



MOUSEHOLD HEATH CONSERVATORS

2.05 p.m. – 3.35 p.m.

11 March 2011

Present: Councillors Bradford, Brociek-Coulton, Collishaw, Grahame, Lay, Little, Mrs M Bush, Mrs M Parker and Councillor Offord (sub)

Also Present: Members of the public were also in attendance

Apologies: Councillors Bremner and Little and Mr C Southgate

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2011.

2. QUARTERLY BUDGET REPORT

The head of local neighbourhood services presented the report and outlined the spend against the budget. Although the budget paper stated £0 spend to date on T100 (day to day repairs (tenants)), there had been some spend and this was being processed through the financial system. He said that he was confident that overall spend would be within budget at the end of the financial year and that any under spend would roll forward.

RESOLVED to note the current budget monitoring position.

3. RISK PLANNING

The head of local neighbourhood services presented the report. He explained that the role of the conservators would be to oversee the Mousehold Heath work programme and the financial risk planning, however the council would be responsible for the actual financial risk and the associated management.

The committee identified risks such as extreme weather, fire, fly-tipping, accidents, and the use of scooters and bikes on the heath for inclusion in the financial risk plan. The chair said that sufficient budget provision would be required. The head of local neighbourhood services said that the risk planning process would involve identifying each risk and the appropriate mitigation (to reduce the likelihood and impact) on an individual basis. The risk plan would need to be proportionate to the use of the heath and appropriate to the role and responsibilities of the conservators and budget.

RESOLVED to endorse the proposals to develop a risk plan for Mousehold Heath, for consideration at the next meeting.

4. NEIGHBOURHOOD WORKING MODEL

The head of local neighbourhood services provided a presentation on the council's neighbourhood working model. The city had been divided into four locality areas, each with a neighbourhood area manager, delivering services on a local basis, often through a multi-agency approach involving others such as the police and contractors. Improvements included providing communities and residents with a greater influence on the services they receive; encouraging shared ownership of neighbourhoods; and improvements to the quality of life in local areas. An overarching approach for certain services was still required, for example contract management, and was provided by a central citywide services team.

Mousehold Heath sits mainly within the north locality of the neighbourhood working model. Opportunities for the heath included wardens as part of the locality team; an increased connection with contract monitoring; increased community engagement (covering a wider area); and improved involvement with safer neighbourhood teams.

In response to a question from a Conservator, the head of local neighbourhood services said that work of neighbourhood teams had been responsive so far. However as issues and evidence continued to be gathered, neighbourhood teams would be able to take a more proactive approach to seek out residents and partners to work with. There would be a need to be responsive but also to continue to look for opportunities. The chair said that he hoped that clear processes would encourage individuals to become involved.

It was suggested that events could be organised with the local community, for example through a friends group. In response to suggestions that the Conservators should look at how others involve the local community, the natural areas officer said that the chair of the Catton Park committee had offered for the Conservators to visit and see how they had involved the community.

In response to a question from a member of the public, the head of local neighbourhood services said that the current walkabout programme would run until the end of March 2011. The programme would then pause for the council's purdah period, and recommence after the elections in May 2011.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) circulate the neighbourhood locality map and contact details of officers to members of the committee; and
- (2) ask the natural areas officer to organise a visit by the Conservators to Catton Park.

5. MANAGEMENT SUB-GROUP REPORT

The Chair provided a brief update on the Rangers House which was up for auction.

RESOLVED to note the update.

6. MOUSEHOLD HEATH UPDATE REPORT

The natural areas officer presented the report. A Conservator said that the Cavalry Track may be older than initially thought (possibly 1791 onwards). Although some residents had said that the cleared area looked empty and stark, the natural areas officer said that many more positive comments had been received by wardens on site and that the area needed time to become established.

(Pictures of the reed sweet-grass weed, provided by a member of the public, were circulated at the meeting).

The Chair said that reed sweet-grass weed had invaded the vinegar pond and had needed to be removed. In response to questions from a member of the public, the natural areas officer said that officers had originally advised that the pond should remain a seasonal pond, and that the use of herbicide was preferable to any heavy intervention. Following mechanical removal of the weed, the pond was holding little water and would need to be monitored. If practical, officers would try to maintain the level of water in the pond. A more permanent solution would be considered by the Mousehold Heath working group. The committee were informed that there were signs of dragonfly larvae and other insect life in the vinegar pond in addition to its use by breeding frogs.

The Fountain Ground changing rooms building had been ordered and was expected to have a 25-30 year lifespan. The Chair said that the council hoped to publicise the grounds for wider use and to increase demand.

Discussions had taken place between the Mousehold Conservators and Blue Sky Leisure (Zaks Restaurant) regarding the maintenance of the toilet blocks; the Pavilion building; and utilisation of the car park. A suggestion to offer teas and coffee for people visiting the heath was welcomed. The natural areas officer said that Blue Sky Leisure were responsible for internal repairs and the council was responsible for external repairs to the Pavilion building. Any changes to the car park would need to avoid any risk to the tree, which had been confirmed as a rare example of a Turner's Oak. The manager of Blue Sky Leisure had also offered to run joint events with the council and the Conservators, having run similar events at Kelling Heath. The Mousehold Heath wardens were developing an events programme for the remainder of the year, and there would also be four band concerts in the band stand and the potential for other types of music.

RESOLVED to note the report.

7. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The June 2011 meeting would need to consider the forward work programme, the annual review and a review of the contractors.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) arrange a meeting of the management sub-group to consider the items for the next meeting; and

(2) note the dates of future meetings as follows:-

- Friday 24 June 2011 at 2.00pm
- Friday 7 October 2011 at 2.00pm
- Friday 13 January 2012 at 2.00pm
- Friday 30 March 2012 at 2.00pm

CHAIR