

SHORNE PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Footpaths Properties & Greens Committee
Meeting held on 10 September 2015 in Shorne Village Hall**

PRESENT Mr R Lane (Chairman)
 Mr R Theobald
 Mr D Hart
 Mr G Dent

ALSO IN Mr M Redfern
ATTENDANCE

APOLOGIES for absence were received from Mr R Cooper,
 Mrs S Lindley and Miss P Clifton

20 Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 June 2015

The minutes were AGREED as a true record.

21 Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising from the Minutes.

22 New Siting of Notice Board in Thong (3)

An alternative site adjacent to the post box in front of the knapped flint wall of Cheney's Farm, approximately 25m north of the site of the existing board was discussed at the previous meeting. Following a site visit on 4 July 2015, it was agreed to proceed with the alternative site. A quotation was obtained and at the Council meeting held on 9 July 2015, it was agreed to accept the quotation of £188.00. The work was carried out on Monday, 7 September 2015.

23 Bus Shelter in Tanyard Hill - Re-felting to Roof (8)

The re-felting to the roof of the bus shelter in Tanyard Hill was carried out on 20 July 2015 at a cost of £152.00.

24 Request by Parishioner to Plant an Oak Tree (10)

The letter has been sent to Mrs Smailes advising her that the Council has no objection to the Oak Tree and that planting may proceed with due care. The Chairman has also spoken to Mrs Smailes.

25 Shorne Village Hall - Drain in Car Park (4)

The two manhole covers have been released by Floyd Electrical Services at a cost of £256.00 + £51.20 (VAT) = £307.30. Mr Bugg has arranged for the silt in the drains to be removed. The work is scheduled for 14th September

26 Telephone Kiosk on Chestnut Green

It was reported at the meeting on 19th March 2015 that the four rectangular windows had been ordered by BT (Ref: ND8JAW89) but works have still not been carried out. Mr Lane will chase up the matter with BT.

27 Crabbles Bottom - Clearance of Vegetation (5)

Mr Lane had previously advised that the current maintenance contracts may be insufficient. It was suggested that the Council might need to contact a farmer with regards to cutting the meadow or grazing.

Mr Lane contacted 3 farmers in the area, and met with Mr Julian Houghton of Queens Farm to inspect the area on 7 August. It was noted that the nettles and brambles had grown to a height of 1 metre +. The apples in the orchard were ripening, but access was difficult due to the nettles.

Mr Houghton said that the vegetation had no value as foodstuff or silage. He said that it is conceivable that 10 to 15 sheep of a specific breed could perhaps keep the vegetation down, but the whole area would need to be properly fenced off and the footpath closed. Access for machinery is problematic. Mr Houghton said that his tractor would be too large to get under the trees, and that he was therefore unable to offer any assistance. He advised to continue with flailing.

It was suggested that further advice should be sought from Tim Bell of Shorne Wood Country Park.

At the previous meeting, Mrs Lindley enquired to whether there is a footpath linking Park Pale with Bowesden Lane at Crabbles Bottom.

Mr Lane confirmed in an email on 1st July that NS161 runs at right angles from its junction with Park Pale and leads to the 'top' end of Bowesden Lane, ie near the junction with The Ridgeway/Pear Tree Lane.

There is another tarmac footpath which extends straight on from the end of Park Pale, following the line of the A2 and Wainscott By-Pass, which joins up with the footpath at the bottom end of Bowesden Lane. This footpath is an extension of the one that runs alongside the A2 for its full length, and it continues alongside Crabbles Bottom to Crutches Lane. It is estimated that from the end of Park Pale to the junction with Bowesden Lane by Crabbles Bottom is a distance of some 400m or a quarter of a mile or so.

28 Rights of Way

(a) Shornemead - Re-Opening of the Level Crossing (6a)

A copy of the Inspector's report was received on 26 August 2015 from the Planning Inspectorate, allowing the Council's appeal against KCC's decision to refuse the Council's application for a Definitive Map Modification Order in respect of the footpath over the Shornemead Crossing. As a result KCC will be instructed to publish a draft order. If this is unchallenged, the order should be confirmed by the Secretary of State. If there are objections to the draft order it is likely there will be a public enquiry. A Press Release on behalf of the Council has been issued.

