

Mousehold Heath Conservators

Date: **Friday, 16 June 2023**

Time: **14:30**

Venue: **Mancroft room City Hall, St Peters Street, Norwich, NR2 1NH**

Committee members:

Councillor Carrington
Councillor Champion
Councillor Fox
Councillor Francis
Councillor Kendrick
Councillor Kidman
Councillor Lubbock
Councillor Peek
Councillor Sands (M)
Matthew Davies, Norwich Fringe
Project
Marion Maxwell, Mousehold Heath
Defenders
John Trevelyan, The Norwich Society

For further information please contact:

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Agenda

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1 Appointment of chair

To appoint a chair for the ensuing civic year.

2 Appointment of vice chair

To appoint a vice chair for the ensuing civic year.

3 Apologies

To receive apologies for absence

4 Declarations of interest

(Please note that it is the responsibility of individual members to declare an interest prior to the item if they arrive late for the meeting)

5 Public questions/petitions

To receive questions / petitions from the public which have been submitted in accordance with the council's constitution.

6 Appointments to the management subgroup

To appoint the members of the management subgroup.
The management subgroup comprises the chair and vice chair and up to three other conservators:

- one councillor
- one Mousehold Heath Defender; and
- one member of the Norwich Society

7 Management subgroup meeting dates

To agree dates for the Mousehold Heath Conservators management subgroup. Suggested dates are:

- Friday 28 July 2023 at 14:30
- Friday 17 November 2023 at 14:30
- Friday 16 February 2024 at 14:30

8 Minutes

5 - 8

To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2023.

- | | | |
|-----------|---|----------------|
| 9 | Mousehold Heath Conservators 2022-23 provisional year end outturn | 9 - 14 |
| | Purpose - To provide the 2022/23 provisional year end outturn position. | |
| 10 | Mousehold Heath Conservators Annual Report 2022-23 | 15 - 34 |
| | Purpose - To provide an annual review on activities on Mousehold Heath relating to the delivery of the Mousehold Heath management plan objectives. | |
| 11 | Itinerant date | |
| | To agree a date for the itinerant of Mousehold Heath. | |

Date of publication: **Thursday, 08 June 2023**

MINUTES

Mousehold Heath Conservators**14:00 to 14:50****17 March 2023**

Present: Councillors Sands (M) (chair), Brociek-Coulton (vice chair), Champion, Galvin, Kendrick, Kidman, Peek and Schmierer and Marion Maxwell (Mousehold Heath Defenders) and John Trevelyan (Norwich Society)

Apologies: Councillor Lubbock and Matthew Davies (Norwich Fringe Project)

In attendance Susan Moore, Parks and Open Spaces Manager
William Stewart, Mousehold Heath Warden

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 minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2023.

4. Mousehold Heath Budget Monitoring to 31 December 2022

The Parks and Open Spaces Manager introduced the report and said that there were no updates since the publication of the agenda papers.

The chair welcomed that there had been an underspend of £6,854 due to reduced contract costs and increased income from Pitch and Putt.

RESOLVED to note the current budget monitoring and reserves positions.

5. Mousehold Heath Management Update 22 December 2022 to 5 March 2023

The Mousehold Heath Warden presented the report.

During the presentation, the Mousehold Heath Warden highlighted the contribution made by community volunteers who had contributed 624 hours over eight weeks from 22 December to 5 March 2023. The groups that had contributed were listed in

the report. In addition, the Easton College workplace student had contributed 80 hours out of 150 hours. Five volunteers had successfully passed the woodchipper course for Mousehold Heath and Norwich Fringe Project volunteers. This course, together with the scythe training, increased the transferrable skills of the volunteers and gave something back to them.

The Mousehold Heath Warden explained that the removal of the old leggy gorse was important to reduce the fire risk on the heath. In some areas, the only option was for the gorse to be chipped, for instance, large branches could not be dragged across the playing field or retained for natural habitat. Members were advised that there had been scrub clearance at St James Hill to maintain the historic views. The Monday and Tuesday Mousehold Heath volunteer groups had removed Sycamore saplings. Work in this period include bracken removal and was planned so that it was carried out before the commencement of the bird nesting season. Other works that the wardens had been involved in were guided walks and events, and collating wildlife and biodiversity data on the heath.

The chair welcomed that the Mousehold Heath Higher Level Stewardship agreement had been extended for five years to 2028, and that there was potential for current agreements to enter the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) in future and suggested that there should be some wider publicity on this. The Mousehold Heath Warden said that the press usually picked up on awards from the council's website.

During discussion, a member said that residents in Gertrude Road were concerned that their properties were overlooked as shrubbery had been removed. The Mousehold Heath Warden confirmed that he had spoken to residents and advised them that the areas of bramble had been cleared to provide an important firebreak. A line of Birch trees had been planted along the boundary and it was hoped that these would take quickly to form a barrier.

The Mousehold Heath Warden said that around 350 saplings had been moved from the heathland and grassland habitats to form a woodland area adjacent to Gilman Road. The Conservators were advised that a sapling popper was used to protect the saplings when pulled ready for transfer. The volunteers enjoyed this work. The tree stock was monitored and saplings from the heath had potential to transfer to other sandy soil sites in the city.

