in the May bushes area. Larger trees in this area to be felled later in the year have been ring barked to prevent excessive shading of the grassland and leaf drop. Signs have been put up in the area explaining this work.
- The crowns have been raised on a number of trees and overhanging branches have been cut back along the permissive horse track on the Dog Kennel Lane side of the Common to allow better access for the horse riders on the track.
- A number of windblown trees have been cut and cleared, these included a Cherry on the permissive horse track at the Dog Kennel Lane side, some Hawthorns in the May bushes, Willow in the woodland north east of the Common, several Birch trees in the central block of woodland, an Elder and a Birch tree by Cherry Tree Cottages and a dangerous Birch felled in the central block of woodland.
- A tree came down on the fence of one of the properties at Darvells Yard which caused damage to the fence. The tree has been removed, it was a four stemmed tree, one of the stems came down on the fence and it was felt advisable that the remaining three stems be removed as well. Contractors are currently being approached to quote for the fence repairs which will be at the Council's expense.
- An additional small ash tree was felled further down the boundary with Darvells Yard which had been agreed in the Autumn last year.
- Cleared and removed a large hung up oak limb on the Village Day Fire ride.
- At Appendix 1 is a briefing recently received regarding Chalara dieback of Ash

## 5.5 COMMON

### 5.5.1 General:

Litter picking of the woodland behind Berry Lane has taken place. Two very large RTV loads of rubbish were removed from behind the properties on Berry Lane. Notices have now been placed to the rear of the properties advising that Fly tipping is illegal. The area will now be regularly monitored to see if the tipping continues.

Scrapes were created in the heathland areas on Common Road . Turfs and a thin layer of organic matter were removed to expose the underlying mineral soil. These were then raked and reseeded with heather seed collected from the common in the Autumn. The turfs were used to repair some of the damaged ground around the Top Common pond area where the works were carried out over winter.

Repair works have been completed where contractors failed to satisfactorily re-instate ground last year after infrastructure works on behalf of Affinity Water. Payment for this work is still being chased.

A number of heaps of grass cuttings were cleared from the acid grassland adjacent to the cricket pitch which were left by the Cricket groundsman. This was to prevent nutrient enrichment to these important areas of acid grassland.

Pulling/cutting of hawthorn saplings has continued on Larks Meadow, some still remain but will continue to be removed when time allows.

Brush piles from the various tree works over the winter have been removed.

A parking advice sign has been installed near the Alms Houses advising parking is for residents only.

Saplings have been removed from the banks at Old Common Road.

Cut and collect of brambles and scrub near the horse track at Dog Kennel Lane has taken place.

Cutting and lifting has taken place between the verge and the ditch on Common Road, the main verge on Common Road, the area next to Darvells Yard, strips on the area of grass opposite the Kennels, the top of Wynnets Hill, the verges and smaller areas on Dog Kennel Lane, verges and islands at Chorleywood Bottom and the lushest areas on the Chorleywood Bottom slope.

Strimming and cutting has taken place on the A404 verge, the banks of Old Common Road and the verge on the hairpin bend. Amenity areas have been cut by the Cricket outfield and by Church Pond.

A small amount of wire for the grazing fence was once again disturbed and has been re-buried.

**5.5.2 Orchids:** A pyramidal orchid first noted last year on the verge leading to the Paddocks at Dog Kennel Lane has finally been located again this year. This has allowed it to be avoided when carrying out mowing in this area.

**5.5.3 An unusual insect** to the Common has recently been spotted. Reports of a **blue coloured bee** were received at the office this week. It was seen in the grassland adjacent to Shepherds Bridge Parking area. We would appreciate any further sightings of this unusual insect being reported to the Parish Office or Rangers. The species is as of yet unknown until further evidence is gathered.

#### **5.5.4 Ponds:**

Top Common Pond South has now been cleared of debris and the resulting silt has been drying off in the bunded areas. It is now suitably dry for removal and quotes are being sought. After such major disturbance the remaining debris within the pond will some time to settle back down. A number of factors can affect this, the first being dogs etc running into the pond which will continue to disturb the water, if anyone places fish in the pond then they are likely to feed within any remaining sediment again clouding the water. It is hoped however that this latter reason is not happening and notices advising people not to place anything in the pond have been in place since the work was carried out. As the plants continue to develop within the pond they will begin to trap and lock in debris more effectively causing the pond to clear more quickly at this stage.

Surveying has taken place within the ponds and newts of some description have been found to be breeding in all the ponds

Ponds	Frogspawn	Toadspawn	Great Crested Newt's Eggs	Smaller newts eggs
Sladdys	25.2.16	*	3/5/16	3/5/16
Top Common North	22/3/16	-	3/5/16	3/5/16
New Pond	22/3/16	4/4/16	-	3/5/16
Dew Pond	22/3/16	4/4/16	3/5/16	3/5/16
Church Pond	22/3/16	22/3/176	4/4/16	4/4/16
Darvells Pond	4/4/16	4/4/16	3/5/16	-
Top Common South	-	-	4/4/16	3/5/16

Dates shown are when the species were first noted, not necessarily when the eggs were laid

\*' Tadpoles are now present within this pond but the spawn was not noted at the time of surveys

'-' indicates that these species have not been noted at this time, it does not mean that they are not present, just that they were not spotted on the days of the surveys.

