



MOUSEHOLD HEATH CONSERVATORS

2.00 p.m. – 4.20 p.m.

17 September 2010

Present: Councillors Bradford (chair), Brociek-Coulton and S.Little,
Mr. M Davies and Mr C.Southgate

Also Present: Several members of the Mousehold Heath Defenders and public
were also in attendance

Apologies: Mr. M Bryant and Mr. D Cannon

1. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED to defer the appointment of vice-chair to the next meeting when the remaining vacant positions had been filled.

2. ANNOUNCEMENT – ANGLIA IN BLOOM AWARDS

Councillor Brociek-Coulton informed the committee that the city had been successful in achieving several awards at the Anglia in Bloom Regional Awards. The Mousehold Heath Defenders had received the Best Community Project award for their display on Mousehold Heath. A presentation evening (invitation only) would be taking place on Friday 22 October 2010 at the Assembly House when the winners would receive their certificates and awards.

RESOLVED to:-

- (1) note the congratulations and the appreciation of the Conservators to the Mousehold Heath Defenders and to the volunteers who were involved in the display;
- (2) ask the committee officer to notify city councillors of the achievement via the e-Councillor system.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Accidents caused by bikers on Heath - liability of council

Gill Webb of the Mousehold Heath Defenders, referred to a copy of a letter that had been addressed to the council by Ms Kelly Matthews, a local resident. Ms Matthews had asked that should bicycles and motorbikes were to be allowed on the Heath, whether the council would be offering insurance to people or animals who may be

involved in an accident caused by the bikers. As she had not received a response she had asked Gill Webb to pursue the matter on her behalf at the next meeting of the Conservators.

In the letter, Ms Matthews said she walked her dogs twice a day on the Heath and considered that the safe environment was now being destroyed by bikes pedalling at speed and jumping over hills without thought or consideration of children, the elderly or dogs walking in the area. She requested that written assurance be provided that, should she or any animal be harmed by bikers the council would have an insurance policy in place to cover medical and veterinary fees.

The parks and open spaces manager said he had been unaware of the letter and had not been able to find a record of it being received. However, he had contacted the council's legal team before the meeting and they had issued the following response:-

"The Norwich City Council is insured. It is not possible to say whether the insurance will be called upon in advance of knowing the details of any claim. We cannot say that whatever the circumstances of the accident (i.e. who was involved, what happened and where it took place on the Heath) the city council will be paying vets bills for example."

RESOLVED to ask the committee officer to contact the council's risk and safety manager and ask him to respond to Ms Matthews directly at the earliest opportunity.

4. MINUTES

With regard to the Fountain Ground changing rooms the finance control manager updated the committee with the advice obtained from the council's monitoring officer. He said the Conservators had the duty and power to commit the spend of funds from the capital account for the changing rooms and that officers would be able to seek council channels without further authorisation from the Conservators.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the update as above
- (2) agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2010.

5. QUARTERLEY BUDGET REPORT – APRIL TO JUNE 2010

The finance control manager presented the report which provided the Conservators with the position on budget monitoring for the Mousehold Heath Conservators budget for 2010/11.

In response to questions, the parks and open spaces manager said works on the Heath would not be affected by the recent collapse of Connaught Partnerships Limited as the contract was with Connaught Environmental who was still trading as a viable company. The accommodation charge for the Mousehold Heath wardens would remain the same and included the use of computers and telephones whichever office they were located in.

Chris Southgate said being provided with budget information in September did not allow the Conservators enough time to be able to carry out their duties efficiently and to be able to properly consider issues such as risks.

In response to a question, the finance control manager said he would ensure that the figures provided at the special meeting to look at the budget precept in January 2011 would be the latest available. The council issued guidance to budget managers on the construction of the budget, which would be made available to the Conservators to aid their deliberations in setting the precept.