A member suggested that there should be some outreach work to encourage more corporate volunteer groups. The Mousehold Heath Warden said that there were two to three organisations that had approached them but would make a note to send out a letter to potential organisations about corporate volunteer groups. The Parks and Open Spaces Manager said that the volunteers were a valuable resource for Mousehold Heath, and together with the Norwich Fringe Project, for the 51 open spaces around the city. Volunteering outdoors was good for people's mental and physical health. It was noted that the Defenders had been joined by 7 new members, all young women.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the contents of the report;

- (2) ask officers to consider outreach to companies/organisations to encourage corporate volunteer work on the Heath and other natural spaces.

6. Annual Work Programme 2023-24

The Parks and Open Spaces Manager introduced the report. She added that following the Conservator's decision on toilet provision at its January meeting, there had been discussions with Zak's, the restaurant operators, about the electricity source and equipment to measure the energy supply to the toilet facilities. Scaffolding for the repairs to the pavilion roof would be erected on 4 April, and works would commence on 10 April 2023.

The Mousehold Heath Warden then advised members of the Volunteer Strategy. Numbers of volunteers had increased slowly after the pandemic. There had been around 4 to 5 new volunteers over the last few weeks, who had learned about it by word of mouth. Volunteers had been split into two groups, Monday and Tuesday, with around 8 to 15 members each, in order to make numbers manageable. The Assist Trust and the Mousehold Heath Defenders also provided regular volunteer work.

The Parks and Open Spaces Manager said that minor changes to the Annual Work Programme had been made. It was proposed to bring the Work Programme to each meeting to review progress. She advised the Conservators of the work of the two Mousehold Heath Wardens to contribute to habitat and species surveys, as part of the work to determine the Biodiversity baseline survey. This built on data gathered over several years. The Mousehold Heath Warden explained that details of the wildlife and species on the heath would be included in the Mousehold Heath Conservators Annual report, which would be considered at the next meeting. He explained that all biological records are sent to the county's wildlife recorders and Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service (NBIS).

Councillor Kidman said that she would like to volunteer to support school visits by providing short talks and slides. The Conservators were advised that the outreach programme was open to all schools in the area. The chair welcomed Councillor Kidman's suggestion.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report to secure the implementation and commitments made within the management plan objectives to deliver the works outlined in the work programme keeping within budget for the 2023-24 financial year.

CHAIR



Committee name: Mousehold Heath Conservators

Committee date: 16/06/2023

Report title: Mousehold Heath Conservators 2022/23 provisional year end outturn

Portfolio: Councillor Giles, Cabinet member for communities and social inclusion

Report from: Head of environment services

Wards: Catton Grove and Crome

OPEN PUBLIC ITEM

Purpose

To provide the 2022/23 provisional year end outturn position.

Recommendation:

To the provisional year end outturn position

Policy framework

The council has five corporate priorities, which are:

- People live independently and well in a diverse and safe city.
- Norwich is a sustainable and healthy city.
- Norwich has the infrastructure and housing it needs to be a successful city.
- The city has an inclusive economy in which residents have equal opportunity to flourish.
- Norwich City Council is in good shape to serve the city.

This report meets the people live independently and well in a diverse and safe city corporate priority.

Mousehold Heath management plan objectives

The report helps to meet the Mousehold Heath management plan objective C.

C) To ensure that Mousehold Heath is clean and well maintained.

Report details

1. Conservators approved a precept for the financial year 2022/23 of £246,082 at their meeting 21 January 2022.
2. The Conservators have requested that budget reports be brought to their meetings on a regular basis. Appendix A details the provisional financial outturn for Mousehold Heath as at the end of March 2023, and comparison of the expected outturn to the annual budget.
3. Corporate recharge budgets are no longer shown against individual cost centres within the General Fund, for accounting presentation purposes. All corporate recharges are still calculated in line with agreed principles. The Conservator's element of the recharges has been included within the figures in this report, for consistency between accounting periods.
4. Overall, the budget shows a forecast underspend of (£9,833), mainly due to Supplies & Services cost and increased income from Pitt & Putt. However this underspend was slightly reduced by employee costs and recharges higher than budget.
5. The impact of the precept and forecast 2022/23 budget monitoring position on the Mousehold Heath balances are as follows:

Table 1:

	£
Balance brought forward from 2021/22	(33,843)
Precept 2021/22	(246,082)
Forecast Outturn 2021/22	236,249
10th out of 10 instalment of pension deficit costs	2,808
Forecast balance to be carried forward to 2023/24	(40,868)
In-year movement in reserves (underspend)	(7,025)

6. The prudent minimum level of reserves was assessed in 2021/22 for it to be £9,800. The reserve balance is expected to continue to exceed the prudent minimum balance.

Capital

7. The position on capital reserve is as below, with no spend incurred in 2022/23 to date. There are no current items in the capital budget therefore no spend can be incurred in 2022/23 without a budget amendment to council.

