

RIGHT'S OF WAY & HIGHWAY LICENSING PANEL

MONDAY, 7 DECEMBER 2015

PRESENT: Councillors Maureen Hunt (Chairman), Clive Bullock (Vice-Chairman), John Collins, Mohammed Ilyas, Gary Muir and Samantha Rayner.

Also in attendance: Gordon Marrs (East Berkshire Ramblers).

Officers: Tanya Leftwich and Anthony Hurst.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lynda Yong, Colin Rayner (Lead Member for Highways and Transport) and Carwyn Cox (Lead Member for Environmental Services).

It was announced by the Chairman that the meeting was being recorded.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

MINUTES

That the Part I minutes of the Panel held on the 20 July 2015 were agreed to be correct.

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY MANAGEMENT AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2016-2026

The Principal Rights of Way Officer, Anthony Hurst, informed Members that the report sought the Panel's approval to publish the "*Public Rights of Way Management and Improvement Plan 2016-2026*", in Appendix 1. It was noted that all local highway authorities had a statutory duty to publish and review their Public Rights of Way Improvement Plans every ten years. The Principal Rights of Way Officer explained that the Royal Borough's current Plan ran from 2005-2015 and the replacement Plan would cover the period 2016-2026. The Plan before the Panel set out the Council's strategy for managing and improving the public rights of way network and other accessible routes in the Royal Borough over the next ten years. Members were informed that following a statutory consultation on the Draft Plan during August/October a number of comments had been received as set out in Appendix 2, and consequently some amendments had been made to the Plan.

The Principal Rights of Way Officer showed Members before and after photos of improvement works that had taken place throughout the year. Members were informed that there was a total of 307km of public rights of way in the Royal Borough which equated to 32% of the total highway network (967km). The Principal Rights of Way Officer explained the differences to Members between the types of public rights of way (footpath, bridleway, restricted byway and byway open to all traffic).

Members were referred to pages 20 – 21 of the agenda which showed the twelve new or upgraded routes that had been created in the 2005-2015 Plan. The Chairman thanked the East Berkshire Ramblers for all they had done (physical help, funds, etc) for the Royal Borough which was echoed by the Panel. It was suggested that a letter be drafted from the Mayor to thank the volunteer groups involved in the improvement work.

Members were referred to page 22 of the agenda which showed the results of the public satisfaction survey 2015: National Highways and Transport Network. Members were informed that the Royal Borough had scored high in all seven categories and the highest in the South East in the 'provision of information on public rights of way' category. The Chairman praised the Principal Rights of Way Officer and his team for achieving such high scores. It was noted that this success would be promoted in the Around the Royal Borough newsletter.

Members were referred to the Plan on pages 23 – 49 of the agenda which showed the consultation responses. It was noted that the Ascot, Sunninghill and Sunningdale Neighbourhood Plan Delivery Group had put forward a lot of suggestions which could be found on pages 44 – 46. Members noted the proposal that the paths listed on pages 47 – 49 should be recorded as either adopted highway, public rights of way or as permitted paths, although the process for achieving this would require further investigation on a case-by-case basis in discussion with the relevant landowners.

The Principal Rights of Way Officer explained to Members that item 26 referred to establishing a continuous riverside route of the Thames Path in Maidenhead beside the river bank from the landing steps opposite Thames Hotel to Bridge Gardens. It was noted that this was still an aspiration if the opportunity ever arose.

It was requested by the Panel that in order to make it clearer in the report / appendix that the suggestions received were aspirational targets an additional bullet point be added to page 35 to explain that the list of suggestions was a 'wish list' rather than a guaranteed list and that some of the requests may turn out not to be feasible or achievable for reasons out of the RBWM's control. It was also suggested that a sub-group heading be added to page 44 before item 51, to say the proposals had been put forward by the Ascot, Sunninghill & Sunningdale Neighbourhood Delivery Group, and had the support of the RBWM, and to wish them luck with completing the suggestions.

The Principal Rights of Way Officer referred Members to the existing public rights of way and permitted path network maps which were being shown on the big screen. Members were informed that each map included a disclaimer to state they were proposed routes. The Chairman stated that she felt the maps were excellent. It was suggested that ward boundaries be added to the maps.

The Chairman informed Members that the Lead Member for Environmental Services, Councillor Carwyn Cox, had informed her by email in advance of the meeting that there had been twelve events encouraging responsible dog ownership. It was noted that it was difficult to catch owners that did not clear up after their dogs, but wardens were on the look out when they were patrolling. The Chairman explained that the Community Wardens in her ward took this issue seriously as she was sure Community Wardens in other wards did too.

The Principal Rights of Way Officer informed Members that the work on the Thames Path was considered the most significant work planned for the future, along with work on the Hurley footbridge to be replaced by a ramped bridge and repairing damage to the riverbank in Datchet as a result of the floods.

The Chairman informed Members that they could ask the Principal Rights of Way Officer if they required new leaflets for their parish councils and his team would be happy to help design and fund them. It was suggested that joint ward leaflets were also an option.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Thursday 10 March 2016.

The Chairman asked for the Panels thanks to be minuted to everyone who had helped with the improvement works over the past year in particular the East Berkshire Ramblers, the Local Access Forums, volunteer groups and the Rights of Way team and congratulated the Rights of

Way Team on being voted the best team in all councils in the South East for the provision of information about rights of way.

The Chairman wished everyone a very Happy Christmas.

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 7.10 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....