The finance control manager said the main financial risks were included within the council's budget report based on the Corporate Risk Register. This covered mitigating actions and impact minimisation, including insurance and contingency reserves. He was not aware whether the Conservators had carried out their own risk assessment for the Heath which would highlight specific issues. The parks and open spaces manager said a general risk for the Heath may be tree disease. With regard to the damage caused by storms in the previous year, he said a service level risk assessment was carried out last year and this was identified in the work programme which was flexible if additional funding was available.

Councillor Little referred to the comprehensive spending review that the coalition Government would be announcing in October 2010 and asked if the budget for the Conservators could be affected. The chair said the basis on which the Conservators were established meant that it should be outside of the budget cuts.

RESOLVED to:-

- (1) note the report;
- (2) ask the parks and open spaces manager to arrange for a representative from the contractors for the Heath and the contract manager to come to the next full meeting of the Conservators on 10 December 2010 in order to answer any questions or queries members may have;

6. REVIEW OF ACTIONS

Neighbourhood Working

The parks and open spaces manager said the appointment of the community and neighbourhood manager for the area had not been confirmed.

In response to a question, the parks and open spaces manager explained the staffing structure of the parks and open spaces team who were now situated in citywide services. He said he was still currently responsible for the management of the Mousehold Heath wardens and this would continue until the matter of which neighbourhood area the heath would be situated in was resolved.

RESOLVED to;

- (1) ask the head of local neighbourhood services to prepare a report on how the new neighbourhood team will work on the Heath within the remit of the Conservators, to be brought to the next full meeting of the Conservators on 10 December 2010;
- (2) ask the relevant community and neighbourhood manager to attend the next full meeting of the Conservators on 10 December 2010.

Britannia Road Car Park

The parks and open spaces manager said temporary repairs had been carried out in order to make the car park safe.

Councillor Brociek-Coulton said that at a recent SNAP (Safer Neighbourhood Action Panel) meeting, the issue of boy racers on Britannia Road had been made a SNAP priority.

RESOLVED to:-

- (1) note the position;
- (2) ask the parks and open spaces manager to contact the council's principal technical officer and ask him to arrange a visit to the car park with Malcolm Bryant of the Mousehold Heath Defenders.

7. FOUNTAIN GROUND CHANGING ROOMS

(Jessica Tyson, sports and physical activity development officer attended the meeting for this item)

The parks and open spaces manager updated the Conservators on a further option of an unused demonstration changing room unit for the Fountain Ground. This was currently available from a local company at a significantly lower price than the purchase from new of the modular buildings as reviewed at the last meeting on 18 June 2010. The module would provide a basic changing room facility but as it did not fully meet the criteria of the Football Foundation (FF), the Conservators would be unable to apply for FF grant aid towards the cost of the building.

The sports development officer circulated a drawing of the module available from the local company and said although it did not meet the full criteria, a representative from the FF had advised that it was of good quality. She said it was a very good changing facility at a good price and the Conservators should act quickly if they decided on that option as the local company would not be able to hold the module for the council. She added that application for funding with the FF was a long process.

The parks and open spaces manager referred to the tight timescale involved as the new facility would need to be installed by the next football season. He said although the council's procurement department were ready to proceed with the required

tendering process, the Conservators needed to be fully informed before a final decision could be made.

In response to questions, the sports development officer said the cost of the FF approved facility previously considered by the Conservators would cost a maximum of £70,000 but it was not possible to guarantee that the FF would give the possible grant aid of £20,000. It was also not possible to submit a grant application and withdraw at a later date.

She said the non FF approved module available from the local company would be £25,000 for the modular building plus approximately £10,000 for installation. However, as the local company worked closely with the FF, they would be able to potentially supply a larger module that met the required specifications for the grant application.