Table 2:

	£
Rangers House balance brought forward	(100,766)
Interest accrued on balance up until March 2022	(3,286)
Interest April – March 22/23	(2,076)
Forecast balance of receipts at 31/03/2023	(106,128)

Consultation

8. There has been no consultation on this report.

Implications

Financial and resources

9. Any decision to reduce or increase resources or alternatively increase income must be made within the context of the council's stated priorities, as set out in its Corporate Plan 2022-26 and budget.

10. This report details the provisional year end outturn report of the budget position for 2022/23.

Legal

11. There are no legal implications for this report.

Statutory considerations

Consideration	Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:
Equality and diversity	None
Health, social and economic impact	None
Crime and disorder	None
Children and adults safeguarding	None
Environmental impact	None

Risk management

Risk	Consequence	Controls required
Financial	Failure to adequately plan and monitor finances could result in insufficient resources being available to deliver the aims and objectives of the Management Plan and Annual Work Programme.	Ensure that sufficient financial and management information is available to continue management and maintenance programme.

Other options considered

12. No other options have been considered.

Reasons for the decision/recommendation

13. Revenue budget and capital receipts balance monitoring will ensure that there are adequate resources to implement Mousehold Heath Management Plan and Annual Work Programme.

Background papers: None

Appendices: A – Mousehold Heath Conservators provisional year end outturn report

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Appendix A: Mousehold Heath Conservators Provisional year end outturn report

		Budget (£)	Actual (£)	Variance (£)
2000	Salaries	76,270	78,379	2,109
2011	Employers Pension Contributions	10,028	10,255	227
2015	Annual Added Years Payments	3,581	3,313	(268)
2018	Pension Deficit Recovery	15,809	15,743	(66)
2042	IAS 19 Current Cost of Service	0	0	0
2090	Employee/Public Liability Insurance	474	527	53
2102	Responsive Repairs	0	5,602	5,602
2103	Grounds General Maintenance	15,000	4,028	(10,972)
2170	Programmed Maintenance	0	573	573
2207	Contract Cleaning	10,131	9,035	(1,096)
2216	Electricity	1,554	(968)	(2,522)
2231	Grounds General Maintenance	2,204	1,482	(722)
2239	Recharge from GMO main contract	66,151	61,765	(4,386)
2240	Tree works	8,731	8,200	(532)
2255	Fire Insurance Buildings/Contents	35	0	(35)
2285	Water Charges Metered	81	0	(81)
2400	Car and Cycle Allowances	800	289	(511)
2600	Clothing and Uniforms General	500	498	(2)
2658	Equipment - Purchase	450	442	(8)
2659	Equip-Repairs/Maintenance	650	636	(14)
2663	Other Equipment and Tools	550	547	(3)
2682	Refreshments	745	640	(105)
2684	Staff Conference & Course Fees	500	133	(367)
2695	BDP - Oracle Debtors	0	1,281	1,281
2710	Specialist Supplies	445	150	(295)
2832	Projects	4,046	3,524	(523)
2849	Other Contractual Services	7,110	5,955	(1,155)
2850	Professional Advice/Fees	0	3,495	3,495
4011	Property Services Support	0	3,905	3,905
4015	Recharge from AHOs	5,000	2,160	(2,840)
4055	NCSL Deposit Recharge	0	6,077	6,077
1061	Football	(1,404)	0	1,404
1135	Sponsorship - External Orgs	0	(329)	(329)
1146	Other Rents	(15,000)	(15,000)	0
1148	Catering Concession Pitch & Putt	(1,800)	(4,097)	(2,297)
1412	Government Grants - Specific	(2,204)	(2,204)	0
1911	Depot recharge to NCSL	0	(5,433)	(5,433)
	Corporate Recharges	35,645	35,645	0
		246,082	236,249	(9,833)



NORWICH
City Council

Committee Name: Mousehold Heath Conservators

Committee Date: 16/06/2023

Report Title: Mousehold Heath Conservators Annual Report 2022/23

Portfolio: Councillor Giles, Cabinet member for communities and social inclusion

Report from: Head of Environment Services

Wards: Catton Grove and Crome

OPEN PUBLIC ITEM

Purpose

To provide an annual review on activities on Mousehold Heath relating to the delivery of the Mousehold Heath management plan objectives.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Conservators note the contents of the report.

Policy Framework

The Council has five corporate priorities, which are:

- People live independently and well in a diverse and safe city.
- Norwich is a sustainable and healthy city.
- Norwich has the infrastructure and housing it needs to be a successful city.
- The city has an inclusive economy in which residents have equal opportunity to flourish.
- Norwich City Council is in good shape to serve the city.

This report meets the sustainable and healthy city corporate priority.

This report addresses Deliver a Capital Investment Programme in our parks that will improve visitor experience, maintain our heritage assets, and improve community cohesion. strategic action in the Corporate Plan.

Report Details

1. The report details the work, activities and issues arising on, and relating to the delivery of the Mousehold Heath management plan objectives.

2. The objectives are:

- a. To ensure Mousehold Heath is a welcoming place for people to visit.
- b. To protect Mousehold Heath and ensure that it is a safe and secure place to visit.
- c. To ensure that Mousehold Heath is clean and well maintained.
- d. To manage Mousehold Heath in a way that has a positive impact on the environment.
- e. To improve habitats and the natural environment for wildlife to enhance the biodiversity of Mousehold Heath.
- f. To safeguard the historic landscape, archaeological features and buildings of Mousehold Heath.
- g. To provide opportunities for local communities to be involved in all aspect of our work.
- h. To promote Mousehold Heath to increase awareness, knowledge, understanding and a sense of pride.

