

## RIGHTS OF WAY & HIGHWAY LICENSING PANEL

MONDAY, 4 MARCH 2019

PRESENT: Councillors Maureen Hunt (Chairman), Lynda Yong (Vice-Chairman), Clive Bullock, Judith Diment, Mohammed Ilyas, Samantha Rayner and Simon Werner

Officers: Anthony Hurst, Jackie Rivers and Nabihah Hassan-Farooq.

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

### MINUTES

That the Part I minutes of the Panel held on the 10<sup>th</sup> September 2018 be agreed as a correct record.

### PATH PROGRESS REPORT: SEPTEMBER 2018- FEBRUARY 2019

*\* (The Chair amended the order of agenda items to consider item 5 first due to technical difficulties with the agreement of the Panel.)*

Anthony Hurst, Parks and Countryside Manager (RBWM) outlined that the report would seek to update the Panel on the progress made with Public Rights of Way issues during the period from August 2018 to February 2019. Members were informed that the total number of outstanding reported problems on the Public Rights of Way had risen from 9 to 8 during the reporting period. The Panel were told that there had been an enforcement issue at Eton bridleway as outlined in the report which was now resolved. Members were informed that the enforcement action had taken place within the required time but that there had been some difficulty with the landowner carrying out the work. Members were told that landowners had sent photos to officers after commencing and completing work and that this had been helpful in reducing the amount of resource time for officers when checking works had been completed. Members were reminded that officers were willing to work with landowners with improvement and enforcement matters, and that where an extension request was made that this was considered on its own merit, on a case by case basis. The Panel were informed that there were 6 outstanding enforcement cases on the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2019 and that there had been 32 enforcement problems which had been reported across the period. Members queried the outstanding issues and it was noted that the outstanding issues related to, Bray FP1 (off Ascot Road), Horton BR 4 (off Foundry Lane), Old Windsor FP3 (Thames Path), Sunninghill FP5 (off Cheapside Road), Sunninghill FP 18 (Marston Way), Sunninghill FP 36 (off High Street), Wraysbury FP 6 (Douglas Lane) and Eton FP 19 (South Field). Councillor Werner queried which authority would be responsible for resurfacing and it was confirmed that any rights of way resurfacing issues would remain with RBWM.

Members were told that in on the 15<sup>th</sup> July 2016 that Orders were made to add fourteen footpaths at Thamesfield to the definitive Map and Statement of Public Rights of Way. A number of objections had been received to all of the Orders and a Local Public inquiry was held from the 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> May 2018. It was noted that the Inspector who had conducted the Inquiry published his decision on the 19<sup>th</sup> July 2018 and that thirteen of the fourteen Orders were confirmed as made and that one Order was not confirmed. The Panel were told that the public

footpath signs had been installed at the entrances to the footpaths from the surrounding road network and that all thirteen footpaths were now open and in use. It was highlighted that these thirteen footpaths added approximately 2.9km (1.8miles) to the public rights of way network in the borough.

Members were updated that a new bridge across “The Cut” linking Maidenhead Road to the Green Way at Braywick Park was opened on the 17<sup>th</sup> September 2018. Members were reminded that the bridge had been named in memory of Margaret Bowdery, former President of the East Berkshire Ramblers in recognition of her contributions to improving and protecting public rights of way and access to the countryside in the Royal Borough. Members were informed that the Rt Honorable Theresa May had been in attendance at the opening and that a plaque had been placed at the inauguration. Members commended the commitment of officers in the planning and development of this bridge along with the exemplary materials used.

Members were also told that RBWM had recently purchased an area of farmland off of Lower Cookham Road/Sutton Road which was to be named “Battlemead Common”. It was intended that a new footpath would be opened in March 2019 to complete a missing link in the Millennium Walk which would run from the Thames at Hurley to the Thames north of Boulter's Lock. This route was intended to be used as part of the annual “Maidenhead Boundary Walk” which takes place each October. Members were grateful for the addition of this land to the public rights of way catalogue and felt that this was a great addition to the borough. It was highlighted that there would be 28 boundary stones within the land and that work was being done to place these into position ( where they had been dislodged) to allow walkers to follow this path. The Chair queried whether there would be a new car park as part of this acquisition and planning of land and it was confirmed that there would be a car park but that the details were being finalised. Council Werner queried whether this land should be protected and it was discussed that there was very limited opportunity to build upon this land due to flood plain issues. It was also noted that there would be very little other protection offered with this classification to the land if it was to be “protected”. The Chair queried whether the routes proposed would include bridleways and it was confirmed that the paths would be specifically designed for walkers, and it was unlikely that there would be dedicated cyclist or bridleway paths.

