

WHEATHAMPSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL

Rights of Way & Commons Committee

9th September 2008

Present: Cllrs. N. Page (Chairman), J. Burgess, D. Hills, K. Stammers, A. Waterfield & J. Turner (with apologies for late arrival) with Julian Thornton (HCC), Mark Carter (CMS), Katie Cheetham and Tim Lamb

In Attendance: The Clerk, Mrs. B. Green

Meeting started at 8.02

1) Fencing at Long Meadow

The Council has received several letters of complaint about new fencing on Long Meadow. Katie Cheetham (one of the complainants), enjoys walking in the pretty local countryside. She regretted that it is now no longer possible to get within 50 metres of the riverside. Walking by water is one of our most basic pleasures. There are few people who do not enjoy the peace and tranquillity of which comes from that simple pleasure. She had understood the fencing was installed to protect the voles. Is there a compromise, could the Council lease the land?

Mr. Tim Lamb reported the land has been leased to the Fishing Club about 30 years ago. The Club has not asked for the fencing. People cannot fish where walkers and dogs use the river. People do not keep their dogs on leads. He wishes to retain control of the land. Future farmers would need to be able to go back and farm this land. Fencing on one side of the footpath is the only way he could retain the field. The land is owned by Mr. Lamb and the fence is also his. The danger is if something is allowed to happen i.e. walking off the footpath at the riverside, a potential right could be created. If he had seen this happening and done nothing, people would think it is alright. He must stop people doing what he doesn't want them to. Mark Carter (CMS) commented that voles are declining and grants have been given to landowners to protect the river banks.

Katie Cheetham would like the Parish Council to negotiate with Mr. Lamb for walkers to use the land.

Chairman – Thought we had had a comprehensive discussion. He proposed that he and the Vice Chairman have talks with Katie Cheetham and Mr. Lamb to see whether an agreement could be reached and bring the matter back to the committee, seconded Cllr. Burgess. Vote in favour 3 against 0 abstentions 2.

- 2) Waddling Lane – The residents of Abbot John Mews have complained about pony and traps using Waddling Lane in a manner which is a hazard to pedestrians of Abbott John Mews. They also seemed to litter the bridleway deliberately. A large oak trunk was laid by persons unknown to stop this happening. The Parish Council removed the oak trunk as it constituted an illegal obstruction of the bridleway. The Chairman reviewed the background to how the present BR17 with a footpath and bridleway separated by a row of poplars had replaced the original Waddling Lane into the Murphy Site. He circulated a sketch plan of how the wishes of the residents could be met. The footpath from Abbott John Mews would be protected by bollards with a 1 m spacing; the bridleway would be protected by a horse-hop at the north end. He and Julian Thornton had met on site and agreed this plan that in principle had the support of the residents of Abbott John Mews. The identity of one family using a pony and trap is known. A letter to be written from the County Council informing them that it is illegal to use a horse and trap on a bridleway.

2) continued.....

Mr T Lamb informed the committee that he thought he had a right of way along Waddling Lane. He would like an assurance that he will have an access through Mount Road if the proposed works at the north end of Waddling Lane are carried out. The Mount Road access is to land owned by J. Sainsbury. The Chairman was sympathetic and noted that the Parish Council are hoping to purchase the J Sainsbury Bridleway but there has been no progress to date.

Cllr. Waterfield proposed that the cost of providing the bollards and horse hops could be borne between County and Parish, seconded Cllr. Burgess. Vote in favour 6

- 3) Ragwort – The Chairman has this year been pulling ragwort from Marshalls Heath, Bower Heath, Gustard Wood Common, Cross Keys Common, Old 16th Green, East Meads, Meads Dell, Waddling Lane, BR12, RUPP4 and Sheepcote Lane, Marford Road to roundabout, Cory Wright Way, Lower Luton Road, Harpenden Top Road, Marshalls Heath Lane, Cherry Tree Lane and Wheathampstead-owned Nomansland. The count between July 13th and August 31st is in excess of 2066 plants and florets. If the first year floret growth is sprayed in the autumn it should make a significant impact on ragwort occurrence. It could only be applied on a ‘spot’ basis and therefore subcontracting would be expensive but done on a voluntary basis it could be more efficient than annual pulling. CMS to supply some Barrier H spray to try. Accepted. Cllr. Stammers proposed that we should write to the County Council and ask what they are doing to contain the growth of ragwort on the verges, seconded Cllr. Burgess. Recorded vote – in favour unanimously.
- 4) FP71 East Meads to Marford Glebe Allotments – Badly overgrown. County asked to clear this path that is not included in the Parish Council maintenance programme.
- 5) FP73 Marford Field – to Sheepcote Lane – Hedge badly needs cutting. Request our contractor to do a hard cut also Jane Hands to be asked to cut back her hedge. Action is also required to cure the large puddles forming near to Necton Road.
- 6) Scout Hut track verge – West Side – Formal request for our contractor to cut this verge on a fortnightly basis. First raised on site and confirmed by email on May 20th.
- 7) Development Centre Butterfield Road – The Chairman had been asked at the meeting between residents and the Parish Council to mark all the trees covered by TPO 1451 with metal tags. So far he has been unable to do this as the District Council did not want metal tags on the trees and the residents are not happy with the District proposal to use fluorescent tape which would be more obvious but prone to child vandalism. It was suggested that perhaps plastic tape could be placed around the trees. Chairman to continue consultations with the District Council’s Tree Officer.
- 8) Contracts and Purchasing – a) FP32 Turners Hall Farm – Used as a short-cut by horse riders making it muddy. A motor-bike inhibitor is needed to prevent access – Clerk to contact Julian Thornton with a request to supply this equipment from County stock.
b) BR12 – Concern that the wood edges will be badly damaged as the EDF work progresses. The lowest quotation of several was received from Harton for £682. Cllr. Turner proposed that the quote be accepted and the edging work goes ahead, seconded Cllr. Hills. Unanimously agreed.
- 9) Date of Next Meeting – 16th December budget meeting.

Meeting ended at 9.55pm