Introduction

1. Mousehold Heath is a unique natural area made up of 88 hectares (184 acre) of woodland, heathland, and recreational open space within Norwich. Mousehold has played an important part in the history of Norwich, and it is a designated Local Nature Reserve and County Wildlife Site. It is important both for its wildlife and as a place where people can improve their health by exercising and unwind from the pace of city life.
2. In Tudor times, Mousehold Heath stretched as far north as South Walsham and was 22 miles round. The surviving remnant of the heath was given to Norwich City Council (then known as the local corporation) by the Dean and Chapter, to look after on behalf of the citizens of Norwich.
3. This was officially recorded in 1884 by Parliament in an agreement called the Mousehold Heath Confirmation Act and a body called the Mousehold Heath Conservators was formed to govern the heath. The Mousehold Conservators is comprised of city councilors, representatives of professional bodies and members of the public and meets four times a year, to oversee the management and protection of Mousehold Heath.
4. The Conservators also prepare an annual report which provides an overview of the work of the Conservators, any changes to the heath or new biological records and an opportunity to look forward and reflect on changes, opportunities, and issues that the heath faces. The report also highlights the significant level of voluntary activity as well as the numbers of events, walks and surveys undertaken.
5. The report also highlights how the community are involved with Mousehold Heath; through active involvement in its management and attending events and guided walks and talks, to find out more about their local open space.

The work of the Mousehold Conservators

6. The management of Mousehold Heath is guided by the Management Plan 2019 - 2028. This seeks to balance the important ecological value of Mousehold with an equally important recreational site within an urban area.
7. The challenge is to balance these important and at times conflicting objectives.
8. The Conservators agree an annual work programme and budget in January each year for the following financial year and monitor the implementation of this plan at its meetings.
9. The management plan and further details of the work of the Mousehold Conservators can be found on the Norwich City Council website.

https://www.norwich.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/5043/mousehold_heath_management_plan.pdf

Priority A: To ensure Mousehold Heath is a welcoming place for people to visit.

AI00/01 GREEN FLAG AWARD APPLICATION

10. The Mousehold Heath Conservators submitted a Green Flag application for 2022/23. Sites need to apply for a Green Flag award and be judged annually, ensuring the standards required are still meeting the criteria to receive an award. On this occasion the application was a successful one after a site inspection undertaken in May 2022 by a Green Flag Judge.

AP80/03 MOUSEHOLD CONSERVATORS ITINERANT

11. An itinerant meeting took place on 2nd September for committee members to discuss the management of the site regarding the implementation of the Mousehold Heath Management Plan and Higher Level Stewardship Agreement.

Priority B: To protect Mousehold Heath and ensure that it is a safe and secure place to visit.

AI30/02 TREE SAFETY INSPECTION

12. Following the two, six monthly tree safety inspection surveys (September and March), 59 dead, dying and dangerous trees and branches were identified as requiring works to manage tree safety risk and made safe accordingly. Most of the works were completed by the Mousehold wardens, with additional specialised tree works being ordered through the council's Arboricultural team and carried out by Norwich City Services Ltd (NCSL).
13. An additional twenty-three dead, dying, dangerous and windblown trees and branches spotted during patrols and reported by members of the community, have been made safe and cleared by the Mousehold wardens.
14. Trees encroaching on to Gurney Road have been managed by the NCSL Arboricultural team, following a survey by a Norwich C.C. Arboricultural Officer.

AR01/05 SEAT AND BENCH SPONSORSHIP SCHEME

15. The dedication of Ian Kents memorial bench, located adjacent to the Wingfield Open Space, was undertaken on Thursday 19th May, with his family and friends. Ian was a dedicated member of the Mousehold Heath Defenders for many years, attending many work parties, events, surveys, and guided walks and was regularly seen on the heath walking his dog Frodo.

AT40/01 CONTRACT MONITORING/IMPROVEMENT NCSL

16. Damaged plastic litter bins were either repaired or replaced by Norwich City Services Limited (NCSL). Five plastic bins, which were prone to fire damage, have been replaced with cast iron bins.

MC81/01 VIEW FROM MOTTRAM MEMORIAL

17. Scrub has been cleared to retain historic views of the city and conserve open habitat biodiversity.

ML60/01 NORFOLK CONSTABULARY

18. The Mousehold wardens liaised with police officers regarding anti-social behaviour in the Gilman Road area.
19. The public notice/information board was stolen in early May located on the Pitch and Putt public car park, Gurney Road. This was reported to the police by the Mousehold wardens, and a new board ordered and installed.

ML60/02 NORFOLK FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

20. The Mousehold wardens have liaised with Norfolk Fire Service to ensure that fire crews have keys for access gates and bollards, allowing quick access to the site. Four fires occurred in the past year, including a large fire on St James Hill on a hot Friday afternoon in late July.