The Panel were informed that the Public Rights of Way Team had worked with The Conservation Volunteers (TCV), Berkshire College of Agriculture (BCA), Ways into Work (WiW) and Centrica to carry out practical work upon the public rights of way in the borough over the past 6 months. Members were told that 165 hours of condition survey work had been carried out over September 2018- January 2019. In total it was reported that a total of £6,715.50 had been saved by the contributions and volunteering work. Members commended the work of the volunteers and their work and it was suggested that a vote of thanks be written to all involved.

**ACTION- That the Chair write a letter of thanks to TCV, BCA, WiW and Centrica for their volunteering work and contributions.**

Members were also informed that an advert had been recently placed in the newsletter, ‘ in and around the Royal Borough’ for the current Local Access Forum(LAF) vacancies. Members were encouraged to circulate this information to their networks and alert officers if they were aware of any suitable candidates. The Panel were introduced to Jackie River, who would be supporting the LAF moving forward.

#### DRAFT MILESTONES STATEMENT 2019/2020

Anthony Hurst, Parks and Countryside Manager outlined the above titled report. Panel Members were informed that the report sought to gain approval for the “Milestones Statement and Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan Annual Review 2019-2020” which outlined the

Council's objectives, priorities, targets and service standards for public rights of way work in the upcoming year and available resources for delivering this service.

Members of the Panel were told that a consultation had been held with the Local Access Forum (LAF) and that they had endorsed the targets as outlined within the report. It was highlighted that Parish Councils had also been included, and notably Hurley and Cookham Parish Councillors had been supportive of the targets. Councillor Werner queried how priorities in relation to resurfacing were created and it was confirmed that there was a stringent criteria applied which included, complaints received, costs, level of use and the capital works budget. Members were informed that there was £2,000 allocated per project and that there were ten major resurfacing projects that currently exceeded this budget. Members queried whether larger projects were avoided due to costs and it was confirmed that for any large projects that a capital bid would be confidently applied for. Councillor Hunt queried whether the WM1 target should be decreased from 95% to 91% and it was confirmed that the 95% had been achieved in the past and that this particular target had been based on recommendations made by Ramblers and that this was a realistic and achievable target. Councillor Werner queried whether stretch targets should be introduced and it was commented by members that this would be an inaccurate display of volunteer work and contributions. Members were updated that in relation to target WP2 that 1 new updated ROW map would be produced. It was outlined that work had begun in co-production with Eton Wick & Wraysbury Parish Council to produce this updated publication.

Councillor Ilyas queried whether all of the footpaths as laid out in the Rights of Way Management and Improvement Plan 2016-2026 had been considered as future projects and it was confirmed that there were some long-term aspirational projects listed and that any updates were listed in bold within the appendix. It was discussed that some of the listed updates had been completed.

**ACTION- That Anthony Hurst, update Appendix 7 to amend any completed updated and site specific projects within the Rights of Way Management and Improvement Plan 2016-2026.**

Councillor Hunt queried how many cold case files were currently on the RBWM database and it was confirmed that at present there were 50 outstanding cold case cases, but that there was no pressure or need to prioritise these projects at this time. Councillor Yong queried that there were some site specific updates which were not on the definitive map and listed, for example St George's Lane. It was noted that some sites were not public rights of way and had lost this classification. Councillor Yong also queried a footpath which had been blocked Heatherwood Hospital which linked to the nearby train station and queried whether work could be carried out to re-open this for commuters. It was highlighted that this could be suggested as part of the development proposal for Heatherwood hospital and that further details of this were available through the Heatherwood; housing site proposal planning application.

At the conclusion of the update, Members thanked the public rights of way team for their work on the Milestone's Statement and Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan Annual Review 2019-2020.

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY; That the Rights of Way and Highways Licensing Panel approved the Milestones Statement and Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan Annual Review 2019/2020.**

#### ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was raised.

#### DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Future dates to be scheduled and to be circulated by Democratic Services.

The meeting, which began at 6.33 pm, finished at 7.34 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....