Mr Theobald reported that should the matter go to a public enquiry, the Ramblers' Association have a contact for a Rights of Way consultant. It was agreed that Mr Theobald should have a preliminary meeting with the consultant to get a view on the strength of our evidence and potential costs should the matter go to public enquiry. He also reported that Mrs Hornby is willing to carry out the research on the matter.

29 Landscaping Strip off Michael Gardens (7)

A site visit took place on 4 July 2015, attended by Councillors Robin Theobald, David Hart, George Dent, and Bob Lane, to inspect the landscaping screening strip near Michael Gardens.

A number of residents appear to have fenced off parts of the land. One resident in Fairfields has cut down the screening trees and fully incorporated the land into their own garden. This is clearly not permitted. However, it is understood that the Borough Council is reluctant to take any action in this matter, citing lack of funds or resources.

There is little that the Parish Council can do about this situation, although the owners of the property in Fairfields who have annexed and incorporated the land into their garden should be identified, and the Borough Council requested to write to the owner and prevail upon them to restore the landscaping strip to its intended screening purpose.

It was also suggested that the Council could also request the Borough Council to write to all the properties that back on to the landscaping strip to remind them that ownership of the land remains with Borough Council and that any encroachment into the land is permitted under licence only, and that under no circumstances should the screening trees be removed.

Mr Theobald agreed to draft a letter to Gravesham Borough Council.

30 Motorcycle Disturbances at Claylane Woods (9)

A site meeting took place on 4 July 2015, attended by Councillors Robin Theobald, David Hart, George Dent, and Bob Lane, to inspect the site and boundary fence. It was observed that the land is separated from the footpath adjacent to the A2 by a simple 2 or 3 bar wooden fence. The fence bars had

been removed in several places to provide access to the site and the site is evidently well used by bikers.

It was considered that it would be impossible to prevent motorcyclists and others from gaining access to this site should they wish to do so. The fence could conceivably be repaired, but it would be a very simple operation to remove the fence bars again, and this would in all probability happen. The land is in any case open to adjacent farmland and to footpath NS174.

Mr Lane considered that the most the Parish Council could do would be to write to the local authority, the Police, and the land-owner, to make them aware of the situation and the nuisance caused to residents, and to monitor the situation. Residents should be encouraged to contact the Police by telephoning 101 whenever disturbances occur.

30 Update on the Use of Volunteers to Clear Footpaths in the Parish (11)

At the meeting on 25 June, Mr Lane reported that the number of volunteers was disappointing, and that the volunteers lacked a KCC-trained leader. Dartford & Gravesham Ramblers Association had written to the Council, offering to undertake footpath clearance where KCC is unable to carry out the work. Mr Lane wrote to the Ramblers accepting their offer of support on 25 June 215.

Further appeals for local volunteers were posted on the website, in the parish magazine, and on notice boards at The Ridgeway and the Village Hall, and Mr Dinnis agreed to supervise a clearance operation of NS163 on Sunday 2nd August. This was the footpath which had been cancelled in June due to lack of volunteers. A total of 10 volunteers responded to the appeal, as well as Mike Hickmott from the Ramblers, equipped with a petrol strimmer, and the footpath was cleared.

Mr Lane suggested that the Parish Council if we are to persevere with this, the Council should consider purchasing one or two brush cutters for use in clearing footpaths. Following a discussion, it was decided that the Parish Council should look into hiring the equipment in the first instance.

There have been no offers for the storage of the equipment. Mr Dinnis is currently storing equipment supplied by KCC, but unless the Council is able to find alternative storage soon, the equipment will need to be returned to KCC. Mr Lane agreed to recirculate the inventory of equipment.

31 Frontages at Butchers Hill (12)

Mr Theobald reported that he discussed the frontages at Butchers Hill at the recent site meeting he had with Kent Highways. All that KCC could offer was to provide scalpings (road stone with a binder) to alleviate the problems at the top end of Butchers Hill at Shorne Common where huge puddles occur when it rains which is causing an unpleasant smell. The scalpings have now been delivered to Butchers Hill but the Parish Council needs to find a contractor to spread it on the highway. Mr Theobald will contact John Vilday to ask him to carry this out.