Following a call from a member of the public a small child's ride on toy was recovered from Christchurch pond by the Common Ranger. The children had apparently been captivated by the tadpoles and a gust of wind took the toy into the pond. A very grateful boy picked it up the following day.

**5.5.5 Butterflies:** The Common Ranger attended the first Friends of Chorleywood Common Butterfly survey of the year on the 13<sup>th</sup> April. Not many butterflies were noted on this occasion due to poor weather conditions. The following have been noted by the Ranger so far this year:

Comma  
Small Tortoiseshell  
Red Admiral  
Peacock  
Brimstone  
Orange tip  
Green Veined White  
Large White  
Holly Blue

It is expected that this list will increase rapidly now it has warmed up.

#### **5.5.6 Cattle:**

The Cattle are due to return to the Common around the end of the month. Some remedial fencing work is required in the Railway field which ideally will be completed before the cattle return.

#### **5.5.7 Common Education:**

A bug hunt and welly walk was held with the Children's Centre on the 7<sup>th</sup> April and well received. A newt display, ponds bug hunt and wildlife walk was held with Russell School on the 4<sup>th</sup> May, again well received and enjoyed by the children. They had a picnic during the event.

#### **5.5.8 PARKING SCHEME IN PERMISSIVE PARKING AREAS ON THE COMMON**

Parking outside the Old Shepherd Public House: The ticket machine is now in place, residents permits have been sourced and it is hoped to have the scheme up and running shortly.

Several complaints were received about a caravan in this area which has since been removed.

#### **5.5.9 Exercise Classes on the Common :**

**Nordic walking** – the Ranger met with another individual wanting to run Nordic walking taster sessions on the Common. She has been offered a route avoiding the Stewardship area and Golf course and the sessions are to take place on Mondays in June.

It has been reported that the company who use the common for fitness classes three times a week are going outside the conditions of the licence and may potentially be damaging the area due to the equipment they are using and the manner in which they use it. Furthermore, they were recently observed to have strayed onto Stewardship land which is definitely not acceptable and is against our terms and conditions. These aspects are being followed up with the Company who have yet to renew their licence for the current year.

Our long standing licence holder for exercise classes continues to use the Common with no issues.

**New Request for licence to use Chorleywood Common for fitness classes:** Another request for a licence to use Chorleywood Common for Fitness Classes has been received. This individual is looking to run classes a few times a week on both weekdays and maybe once on a weekend. The midweek sessions would run from 6am - 7am and the weekend session from 7am - 8am. He has public liability and a first aid certificate (not yet seen) and “a wealth of experience playing at a high level of both rugby and cricket”. He has stated that the classes will use weighted sandbags for simple running exercises with added weight to increase the intensity. He is looking to eventually having between 10-15 people at a session after the first couple of months. In regard to the space needed he has suggested a quarter of the outfield by the cricket pitch. He has offered assurances that the equipment he uses and the exercise he does will not tear up or ruin the ground, as everyone will be wearing trainers and all the equipment used has a soft exterior. The individual has been advised of the licence fee of £12.25 per hour.

Members are asked to consider this request . **Recommendation 1**

#### **5.5.10 Common Management Plan Review:**

The current Management Plan for the Common is due for review next year and work on this needs to commence soon. Work will need to include a review of the current plan to incorporate work from the Stewardship and also include some additional work such as the possible maintenance of hedgerows around the boundary of the Common. Countryside Management Services were involved in the last review and it is hoped that the Council will agree to their involvement with this review again. **Recommendation 2**

#### **5.5.11 Beating of the Bounds:**

This took place on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> May with the whole of the perimeter of the Common being walked on this occasion with a good attendance from the public. The Common Ranger and Clerk led the walks with items of interest and background to the work being undertaken on the Common being explained. A number of encroachments were recorded, including gate access from adjoining properties, dumping of rubbish, grass cutting of paths and stepping stones to properties. Letters will be written to follow these up. Thanks are due to the Junction at Christchurch and specifically David and Judy Cansdale for the provision of refreshments afterwards.

#### **5.5.12 Commons Day**

An event is being planned on the Common to take place in early September. The idea is to have activities taking place during the day informing and educating people about the Common. It is hoped to get a number of Country crafts on display including Blacksmithing, chainsaw carving etc. There will be a Tug of War competition and the day will finish with the showing of a film on an outdoor screen at dusk on the common.

### **5.7 ALLOTMENTS**

Allotments have received their first cut.

Plans for clearing the dumped rubbish are being formulated. It is hoped that more details will be available to discuss at the meeting following a site visit to the allotments by the Officer and Rangers responsible for the allotments. Quotes for the fencing work at Copmans Wick Allotment site have been sought. Only one quote has so far been received and it is hoped that a second will be available for the meeting. **Recommendation 3**

An approach has been made to the Council by a nearby resident regarding the wooded area at Copmans Wick between the Allotments and TRDC land with an offer to either purchase the area or let long term, should the council be so minded with a view to assisting with the upkeep of the area. **Recommendation 4**

## **5.8 OFFICE**

Grass cutting outside the office has been undertaken on several occasions. The Pampas grass has been cut back and is already growing back.

