

**Wheathampstead Parish Council
Rights of Way & Commons Committee
8 February 2011, 19.30h**

Present	Councillors	T Reason D Hills N Page S Walford	Chairman
		Mark Carter	CMS 8pm arrival
		Irene Casper	Deputy Clerk
		Press	0
		Public	1

At the request of Cllr. Hills the meeting took place in the Hewitt Room. Cllrs. were happy with this move.

1705-11 Apologies & Substitutions

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Stammers and Cllr Waterfield (personal reasons).

1706-11 Questions from the Public

None

1707-11 Specific Declarations of Interest

None

1708-11 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2010 were approved.

Resolved To confirm the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2010 as a true and accurate account of the meeting and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

1709-11 CMS Matters – Devil’s Dyke Grant application

The Chairman was delighted to inform members that the application for a Lottery Grant to improve access to Devil’s Dyke has been successful. A grant of £5,934 has been offered.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Carter (CMS) for all his hard work towards receiving this award.

The work will take place in the Autumn.

Recommended 1 To note the successful application for a

Lottery Grant and the offer of £5,934 for the Devil's Dyke access.

- 2 To thank Mark Carter CMS for all his hard work towards achieving the award from the Lottery Fund.**

1710-11 Station Platform Working Group

Shrubs have now been planted to enhance the area, the remaining budget will be spent on more shrubs as previously agreed.

1711-11 Review of Expenditure 2010-11

Members reviewed the 2010-11 budget to ensure that expenditure was within the budgeted figure.

Recommended To note that the ROW budget 2010-11 had been reviewed and that expenditure was within the budgeted figure.

1712-11 Tree work and maintenance including Winter work

The Chairman had walked around WPC owned land with our contractor to discuss what work he does now and what is feasible in the future. This walk followed on from the councillors walk around with Mark Carter CMS in December.

There has been a tremendous amount of tree work at Bowers Heath. Cllr. Page has overseen this over the last few years and the area is vastly improved.

Cllr. Page reported that in his opinion there is a significant amount of tree work to be done.

The Chairman proposed that as all the money budgeted for treework this year has been spent we revisit tree work later in the meeting after looking at other priorities which have a budget and see if there is any money which can be reallocated. Agreed.

Recently planted trees on the Meads have perforated plastic sleeves on them for protection, some of the sleeves appear to be damaging the tree bark. The sleeves are there to protect the trees as they develop and for protection against damage by rabbits. Sleeves are usually left in situ for three years.

Cllr. Page has taken the top half of the sleeve off of some trees and put this around the base of the tree to act as a rabbit guard.

There was discussion on whether the trees were being damaged by the sleeves and should be removed now, or would the trees suffer greater damage from rabbits without the protection.

The Chairman proposed "we leave taking off the guards, where

appropriate, until the end of March when everything is starting to grow". Agreed

Mr. McNeil has offered to take the guards off. The debris to be put in the paladin bins at the Memorial Hall.

Members then discussed the areas overgrown by brambles etc. at the Meads.

Cllr. Page proposed "we do thin the patch of planting at the north east end of the Meads nearest the river", seconded Cllr. Walford. Agreed. Cllr. Page will do this work.

- Recommendation**
- 1 Plastic sleeves to be taken off the trees at the Meads at the end of March.**
 - 2 Mr. McNeil will remove the guards and dispose of the debris in the paladin bins at the Memorial Hall.**
 - 3 Cllr. Page will thin the patch of planting at the north east end of the Meads.**

1713-11 The Forge

a) Electricity supply to the Forge

The Forge building is mainly used for maintenance work and storage. At the moment there is no supply of electricity to this building.

EDF will be removing the overhead cables and putting the cables underground at the Meads, they have agreed to install an electricity supply to the Forge, this work will be free of charge. The Forge building needs electrical work to enable the supply to be installed – installation of a consumer unit, light fittings and socket outlets. We are waiting for a quotation for this work from Electrical Contractors.

The Chairman proposed "that we do put electricity in the Forge up to a cost of £500".

Vote FOR 1 Against 3. The proposal was lost.

b) Ivy Removal and Painting the Forge

The Forge is covered by ivy which is fast growing and has to be cut back annually as it approaches the roof.