It was also suggested that Mr Theobald should also speak to Mr Vilday about the clearance of the footway in Forge Lane where the bank is eroding onto the footway. This is a recurring problem, and the surplus soil needs to be removed.

32 Parish Website (13)

At the previous meeting, Mr Hart had asked if other members would like to be briefed regarding its management. The Chairman expressed an interest and met with Mr Hart on 21 August 2015. Mr Lane has since updated the website. In addition, the Parish Council now has a Facebook page. Mr Lane has asked members to review the contents of both sites.

A member drew the Committee's attention to a local newspaper where it was shown that the Gravesend Messenger is down-loading items from the Shorne Parish website (including extracts from minutes) and publishing it as news in their newspaper. It was agreed to take no further action on this for the time being but to be careful as to what is minuted in future.

33 Chestnut Green – Additional Daffodil Planting (16)

It had been agreed to contact Leanne Hornby who had planted the verges in Tanyard Hill with daffodils to ask her if she would also plant Chestnut Green.

Mr Lane contacted Mrs Hornby and was told that Chestnut Green already has daffodils planted. She agreed to plant more daffodils if the Council agreed to provide additional maintenance to the greens and verges (see item 35 below).

35 Additional Maintenance & Cutting of Greens & Verges (17)

In response to a letter from Mrs Hornby, it was agreed at the last meeting that Mr Lane would obtain costs for weed treatment and additional grass cutting of the greens in the village.

Mr Lane reported that he has obtained a quotation for additional maintenance of the greens in Forge Lane, Post Office Green, Chestnut Green, and the bottom of Tanyard Hill, based on weed treatment and mulch-mowing three times a year.

There was a discussion on the precise scope of the additional work, and how this may be co-ordinated with the cuts provided by GBC and KCC. There was also some concern on whether the weed treatment would damage the daffodils.

It was agreed to consider carrying out an additional cut and weed treatment early next spring when the daffodils and narcissi are visible, so that they can be avoided during the cutting and treatment. This will provide a better idea of the extent of the work and likely costs of any future work should the Parish Council arrange for supplementary cuts to be carried out.

In the meantime, Mr Lane will respond to Mrs Hornby and seek to obtain a better understanding of the KCC and GBC schedules.

36 Court Wood – Footpaths (19)

At the previous meeting, Mr Theobald submitted a report on the footpaths in Court Wood. The footpaths are not shown as rights of way on the Definitive Map, and any proposal to have the footpaths established as rights of way would need GPS surveys and evidence obtained from users of the footpaths. The problem is that although the paths are in Shorne parish, the majority of users are from Higham. Higham Parish Council would need to be approached for the names of people who have walked the paths.

It was agreed that Mr Theobald and Mr Redfern would take the lead on this matter and report back to the Committee.

37 Litter Patrols (18)

The Chairman reported that litter picking wands and ‘Shorne Volunteer’ high-visibility waistcoats have now been obtained. A next litter patrol has been arranged for 10 October 2015. At present, there are up to 16 volunteers.

38 Any Other Business

- (a) A resident has posted on the website, requesting the reinstatement of the litter bin at Shorne Common Rough. It was suggested that the Council request the Borough Council to reinstate the litter bin.
- (b) Mrs Lindley has raised the issue of an aggressive horse in the field through which footpath NS156 passes. Mr Lane has sent an e-mail to the KCC Rights of Way Officer.
- (c) The Chairman reported that a meeting with the Police took place on 1 September 2015 regarding vehicle disturbances in Park Pale. Disturbances have been significantly reduced as a result of police activity. A report will be given to the Parish Council on 24 September 2015.
- (d) The Chairman reported that Shorne Football Club has been awarded a grant of £9,682.00 by the Premier League and FA Facilities Fund towards the cost of the pavilion refurbishment.
- (e) Mrs Hornby has complained to the Parish Council regarding the condition of the white-lining and surface of the Village Hall car park.
- (f) Mr Theobald reported that the neighbour of the Village Hall is still complaining about the activities of the playgroup. The matter was referred to the next full Council meeting.
- (g) Mr Dent reported that he had attended a local KALC meeting on 6 August 2015 (of the six parishes) and that he will circulate a copy of the minutes.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.40pm.