MI60/03 FOOTBALL PITCH PROVISION

21. With demand for local youth football pitches and facilities increasing, a youth pitch has been created and is available for hire at the Fountain Ground, Gurney Road, including changing rooms, showers, and toilets. Sprowston Football Club needed additional youth facilities and have booked the pitch this season.

MI60/04 FOOTBALL BOOKINGS MANAGEMENT

22. This youth facility can be booked via Norwich City Services Ltd on 01603 987922 or email ncslsportsbookings@norwich.gov.uk

MP00/01 SITE PRESENCE

23. Five campers have been informed of the Bylaws restricting camping and overnight stays in the area adjacent to the Pitch and Putt course, the Rangers House and central parts of the heath.
24. A caravan was removed from the Public Car Park at Britannia Road through our legal section, the occupier refused help from the Council to provide him with permanent accommodation.

25. Increased patrols were undertaken due to the exceptionally dry conditions. A group of teenagers were asked to put out a campfire on a dry part of heathland by a Mousehold warden.
26. A motor cyclist riding on St James Hill has been informed that he was breaking the Bylaws and asked to leave the natural area.

RH35/01 ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES CRIME

27. Two chickens were released on the heath possibly due to restrictions enforced regarding Avian flu, NCC guidelines were followed, Norfolk Wildlife Rescue were quick to respond and found them a new home, a big thank you to them!

Objective C: To ensure that Mousehold Heath is clean and well maintained.

ME01/01 GATES, FENCING AND BARRIERS

28. The emergency vehicle access gate at Gilman Road had a new swing joint fitted to replace the old one. Emergency vehicle access is now available.
29. A stolen vehicle was driven through the wooden access gate at Beech Drive. A temporary repair has been undertaken, until a permanent replacement can be fitted.
30. Norfolk County Council Highways were contacted about illegally removed bollards on Gilman Road. New bollards were installed on the cycle path to prevent vehicles from driving on the adopted highway.

ME04/01 LITTER PICKING

31. NCSL litter picked the whole site five days a week Monday to Friday, with just the car parks being litter picked at weekends.
32. Litter was removed from four camp sites and areas where vegetation has been cleared by our NCSL contractor and Mousehold wardens.
33. Before ground vegetation grew, Mousehold volunteer groups litter picked formally burnt areas on St James Hill, areas adjacent to the Rangers house and wooded areas across the heath.
34. Assist Trust volunteers have carried out a number of litter picks in the Gilman Road area.

ME06/01 FINGER POSTS AND WAYMARKERS

35. Nature Trail and Earth Heritage trail posts and discs have been maintained and any rotten or vandalised ones replaced. One Nature Trail post was stolen and replaced by a Mousehold warden and work placement student.

ME04/03 FLY TIPPING

36. Several fly-tipped items were removed from Hill Farm Track, Pitch and Putt car parks and other parts of the heath, including garden waste, and building materials. Items found are removed and disposed of by NCSL's EPA crew.

ME12/01 REMOVE GRAFFITI

37. Graffiti has been removed from three trees, three benches, five emergency vehicle access signs, the historical interpretation panel, the bandstand, two cycle route signs along Gilman Road and the notice board at the Pitch and Putt car park.
The works were reported through the City Council online reporting form, with most of the removal works undertaken by the Mousehold wardens.

ME12/02 BANDSTAND CLEANING

38. The bandstand was cleaned at the beginning of November under our contract obligations with NCSL.

ME41/01 MAIN PATHS

39. Eleven paths have been cut to allow easy access across Gilman Road Open Space and the Desert Wildflower meadow by a Mousehold warden with help from volunteers. This has made the area accessible, whilst conserving biodiversity through providing nectar for pollinators in uncut areas, which receive a conservation biodiversity cut in early Autumn.
40. Over 21 paths have been maintained by brush-cutting, pruning saw and raking cut vegetation, including Mustard Pond Glade, Gilman Rd copse, in front of the Pavilion; St William's Chapel and along transect survey routes, by the wardens supported by volunteers, to allow access to, and across the site.
41. Scrub partially blocking the 'access path for all' and other paths on St James Hill have been cut back to improve access to the Mottram Memorial and historic city views.

ME41/03 CYCLEWAYS

42. Gilman Road, Gurney Road and Valley Drive cycle routes were swept to clear a build-up of leaf litter causing a public health and safety issue.

ME44/02 CAR PARK SURFACING

43. Maintenance works have been carried out to level the entrance and fill in potholes at Britannia Road public car park. This also included the re grading of the surface to provide a level parking area. The Pitch and Putt and Hill Farm Track public car parks have also had surface improvement works carried out.