Cllr. Burgess has offered to cut the ivy right back and paint the building.

Members discussed the merits of having the ivy fully removed and the building painted to smarten it up; or having the ivy partly cut back and the building painted. Cllr. Page felt if the forge was painted it would encourage graffiti; and, as the building is partly screened by trees does it need 'smartening' up?

Cllr. Page proposed "we invite Cllr. Burgess to cut back the ivy on the Forge to the level he previously cut it. If we receive a negative response we get a contractor to do the job", seconded Cllr. Hills. Vote For 3 1 Against. Agreed.

Cllr. Page proposed "that the Forge not be painted", seconded Cllr. Hills. Vote For 2 Against 3. The proposal was lost.

Agreed the Forge is to be painted and the Chairman will choose the colour. Cllr. Burgess to be asked to paint the Forge.

- Recommendation**
- 1 Not to put an electricity supply in the Forge.**
 - 2 Cllr. Burgess to be asked to cut the ivy on the Forge back to the level he previously cut it. If Cllr. Burgess declines a contractor to be found to do the job.**
 - 3 The Forge is to be painted; the Committee Chairman to choose the colour.**
 - 4 Cllr. Burgess to be asked to paint the Forge.**

1714-11 Management of Parish Council Land

The Chairman had prepared documents on the current Management of Parish Council Land after her walk around with our contractor. Documents circulated round the table.

Marshalls Heath

Marshalls Heath has areas of heathland and woodland. It is a valuable habitat for yellow ants, also other invertebrates.

Present Management Scheme

Consultation with the Friends of Marshalls Heath.

There is a regular cutting schedule (bi weekly) of play areas and grass verges.

Works include strim and clear vegetation from heath areas to clear encroaching bramble/wild raspberry/rose bay willowherb, rotation, biannually.

The heathland is constantly invaded by shrubs. The wild raspberry at the southern end is now very invasive. The Chairman wondered if a selective herbicide could be used to kill the shrubs.

Mark Carter advised that as this is a small site with bugs and flowers he would be wary about using a herbicide. Pulling the shrub out by hand would be the best option. The patch is relatively small and a band of volunteers should be able to remove it in half a day.

The Chairman proposed "that this committee resolves to meet with John Murray about hand removing weeds and brambles at Marshalls Heath". Agreed.

Members agreed that the Management Plan should be updated and include – Try not to use herbicides.

Bowers Heath

An area to the extreme west of the parish used to be grazed as common land up until 2nd World War, it now falls into two distinct parts.

Wooded Area – on the south side of the road tall, closely growing trees, very little mid or lower storey vegetation, to the north of the road more scrubby woodland, some of which has been tidied and the arising collected into piles.

All the trees are much the same age, and are very close together, not very bio diverse environment, with virtually no undergrowth, however, very attractive and nice walk through. There is a danger that the overly tall/thin trees are susceptible to wind damage.

In the scrub area to clear some of the bramble undergrowth would give other vegetation a chance to grow.

Grass Area – acid heathland divided into three distinct plots, to the west two areas of grass heathland surrounded by tall shrubs/small trees, to the east of the lane a larger grass area.

Present Management Scheme

Tree work - ongoing.

Scrub clearance when needed.

In the grass area the two little meadows are mown four times a year.

Round the edges of the meadows bramble and coarse grass is rife. Harebells which used to flourish in this area have disappeared, possible due to the fertility of the soil being raised by the four cuts per year.

It was agreed that the contractor should mow the grass edges four times a year and mow the centre once a year in autumn raking up the arisings. This will give the wild flowers a chance to grow. This decision can be revisited if it leads to problems.

It was agreed the contractor should 'top' the brambles this will cause them to die out after a few years. Removal of brambles will open up the area and allow space for a picnic table to be installed. Management Scheme to be updated with these changes.

Melissa Field

Melissa field was donated to the parish in September 1932.

Situated between the Lower Luton Road and the River Lee, Melissa field is a grassy area sloping gently towards the river. It is an attractive area, with a restored Lych gate.

