



Notes from Public Meeting hosted by Cookham Parish Council on Tuesday 13th May 2025 to Discuss the Rules posted on Alfred Major Recreation Ground dated 1st April 2025

Chairman: Cllr Bill Perry

Councillors in Attendance: Mandy Brar, Anna-Louise Regan, Richard Kellaway, Jacqui Edwards, Harriet Fleming, Mark Howard

Christine Hunter, Assistant Clerk (note taking)

20 members of the public

Background to AMRG

Councillor Bill Perry opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and thanking them for giving their time for this meeting. He explained the historical background of the Alfred Major Recreation ground (AMRG). The Parish Council had bought it in 1947 as a recreation ground for Cookham residents and to protect it from future development.

He had prepared from points forwarded to him by Justine Moody of Cookham Dog Walkers and contacts received direct by the Council some 14 discussion points for the meeting .

1. Parish Council Notices on AMRG

The notices were dated 1st April, which had caused some queries. Cllr Perry said this as understandable - he had warned the Council - but correct since that was the date of the meeting.

2. Cllr Perry explained that a complaint had been made about comments quoted in the Maidenhead Advertiser. The complainant had misquoted. In their article on 2nd May 2025 the Advertiser had quoted him referring to 'complaints about out-of-control big dogs, and had mentioned someone referring to ' "terrifying" experiences of dogs that were not in their owners' control'. It had not mentioned 'a large number of vicious attacks'.

3. Cllr Perry explained that the notices were the rules as agreed by the Parish Council. As they are not Bye-laws no formalities were needed prior to them being adopted except due notice of the Council's consideration of them, which had been posted as usual for two council, meetings, and in his own column in the Parish magazine. The rules have been made to try to protect the safety, comfort and best interests of all users of AMRG.

Exercising Dogs

4. Concern had been voiced about a duty to exercise dogs under the Animal Welfare Act 2006. Cllr Perry had checked the Act. There is a due to take proper care but no specific duty about exercise on or off lead.

5. Cllr Perry pointed out many other areas in the Parish where dogs could be exercised off lead (Battlemead, Bisham/Quarry Woods, Cockmarsh, Marsh Meadow, the Moor, Odney Common and all public footpaths and towpaths. Many at the meeting preferred AMRG as it is considered a safe environment.

6. Speakers from the floor said that in the past women in particular had experienced harassment and even attacks in some of the suggested alternative areas. It was felt that AMRG was secure, with houses bordering the recreation area where help could be easily accessed if required. It was also easy to

access for many people on foot. These factors make dog walking a social experience for many owners. Cllr Perry said that these were good points which should be taken into account.

7. Cllr Perry said he had been asked about, and for copies of, any Equality Impact Assessment. He pointed out that while the Parish Council is indeed subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty, a formal written EIA is not required. What is required is simply that the Council fully consider its PSED. It had done so. Cllr Perry asked people to remember that protected characteristics under the Equality Act include religion. Many Muslims and Orthodox Jews regard dogs as unclean (or even impure or evil) so being leapt up at and touched by dogs not on leads is difficult for them. The Council had to bear this in mind, too. He and Cllrs had taken full note of the representations from a disabled dog owner they had received which would be an important part of further thought they would be giving the rules after this meeting

Anti-Social Behaviour

8. Councillor Perry explained that the Parish Council rules were made by the Parish Council as owner of the AMRG. They did not conflict with but were supplementary to the Borough ("RBWM") Public Spaces Protection Order of 13 May 2024 governing all public spaces in RBWM, including AMRG. Hence in some places there are two signs, one from RBWM and one from the Parish Council. It was suggested that the Parish rule should be changed to be the same as RBWM's, to 'dogs to be kept under control' rather than 'dogs to be on a lead'.
9. Members of the public recounted a range of anti-social behaviour on AMRG. Possible solutions were discussed. These included working with an authorised RBWM officer issuing 'tickets' to anyone seen behaving anti-socially. These tickets could lead to a criminal charge. Enforcement of the Parish Council rules by the clearly identified Chief Commons Officer was a civil matter. Cllr Perry explained that this was why there had to be published power to have people leave and keep off AMRG.
10. A resident of High Road living next to one of the accesses to AMRG described how her family had suffered months of both verbal and physical abuse, plus damage to her property. This involved shots from ball-bearing guns and loud noise over a prolonged period. Cllrs Howard and Brar will follow up with this resident to try to resolve this situation.
11. Other members of the public said there were disturbances being caused by young men sitting on the exercise equipment on AMRG late at night and groups of between 20 – 30 would gather on most Friday and Saturday nights to cause trouble.
Cllr Perry explained there were rules already in place to deal with 'trouble makers'. The Parish Council needs people to notify it every time they saw or experienced such behaviour. The Parish Council will improve its record keeping to establish a proper 'log' of incidents reported to it.
12. The 'dog walkers' in the meeting explained they were an asset to AMRG. They are engaging with the young men who are causing a nuisance. Dog walkers are also useful in clearing up litter and dog mess not cleared by their owners.
13. Residents reported that the sports club often needed to clear dog mess before playing. Other residents commented due to the diligence of the dog-walkers there is less dog mess on the AMRG currently. Others witnessed anti-social behaviour including bad language and littering by the footballers.
14. Cllr Regan suggested an action plan to combat and enforce this anti-social behaviour which included:
 1. **Find out the cost of improving the current CCTV coverage.**
 2. **Engage someone to enforce the current parish council rules**
 3. **Contact the Club about the behaviour of some of the footballers, especially (suggested Cllr. Howard) in connection with renewal of the sport club lease.**

Some possible solutions for the problems caused by dogs on AMRG had already been researched by CPC.

- Increase the number and positioning of dog bins. Unfortunately this could cost hundreds of pounds per bin.
- The idea of a separate area for dogs would be expensive. The meeting was divided on whether this was a good idea or would damage the social aspect of dog walking. A minority of residents supported the idea.
- CPC will reconsider the rules generally in the light of points made, and specifically that for dogs to be on leads at all times, both generally and for assistance dogs. He will ensure that this is done at the Council meeting on 3 June.
- CPC recognised that some users of AMRG will find contact with dogs difficult.

Cllr Perry closed the meeting by repeating that Cookham Parish Council wants everyone to be able to use AMRG in comfort and safety. It has a moral duty to protect and please all users of AMRG. This is what the Rules are there to help and are aiming to do. The Council is grateful for the feedback provided and will of course carefully consider it.