RESOLVED to agree that:-

- (1) members of the Conservators, natural areas officer, sports development officer and principal technical officer visit the local offices and view the unused demonstration unit on Friday 1 October 2010 at 10am;
- (2) a special meeting of the Conservators is convened after the visit on 1 October 2010 at noon at City Hall to discuss the matter further

8. GNDP – MOUSEHOLD HEATH AND ADJACENT PLAYING FIELD – PROPOSED INFRASTRUCTURE WORKS

The parks and open spaces manager presented the report that informed the Conservators of some additional works to be carried out adjacent to the heath which were externally funded by the Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP). The works would benefit the objectives of the Conservators and the management plan.

On behalf of the Mousehold Heath Defenders, Gill Webb asked that the oak trees be left alone, the scrapings of the earth be kept to the minimum required and that the gorse was left undisturbed as birds were nesting.

RESOLVED to approve the work on the subject to the following caveats:-

- (a) that the comments minuted above be adhered to;
- (b) that the Mousehold Heath warden provides a map of the area detailing the areas in which the work will take place and that it is displayed on the notice board on the Heath.

9. MANAGEMENT SUB GROUP

The parks and open spaces manager presented the report of the Mousehold Conservators Management Sub-Group and updated members on the work undertaken since the last meeting.

He said as the previous contact at the Forestry Commission had left, the council was waiting further guidance to be provided on the issue of off road cycling. The natural areas officer was also waiting to hear back from the Cyclists Touring Club who dealt with all types of cycling including mountain biking and BMX. He said it had been difficult to get the users to engage with the council as a group.

The chair said that if the issue continued then the Conservators may have to reconsider their position. The parks and open spaces manager said he would ask the mousehold heath wardens to be more proactive by way of the byelaws with the bikers.

RESOLVED to:-

- (1) note the position;
- (2) ask the parks and open spaces manager to check that the natural areas officer has arranged for a chainsaw and kit to be purchased for use by the mousehold heath wardens.

10. GURNEY ROAD SITE VISIT

The committee officer reminded the Conservators of the forthcoming visit to Gurney Road by members of the Mousehold Heath Conservators and Norwich Highways Agency Committee (NHAC) on 24 September 2010 at 10:00am. The visit was open to members of both committees only.

Members discussed what information should be provided to the members of NHAC prior to the visit and the context that the visit should take. Chris Southgate said he hoped NHAC members would agree that action needed to be taken should any money or special funding become available in the future.

Pat Siano referred to a letter she had prepared outlining her serious concerns including the fact that school children frequently used the Heath for their nature studies, and asked that it be included in the information pack. She asked that members took these concerns into account at the visit.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) to note the date and time of the visit;
- (2) that with the assistance of the natural areas officer, transportation manager, Chris Southgate and Councillor Little, to ask the committee officer to prepare a pack for NHAC members prior to the visit to include the following information:-
 - A map of the area showing pedestrian paths and cycle routes;
 - Extract of mousehold heath management plan;
 - Information on how Gurney Road fits in with Joint Core Strategy;
 - Latest accident figures and statistics for Gurney Road;
 - Previous correspondence between Conservators and NHAC;
 - Copy of letter from Pat Siano as submitted at the meeting.

11. MOUSEHOLD HEATH MANAGEMENT PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

The parks and open spaces manager presented the report and updated members on issues, works and events undertaken on the Heath since the last meeting of the Conservators and on forthcoming events.

The parks and open spaces manager said the events that had taken place on the heath that year had been well attended and he would be collating the exact attendance figures at the end of the year. Gill Webb from the Mousehold Heath Defenders said she would be carrying out a bee survey on the Heath.

RESOLVED to:-

- (1) note the report;
- (2) ask Councillor Brociek-Coulton to directly contact the head of citywide services in regards to the problem of rubbish located near the Rangers House at the pathway running from Lavengro Road to the back of Heathgate, just outside the boundaries of the Heath.

12. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED to note the dates of future meetings as follows:-

- Friday 10 December 2010 at 2.00pm
- Friday 14 January 2011 at 2.00pm (additional meeting to look at Budget Precept for 2011/2012)
- Friday 11 March 2011 at 2.00pm

CHAIR