## **5.9 PARISH PATHS**

Cutting of the paths is expected to commence shortly.

An application has been made as part of the P3 Grant Funding for the funding of a Parish Paths Leaflet showing all footpaths within the Parish. The leaflet would include places of interest to visit with photographs where possible. It is hoped that work can commence on this shortly with a target of having it available for the proposed Commons Day in September. It is suggested that an initial meeting be held with local community interest groups with a number of Councillors from this committee to start the process. **Recommendation 5**

## **5.10 HEALTH AND SAFETY (H&S)**

### **5.10.1 Height Restriction Barriers:**

The two replacement height restriction barriers at the Cricket Club and Lorry permissive parking areas are expected to be replaced in the near future.

## **5.11 HALLS**

The grass was cut at War Memorial hall.

## **5.12 EQUIPMENT**

- The usual maintenance of the vehicles and machinery has taken place.
- The first service to the two new RTVs has been booked. This is for warranty reasons.

## **Chalara dieback of Ash (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*)**

During the autumn a member of staff from the Countryside Management Service found a suspected case of Chalara dieback of ash on a young Ash tree at the Three Rivers DC owned Prestwick Road Meadows. Samples were sent to the Tree Health Diagnostic and Advisory Service at the Forestry Commission.

The results were received last week and were confirmed as **positive for Chalara dieback of ash**. The infected tree and other saplings nearby were removed during the autumn as part of planned management at Prestwick Road Meadows.

Trees and Landscape have also become aware of a further case of Chalara dieback of ash which was confirmed in August 2015 on Highways Agency land at Jn18 of the M25.

The most up to date source of information regarding Chalara can be found on the following page of the Forestry Commission Website:

<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara>

The Countryside Management Service have recently added this tree health page to their website:

<http://www.hertslink.org/cms/treehealth>



**Date: TUESDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2016**

**Subject: REQUEST FROM THE BEAVERS TO USE THE COMMON TO DO A CYCLING BADGE**

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**Committee Member:**

**Officer Contributors:** Deputy Clerk

**Status (public or exempt):** Public

**Wards affected:** All

**Enclosures:** None

**Contact for further information:** Deputy Clerk

### **1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1.1 The Committee are asked to consider if permission can be given for the Beavers to carry out the assessment for their Cycling Badge on Chorleywood Common using the permissive horse track.

### **2. RELEVANT PREVIOUS DECISIONS**

- 2.1 The Council has in the past granted similar requests as a 'one off' with all the necessary Health and Safety areas covered. It has also been used as an opportunity to educate users about the Byelaws as many are unfamiliar with the fact that cycling is prohibited.

#### **Open Spaces 09.09.14 Minute 14/29 REQUEST FROM THE BEAVERS TO USE THE COMMON TO DO A CYCLING BADGE**

A number of members expressed concerns about mixed messages in relation to cycling on the Common. Members were advised that although cycling on the Common is prohibited under the bye laws, the Council is allowed to permit such an event as a one-off and it therefore does not set a precedent. It had been done before and the opportunity used to re-enforce the message that cycling at all other times was prohibited.

The Committee  
RESOLVED

That the request from the Beavers to use the Common to do a cycling badge be permitted.

This was proposed by Cllr Watkins, seconded by Cllr Mrs Clark and carried with 5 votes in favour, one vote against and one abstention.

### **3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

None

#### **4. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

- 4.1 The Chorleywood Scouts have their own Public Liability Insurance.
- 4.2 Should the Committee agree the request a full Risk Assessment would be obtained from the Scouts.
- 4.3 The ratio of adults to children is 1:6 for outdoor activities, however the Scout Leaders have said they will probably have a higher ratio for this.

#### **5. FINANCIAL, STAFFING, ICT AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 None

#### **6. LEGAL ISSUES**

- 6.1 Cycling is prohibited on the Common under the Byelaws without express permission of the land owners. Should the Committee agree to the request, it must be made clear that this is an exception.
- 6.2 It is suggested that should permission be granted that a notice is given to the Beaver Scouts to circulate to the attendees explaining the legal position with regard to cycling on the Common.

#### **7. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 7.1 A request has been made by the Beaver Scout Leader at the 1<sup>st</sup> Chorleywood Scout Group to use the permissive horse track on the Common for a cycle ride to enable the Beavers to attain their Cycling Badge, on September 23<sup>rd</sup> between 5.30pm and 6.30pm, for approximately 30 Beavers.
- 7.2 The Beavers are aged between six and eight and many are only just confident on a bike and need fairly even Surfaces
- 7.3 The cubs use the canal towpath but the leader feels that wobbly Beavers near water would not be safe..
- 7.4 The Scout HQ is not near a flat traffic free area and Scout Leaders know of no other suitable local sites.
- 7.5 The scouts have links with the school and would therefore like to do the badge up near Christ Church School again although this year they would like to take the Beavers all the way round the Common on the horse track.