



MOUSEHOLD HEATH CONSERVATORS

2pm to 3.35pm

1 February 2013

Present: Councillors Bradford (chair), Little (vice chair) , Ackroyd, Brociek-Coulton, Henderson and Price; and Margaret Bush (The Mousehold Heath Defenders)

Apologies: Councillor Bremner, Chris Southgate (The Norwich Society); and Matthew Davies (The Norwich Fringe Project)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2012.

3. BUDGET MONITORING STATEMENT APRIL 2012 - DECEMBER 2012

The finance control manager presented the report.

He explained that a precept was the money raised through council tax to fund local bodies, such as the Mousehold Heath Conservators, which allows these bodies to set their own budgets. He also reminded the committee that the Conservators decided to draw on the reserves last year to lower the precept.

In response to a member's question, the finance control manager agreed to insert a subtotal for the works budget from now on to make the calculations clearer. He reminded the committee that the codes used in the report are general across Norwich city council and therefore are difficult to change but added that work had been undertaken to make the codes clearer.

The head of local neighbourhood services explained to the committee that the water and sewerage charges are shown as zero in the budget as the report only showed costs charged against Mousehold Heath. The water and sewerage charges were charged back to the green spaces budget. He added that in the budget report for next year, budget lines that are not being used will be removed from the report to make the figures clearer.

In response to a member's question, the finance control manager explained that recharges for property services were logged by the property engineers and periodically processed. The zero in the report against this budget line may be due to a lag in the recharging of these services.

The finance control manager confirmed that all Mousehold heath staff were enrolled in the local government pension scheme and this was the reason for the salary forecast overspend.

RESOLVED to note the current budget monitoring position

4. BUDGET AND PRECEPT 2013 / 14

The finance control manager presented the report.

The head of local neighbourhood services explained that Heathgate was the base for the two Mousehold heath officers and a charge needed to be made for accommodation for each member of staff.

The finance control manager also confirmed that there would be an increase in the precept for this year as the conservators chose to lower the precept in the previous budget by using some of their reserves. The members discussed using some of the reserves again for this year but were reminded that it was useful to have a contingency fund and financial challenges would impact on all local councils in the future.

In response to a question from a member, the finance control manager explained that the conservator's budget was not shown separately on council tax bills, it would be included in the level of council tax set by Norwich City Council.

RESOLVED to;

- 1) approve 2012 / 13 budgets as set out in appendix A;
- 2) place a precept on Norwich City Council in the relevant amount for the financial year beginning 1 April 2013, as per paragraph 6; and
- 3) note the risk management arrangements set out in paragraphs 8-12

5. MOUSEHOLD MANAGEMENT PLAN 2013 – 2018 AND WORK PROGRAMME 2013 -14

The head of local neighbourhood services presented the report. He explained to the committee that officers had reviewed the management plan and had updated some wording and it was not a major reworking of the document. If the changes shown in

the appendices were agreed, it was noted that the document would not be re-printed but instead put onto the Norwich city council website.

In response to a question from a member, it was confirmed that the heath had been used for family open days and would continue to be used in this way in the future. Margaret Bush reminded the committee that the heath was a public space which can limit the activities the area is used for but was pleased to report that the area had been used well during the snowy weather. She also reported that the vinegar pond area was growing in size due to the wet weather.

A member was concerned that the literature implied that cycling was permitted anywhere on the heath and not just in the designated areas and on the cycle paths. The head of local neighbourhood services agreed to re word the management plan with reference to cycling areas to clarify this.

Members expressed concern about the use of chemicals on the pitch and putt course and the impact these may have on the wildlife in the area. The head of local and neighbourhood services agreed to look into this and circulate more information when he had it.

RESOLVED :

- 1) to note the report; and
- 2) for the head of local neighbourhood services to establish the use of chemicals on the pitch and putt course and to circulate this to members.

The head of local and neighbourhood services introduced the second part of the report.

It was explained that the wardens had attempted to cost the programme as accurately as possible but if any estimates were too low, these would be brought back to the conservators for consideration. Conservators were asked to review the points on page 23 which were areas of the management plan that they had previously asked for further information to be included or clarified.

Conservators discussed various aspects of the quality of access to the heath and specific areas within it. The head of local and neighbourhood services agreed that access management, including signage, surfacing of car parks and footpaths and visitor information, needed to be an area of work that required a greater focus over the next five years. It was proposed that these areas could be covered in the spring itinerants with the management sub group and include quality of access points and the mapping of designated access routes of different grades.

The members were updated on the Mottram memorial with a date to be confirmed for the ceremony.

RESOLVED:

- 1) to approve the proposed changes to the Mousehold management plan; and

- 2) to approve and request officers implement the work programme for 2013-14. Any changes to costs to be reported to the Conservators for approval (or if between formal meetings Conservators agreed to delegate this decision to the head of local neighbourhood services in conjunction with the Chair).

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED to confirm that the next meeting of the Conservators will be held at City Hall on Friday 15 March 2013.

CHAIR