A row of Lime trees parallel with the road had the crowns raised. A barrier was put at the road edge to stop vehicular access at the request of the Folly Fields Residents Association. (The sign in the old pub sign holder was painted by a local resident Mary Cheale)

Present Management Plan

Continue with amenity cut

Members agreed to update the Management Plan with the following items:

The contractor only to mow under the Lime trees once a year. This will be more environmentally friendly and encourage life in the trees.

Strim a grassy path through the nettles to make the river more accessible.

Plant suitable trees (alder, hawthorn, elder, hazel) at the west end where the scrub has been cleared.

The trees would be small and the scouts are to be invited to plant them. Cost of trees to be sought before the WPC meeting in February.

Leave the remaining ivy in place on the trees beside the river.

The contractor will clear several fallen trees.

Members considered the proposal to plant trees towards the east end to create a small copse and agreed to leave this item to a later date.

The Old 16th Green & Lamer Lane

Lamer Lane

Running along east side of Lamer Lane, predominantly wooded area between the field edge and the road, has a footpath running parallel to the road. Some lengths of footpath have been hard topped. Holly is gradually invading.

The Old 16th Green

Small area of acid heathland, with formal parking area and grass verges.

Present Management Plan

The Old 16th Green is mown three times annually.

Members agreed to reduce the general mowing to once a year. The strip by the road to be mown three times a year. (Site lines will be affected if this strip is not mown).

There are heaps of tree debris and areas becoming bramble patches. The contractor will tidy the area and remove the debris.

North and East Meads

Meadow on both sides of the River Lea, East Mead (on the south side) being managed as amenity grass land, North meads as rough grass.

There is a footbridge over the river.

Present Management Plan

Amenity grass cutting.

Meads Dell

This area is becoming an interesting habitat for butterflies.

Present Management Plan

One cut a year.

Members agreed no changes are needed to the Management Plans of North and East Meads and Meads Dell

Arising in Meads Dell to be removed in September.

Rectory Meadow

A new tree is to be planted in Rectory Meadow.

Members agreed Cllr. Page to agree type of tree to be planted with the Trees and Woodlands Officer from SADC.

Dog Waste Bins

Members wish to ascertain how well the dog waste bins are used. It was thought some were not used very much.

Agreed Clerk contacts Dog Waste Removal contractor for information on how well WPC dog bins are used.

Note: The bins are emptied weekly.

Barriers

At the moment some WPC barriers are painted with an undercoat of red oxide. Members discussed whether the top coat should be red or green.

A vote was taken for each colour.

Vote For Green Top Coat = 1

Vote for Red Oxide coloured Top Coat = 2

1 abstention

Agreed the barriers will be painted with a top coat of red oxide.

The Pump

Cllr Walford will write an article for the Spring Pump giving information on the new walking maps, new bridleway and the new trees at East Meads.

- Recommendation to Council**
- 1 To note the report on the Management of WPC owned land.
 - 2 To update Management Schemes as agreed.
 - 3 To instruct contractor to amend his annual schedule as agreed.
 - 4 To meet with John Murray re hand removal of shrubs at Marshalls Heath. Action Committee members and Mark Carter (CMS).
 - 5 To plant suitable trees at Melissa Field as agreed.
 - 6 Cllr. Page to liaise with Trees and Woodlands Officer of SADC re type of tree to be planted at Rectory Meadow.
 - 7 Clerk to contact Dog Waste Removal contractor to ascertain how well WPC owned dog bins are used.
 - 8 Cllr. Walford will write an article for the Spring Pump.

1715-11 Treework and maintenance

Cllr. Page circulated a list of possible tree works that are needed in the parish.

Members went through the prioritised list. The committee will look at the trees before the Parish Council meeting.

The Chairman proposed "that the committee spend £1000 on tree work completing as much of the list as possible within this budget". Agreed.

Recommendation to Council: Expenditure of up to £1000 of the ROW budget 2010/11 be used for tree work as per Cllr. Page's prioritised list (attached).

1716-11 Progress Against Village Plan Targets

It was noted that the following targets were in hand.

E7 Improve existing Improvements at footpaths & provide all- Bower Heath weather paths

E8 Trees and bushes appropriately managed

E26 The River – pathway to open up access to river at Melissa Field

E29 Publicising walks – New Walking maps

L14 – Leisure facilities for Youth – new walking maps.

Recommendation To note the report to Council

