



Mousehold Heath Conservators

14:00 to 14:40

17 September 2021

Present: Councillors Sands (M) (vice chair in the chair), Kendrick and Lubbock and John Trevelyan (Norwich Society)

Apologies: Councillors Maxwell (chair), Brociek-Coulton, Button, Champion, Galvin and Sands (S); Clare Cohen (Mousehold Heath Defenders) and Matthew Davies (Norwich Fringe Project)

1. Public Questions/Petitions

There were no public questions or petitions.

2. Declarations of interests

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the amended minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2021 and the minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2021.

4. Budget monitoring Statement April – July 2021 and Prudent Level of Reserves

(The service accountant (budget monitoring) attended the meeting for this item.)

The service accountant (budget monitoring) presented the report. He referred to Appendix A and explained that the underspend amounted to a total forecast variance of £4,300, which would go into the reserves balance. Members were also advised that a small amount of interest was paid on the capital receipt for the Ranger's House (Table 1).

The parks and open spaces manager referred to Appendix B, Prudent level of Mousehold Heath Reserves 21-22 and said that the Conservators had requested that this be reported to the September meeting in advance of setting the precept in January of each year. The prudent minimum level of reserves based on one year's operational risk was £9,802. All risks had been assessed as low, with the main financial risk being around the loss of rental income from concessions which could be relet.

RESOLVED to note the current budget monitoring and reserves positions.

5. Mousehold Heath Management Update 9 July to 31 August 2021

The parks and open spaces manager presented the report. During his presentation he commented that the temporary café had ceased trading. This would have no impact on the Conservators' budget because it had been unbudgeted income. The wardens had met with the contractors to secure a firm price for the maintenance contract for pavilion maintenance. The wardens continued to report incidences of vandalism to the Norfolk Constabulary, but no action could be taken without evidence. The police had evidence in relation to the break-in at the changing rooms and would be investigating this further. The wardens had removed graffiti and revarnished five benches that had been damaged. The wardens had also been asked to cut back an area of vegetation near St James Hill to assist the police following the discovery of a deceased person on the heath. The wardens have been working with volunteers to undertake a butterfly survey. Volunteers were now back on the heath, although corporate volunteer events had not yet resumed due to people working at home and Covid. Other events had resumed particularly for young people using the heath as a learning environment. Walks were being held on the heath as part of the Heritage Open Days. In conclusion, members were advised that the wardens had assisted with the research for the Waste and Strays Project but no additional resources had been required as it could be incorporated into their day to day work.

During discussion the Conservators noted that the café had ceased trading and that no other concessions had come forward for its prime site.

The acting chair said that he had received an email from Norfolk Constabulary confirming that the police were taking the concerns about anti-social behaviour at the car park on Britannia Road seriously. In reply to a question, the parks and open spaces manager said that bollards and benches had not been stolen but had been vandalised.

RESOLVED to note the content of the report.

6. Public Toilet Provision adjacent to the Pavilion, Gurney Road

The parks and open spaces manager presented the report. The Conservators attending the itinerant had asked for the toilets to be reopened. The toilets had been closed in response to the pandemic. There were no savings to be made from the contract or reimbursement for the toilets not being cleaned during the period of closure. Following the publication of the agenda papers, advice had been provided by nplaw that, as with many parks provision, a cold-water supply and provision of soap was sufficient for people to clean their hands after using the facilities. Members were advised that the friction of rubbing hands together with the use of cold water and soap would clean hands adequately. It was therefore suggested that the toilets could be reopened after a deep cleanse, the fitting of new soap and sanitizer dispensers, and to resume the contractual cleaning regime. This would provide a solution in the short term and costings could be provided for the options set out in the report which could be considered at the January meeting.

In reply to a member's question, the parks and open spaces manager confirmed that a request had been made for the minor repair to one of the toilets. The member said that the proposal to reopen the toilet facility was a good one and would ensure that there was some provision on the heath and was the least expensive option. She suggested that regarding long term provision, options included asking Zac's to make their toilets available to users of the heath or to introduce compost toilets. Another member suggested that port-a-loos would look out of place on the heath.

The parks and open spaces manager advised the Conservators the wardens had received no complaints about the toilets, but the concessions had asked for toilets especially around the pavilion area. It was suggested that a working group would consider the options and bring a report back to the next meeting of the committee.

The Conservators also noted that the toilets near the pavilion were signposted from the car park.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) agree to the proposal to reopen the toilets in the short term (as outlined in the minutes above);
- (2) ask the working party to consider options for the long term provision of toilets on the heath, together with costings, to be considered at the January meeting.

CHAIR