Priority E: To improve habitats and the natural environment for wildlife to enhance the biodiversity of Mousehold Heath

Heathland and Grassland management

44. Lowland heathland is a scarce and threatened habitat and only a sixth of the heathland that was present in England in 1800 now remains.
45. However, Britain still has 20 per cent of the world's total area of heathland and this makes it important to conserve the existing heathland areas and look for opportunities to extend them.
46. The Government UK Biodiversity Action Plan for Lowland Heathland includes targets for establishing more lowland heathland to provide space for wildlife and open access to members of the community.
47. Similar declines have been seen in unimproved acid grassland habitat. Both of these habitats can be found at Mousehold and provide a home to a number of notable, declining and threatened species.
48. Heather is an important nectar source for many insects, such as bees, butterflies and hoverflies. A survey of solitary bee and wasps found a high number of scarce and threatened species on heather and bare ground, inhabiting the heath.
49. One of the management objectives is to address the reduction of open heathland and acid grassland across the site, which has occurred over the last 40 years. Of the total area of 88 hectares, only 12 hectares of Mousehold is covered by heathland.
50. Butterflies, such as Small Copper and Green Hairstreak, and a number of moth species, such as True Lover's Knott, Heath Rustic and Beautiful Yellow Underwing, are associated with heathland habitats, and were recorded on the heath.

**HL40/06 NATURAL ENGLAND HIGHER LEVEL STEWARDSHIP (HLS)
AGREEMENT**

51. A grant of £30,600 was awarded to be paid in equal annual payments until the year 2022/23. Higher Level Stewardship funding has enabled the conservators to access specialist contractors to achieve their objective of improving the quantity and quality of heathland, a nationally important habitat.
52. The funding has been used to restore heathland and acid grassland, by removing scrub, mowing with a tractor-mounted Rytex mower, grinding stumps, and stripping humus to control nutrient enrichment of soil and create bare ground, in line with management plan and HLS objectives. This has resulted in existing heathland areas being enlarged and linked up.
53. Habitat improvements carried out during 2022-23 involved the removal of encroaching scrub, bracken and leggy gorse from existing heathland areas.

These works were undertaken by volunteers and the Mousehold wardens, who supervised the works, in compliance with the HLS agreement.

54. In short sward open areas, tree poppers were used to pull up birch saplings, which rapidly out-compete and shade-out heather and grassland species. Three hundred and fifty of these have been replanted on a formally gorse/bracken covered area along Gilman Road during volunteer work parties.
55. Future management will increasingly move from heathland restoration to maintenance as areas in the agreement are restored.
56. The HLS agreement was due to come to an end in November 2023. However, with a new Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS), Countryside Stewardship Scheme currently being implemented, Natural England has extended the existing Mousehold agreement until October 2027. A Natural England officer visited the site in March 2023 and is satisfied with the heathland and acid grassland habitat condition.
57. The council sent an expression of interest to Natural England to be involved in a pilot of the new scheme.

MH12/01 MAINTAIN ACID GRASSLAND

58. The Anthill and Wildflower Meadows had an annual conservation cut which was completed by volunteers and the wardens. The conservation of Anthills is ensured through sympathetic management techniques, such as using a cord trimmer and carefully raking around the large ant hill habitats.
59. All arisings were removed from site, minimising nutrient enrichment of the soil. These management techniques provide and maintain acidic soil conditions required by specialist grasses and wildflowers found on the heath.
60. This year the Desert and Gilman Road Wildflower Meadows were also cut as part of a 'Using a Scythe' course, which was undertaken by sixteen regular Mousehold volunteers, over two days, at the end of November. The course was a success, with all the volunteers now trained and able to complete meadow and bracken management cutting on Mousehold and other sites, under the supervision of the Mousehold warden. The use of scythes is a more sensitive way to cut ecologically important habitats, with many other benefits to volunteers, site management and the environment.

MH39/01: BRACKEN REMOVAL

61. Large areas of bracken were cut, pulled, raked and removed from heathland, grassland and woodland glade habitats by volunteers and the wardens. This summer task is crucial to conserving nectar rich heather species and complying with the Mousehold Heath's, Natural England, HLS Agreement.

MH39//03 COMMON GORSE REMOVAL

62. Invasive common gorse has been cut and removed from heathland areas to conserve heather, western gorse and other dwarf shrub species. This creates habitat diversity and structure and reduces the risk of large fires.

Woodland management

MH00/01 COPPICING

63. Woodland areas were managed through a number of techniques to diversify and enhance habitat and increase biodiversity, through ride creation, coppicing, and pollarding.
64. Work to maintain access to a section of woodland adjacent to Gilman Road by clearing dead and overgrown vegetation has continued. This work has been carried out to increase community access to a formally impenetrable area, with the aim of improving biodiversity and creating a more diverse environment for fauna and flora to become established.

MH03/01 NATURAL REGENERATION

65. Natural woodland regeneration is encouraged, rather than the planting of new trees, which ensures the trees within the woodland are of local provenance, minimising the spread of pests and disease.

MH04/01 GLADE MANAGEMENT, MAINTENANCE

66. Grassland habitat in the Mustard Pond glade has been maintained by cutting and raking encroaching vegetation, such as invasive bracken and dominant grasses.

MH08 DEAD AND DECAYING WOOD

67. Dead and dying trees were retained where safe to do so, to encourage a diverse structure to woodland and to ensure that there is a supply of dead and decaying wood for those specialist species which require it. Trees identified as posing an unacceptable level of safety risk were removed. Where appropriate dead wood is left on site as a habitat. Cut branches and other vegetation in the woodland has been left in piles to provide wildlife habitats.

