

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE HIGHWAYS AND FOOTPATHS
COMMITTEE OF LONGDON PARISH COUNCIL HELD IN THE W. I. HALL,
LONGDON, ON THURSDAY, JULY 6th, 2009

Present: Cllr. N. Stanfield (Chairman); Cllr. N. J. Bird; Cllr. Mrs. G. D. Duckett;
Cllr. R. C. Hemmingsley; and Cllr. Mrs. H. A. Meere.

Also present was the Clerk.

1. APOLOGIES

Cllr. B. J. Butler; Mr. Will Rose

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting, held in the W. I. Hall, Longdon, on Monday, May 7th, 2009, were, on a motion proposed by Cllr. Mrs. Duckett and seconded by Cllr. Hemmingsley, approved and signed

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public were present.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(i) Ditches in Stockings Lane

The Clerk would establish with Cllr. Lewis how soon this work would be carried out.

(ii) Potholes in Borough Lane

Cllr. Stanfield said that, from his observations, no work potholes had been carried out to the exposed service cover, whose sharp edges were posing a danger to traffic, and he would contact the County Highways Department before the next meeting of the Council.

(iii) Embankment in Grange Hill

Cllr. Stanfield reported that, at a site meeting with Richard Rayson, the newly-appointed Divisional Highway Manager, that afternoon, attended by the Chairman, the Clerk and himself, Mr. Rayson had agreed to pursue the matter.

He had explained that, in the case of an embankment above a highway, it was the responsibility of the landowner to ensure that the highway below his or her land was kept safe of any landslide.

In the case of Grange Hill, even if it were established that the curtilage of No. 2, The Grange, did not encompass any part of the bank, who owned the bank would still remain uncertain, particularly as ownership had not been registered with The Land Registry.

It was agreed that the Council should be advised to await a further letter from Richard Harris, the Assistant Divisional Highways Manager, informing the Council of what he had discovered about the legal position and what action he was proposing to take in the light of this information.

4. FOOTPATH SURVEY

Cllr. Stanfield informed the meeting that, following reports from the Parish Council, the County Council had now dealt with the following footpaths: 34, 35, 43, 47, 55 and 0.402.

Out of eighty-two footpaths, thirty-two had not yet been resolved, four of which remained to be surveyed.

It was agreed that the Clerk should send a copy of the complete footpath report to Stafford, highlighting the two remaining to be surveyed and asking for a progress on the rest.

5. VISIT OF COMMUNITY GANG

Councillor Stanfield informed the meeting that the Community Gang had visited the parish on June 19th and the Council had been promised a report on the tasks which had been carried out.

The dates of the Gang's next visits had been given as October 13th, 2009, and February 19th, 2010.

He advised the Committee that Will Rose had drawn his attention to the grass growing on the glebe field was beginning to encroach onto the path, and suggested that cutting it should be included in the programme for next October.

Cllr. Mrs. Duckett stated that the grass on one side of the path had had been cut, and it was agreed that the grass on the other side needed to be cut as soon as possible.

The Committee then discussed whether the Gang should be asked to mow the grass at the junction of the A51 and Borough Lane and at the junction of the A51 with High Street.

The Committee also discussed the alternative of including these areas in next year's mowing contract; it was agreed, however, that, first, Graham McCulloch should be asked whether, in view of the potential risk incurred from working so close to passing traffic, he would be prepared to undertake the work.

If he were to accept the work, it would then be necessary to ask the County Highways Authorities for their consent.

Cllr. Hemmingsley commented that visibility at the junction of Commonsides and Chorley Road was also restricted by uncut grass and might be considered for inclusion in a future mowing contract.

Cllr. Stanfield concluded the discussion by inviting members of the Committee to consider other tasks which could be put forward for inclusion in the Community Gang's programme of work, but reminded them that any task proposed should be highway-related.

6. FLOODING IN LYSWAYS LANE

Cllr. Hemmingsley reported that Mr. Rayson had undertaken to familiarise himself with this problem.

He added that Mr. Rayson had shown an encouraging willingness to attend site meetings and assess problems at first hand.

In addition, a change in Government guidelines would mean that highways authorities were now expected to address the needs of local communities as they were made known to them, rather than pursue their own programmes independently.

7. FOOTPATH NO. 73 – REPAIR/REPLACEMENT OF BRIDGE OVER SHROPSHIRE BROOK

Cllr. Stanfield reported that he had been informed that the County Council would not fund the replacement or repair of this bridge, since it was not in a dangerous condition, nor was the footpath blocked.

This meant that, if the Parish Council wanted this work done, it would have to fund it itself.

Consequently, he would be seeking further quotes.

As regards the re-classification of the footpath as a bridleway with the existing bridleway at Hill Top, Will Rose had been informed that the matter had first been raised with the County Council in 1998 and should already have been marked as such on the Definitive Footpath Map.

Its re-designation was now No. 76 on a list of 143 footpath problems to be considered, and was not likely to come up for a decision for a number of years,

It was agreed that the matter should be left with the County Council.

8. PUBLIC FOOTPATH BETWEEN 31 AND 33 CHURCH WAY. LONGDON

This footpath had now been re-surfaced.

The County Council had published a Notice of Confirmation of a Public Path Creation Order in respect of this footpath in “The Lichfield Mercury” of 1st July 2009.

9. PLOUGHING AND CROPPING OF RIGHTS OF WAY

It was reported that Footpath No. 2, which ran between Tithe Barn and “Laurel Cottage”, was regularly lost when the field was ploughed and planted but never re-instated, as required by law.

It was agreed that this problem should be reported to the County Council, once the identity of the landowner had been established.

Three other footpaths still needed to be checked.

10. PROVISION OF STILES WITH DOG GATES

Cllr. Stanfield reported that he had been told that the County Council had no responsibility to provide stiles with dog gates and was therefore unwilling to devote funds to providing them.

It would, however, be prepared to replace stiles in a poor state of repair with kissing-gates on footpaths known to be regularly used by dog-owners, particularly if the Parish Council were prepared to fund the difference between the cost of a stile and a kissing-gate.

11. FOOTPATH LEAFLET FOR GENTLESHAW

The deadline for this year’s bids for funding from the Community Paths Initiative having passed, it was agreed that a bid should be submitted in 2010.

Cllr. Mrs. Meere advised the Committee that she was, in fact, in the process of drafting the leaflet so that a bid for a grant towards the cost of printing could be submitted in 2010.

12. UNAUTHORISED ROADSIDE SIGNS

Cllr. Stanfield informed the Committee that, following a letter from the Clerk to the District Council’s Conservation Officer, the number of trade notices attached the wire fencing in front of The Grand Lodge had been reduced from sixteen to eight, all of which had been re-located to the two panels which formed the gateway.

The Clerk reported that he was in the process of collecting examples of roadside signs in support of a letter to the County Surveyor.

He had discovered that the practice of displaying signs at the roadside was widespread and, in some cases, had the support of the County Council, as in the case of roundabouts sponsored by commercial bodies.

Basically, objection to them was grounded in their proliferation, their potential for distracting passing motorists and the aesthetics of their appearance.

Cllr. Hemmingsley pointed out that the Council's present policy was in line with the law and could therefore not be compromised, but he suggested that the Council might adopt a pragmatic approach when implementing its policy in the case of signs which were of a strictly local and temporary nature.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS (AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN)

No other business was raised.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday, September 7th, 2009, in the W. I. Hall, Longdon, commencing at 7. 30 p.m.