MH31/01 SCRUB AND TREE REMOVAL

68. Thickets of scrub (i.e. bramble, gorse, etc.) are important habitats for insects and nesting birds. Where scrub has encroached onto heathland and grassland areas it has been cut to conserve important open habitats. Tree saplings encroaching on to important open habitats have been removed with many being replanted along Gilman Road.

Aquatic habitats

MH60/01 Vinegar Pond and MH60/02 Mustard Pond

69. Due to the extreme hot and dry weather conditions, the Vinegar Pond water level was very low last summer. There was evidence of algal and bacterial blooms compromising the health and safety of a large shoal of fish that were showing signs of stress due to the exceptionally low oxygen and water levels. This situation needed urgent action to remove the fish and transfer them into a much safer environment.
70. A private contractor was procured, and the fish (as many as possible) were removed by electrofishing. This method introduces an electrical current through the water stunning the fish so as they can be caught in a net, then transferred into large aeriated water tanks. The fish were then removed from site and released into an isolated ornamental pond. The fish, mainly goldfish, were unofficially introduced some years ago. There were no fatalities as a result of this action.
71. One frog and several common newts were captured at the time. These were released back into the pond as they are more adept at surviving under these extreme conditions.
72. To control future levels of fish and manage the negative impact they have on frog populations, it is advised to carry out the removal of fish on a regular basis for the next two years, to monitor and control levels to an acceptable level so as not to have an impact on spawning frogs and their development and survival into emerging adults.

Birds.

RA12/01 COMMON BIRD CENSUS

73. A Common Bird Census (CBC) survey was carried out by the wardens and volunteers in the Spring, following a transect route between Gurney Road car park and St James Hill. A highlight of the year for all involved was a dawn chorus survey in May.
74. Thirty-five species of bird were recorded (singing and/or calling), with many having breeding territories based on the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), CBC methodology. Overall, bird species and numbers were roughly consistent with previous years. Greater Spotted Woodpeckers, Song Thrush, Wren and Blackcap saw increases in mapped territories, while Blackbird, Chaffinch and Dunnock showed slight decreases in territories.

Reptiles and Amphibians.

RA26/01 REPTILES SPECIES LIST

75. Common Lizard and Slow Worm were recorded throughout the spring and summer months. Ad hoc sightings of these species were recorded basking in recently restored open heathland and grassland habitats.
76. Frogs, frog spawn and tadpoles were greatly reduced this year in the Vinegar Pond, due large numbers of fish inhabiting the pond (see section 57 and 58).
77. Frogspawn increased in the Mustard Pond with Common Newts also recorded.

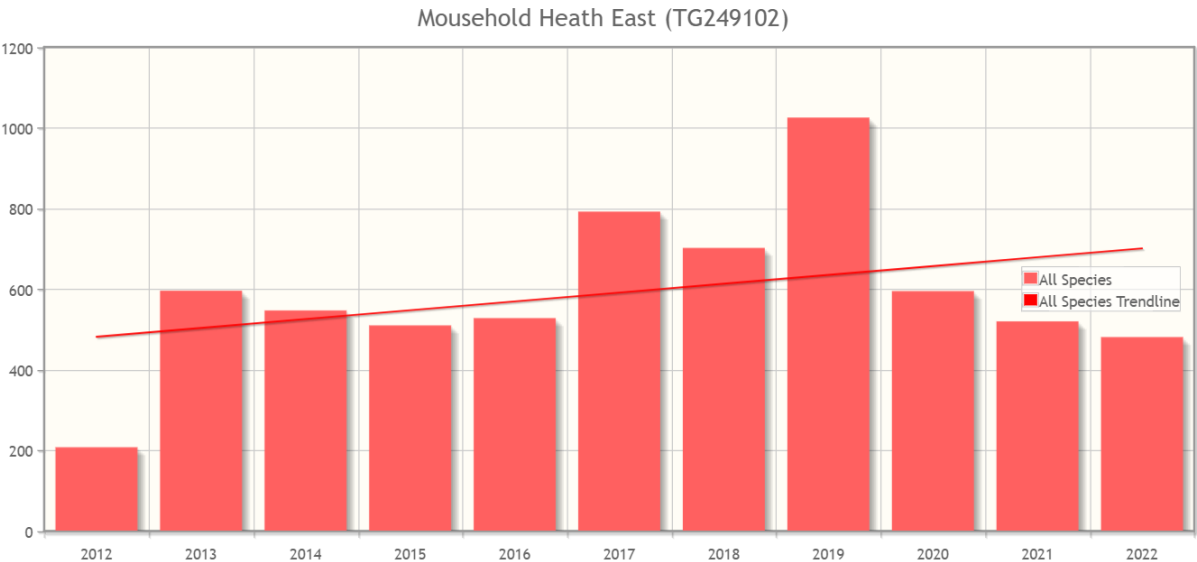
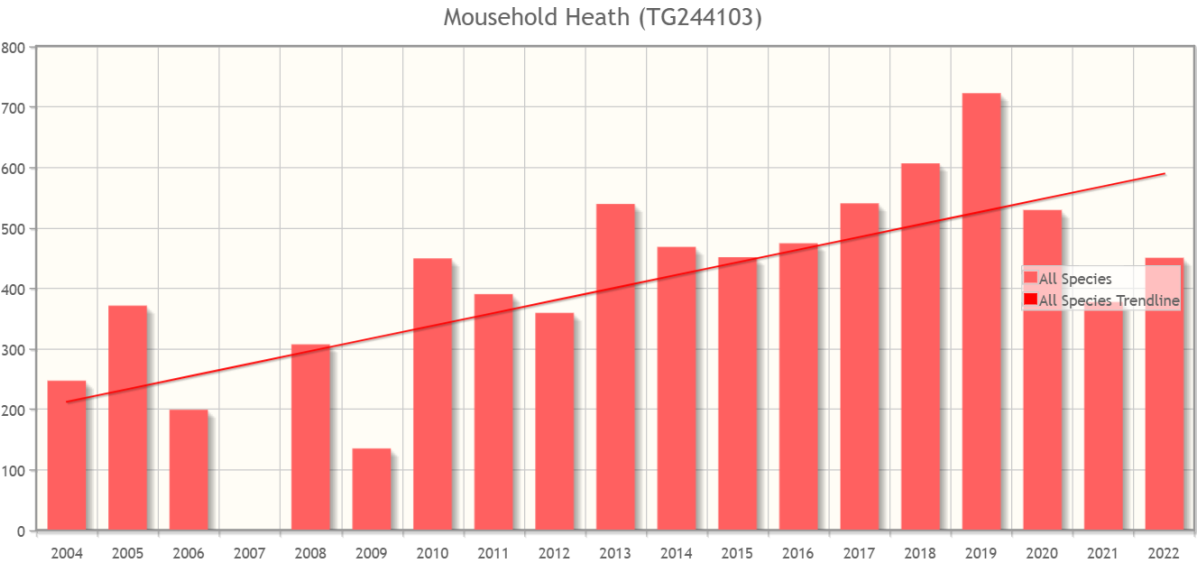
Butterflies.

RA42/01 BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION SURVEY

78. The BMS is the largest and longest running biological survey in the country (established in 1976). Data is collected from over 1,200 sites in the UK, with 31 sites surveyed in Norfolk.
79. Butterflies are uniquely placed among British terrestrial insects and other invertebrate groups to act as indicators of the state of the environment. The results of the surveys are used by the national government to assess the impacts of climate change, health of ecosystems and the progress of governmental policy initiatives such as the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and Higher-Level Stewardship (HLS) schemes.
80. Not only are butterflies biologically suitable as indicator species, having rapid lifestyles and, in many cases, high sensitivity to environmental conditions, but the recording and monitoring volunteer and datasets built up by Butterfly Conservation (BC) and the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, enable accurate assessment of their trends. BC use an index system to estimate butterfly abundance when a weekly count is missed.
81. Two, weekly BMS transect surveys have been undertaken by the wardens, often joined by volunteers. On the Mousehold Heath West survey, weekly counts recorded an estimated 609 (450 individual butterflies) butterflies. This is compared an estimated 472 (377) recorded in 2021.
82. Several local and characteristic species were recorded, such as Green Hairstreak, Brown Argus, Small Copper and Purple Hairstreak.
83. On the Mousehold Heath East transect, an estimated 587 (481 individual butterflies recorded) were recorded, compared to 654 (520) in 2021.
84. Following a good Spring for butterflies on the heath, the slight drop in numbers on the Mousehold Heath East transect in 2022 could be explained by the extreme heat and dry conditions which caused many foodplants and nectar plants to dry up and butterflies completing their flight period earlier. Due to its sandy, free-draining soils, Mousehold was significantly affected by the dry weather. Interestingly, on the Mousehold West transect in August and September 2021, there were 236, compared to 68 butterflies in 2022. On the

Mousehold East transect, there were 218 recorded in August and September 2021 compared to 137 in 2022. This drop in numbers in August and September were reflected at a Norfolk County level.

- 85. When taking into consideration that butterfly numbers have been declining nationally over recent decades, it is encouraging that the butterfly population trend line on both Mousehold BMS transects (see trend line graphs below) - when taking into account annual weather fluctuations and national population changes - are increasing.
- 86. An upward trend could suggest that the restoration and conservation of early-successional habitat, such as heathland, woodland glades, scrub and grassland, through bracken control and conservation cutting, is having a positive impact.



Dragonflies.

RA56/01 DRAGONFLY SPECIES LIST

87. An abundance of dragonfly and damselfly species have been recorded, such as Norfolk Hawker, Red Darter, Southern Hawker and Emperor dragonflies, etc., with over 60 Migrant Hawkers being recorded feeding together over heathland vegetation. Norfolk Hawker, which is a nationally threatened and scarce Red Data book species, was recorded for the sixth year in succession. It's nearest breeding site is Thorpe Marshes so they are presumably flying up to the heath to feed on the abundance of insects in open habitats. Many species are seen near the Vinegar and Mustard Pond during the summer months.
88. During a Community Wildlife Workshop on 12th August, a pair of copulating Willow Emerald Damselflies were recorded on a Hawthorn branch adjacent to the Mustard Pond. This large, metallic-green damselfly is a recent colonist, with numbers increasing in Southeast England since 2009. It is still a scarce damselfly, and this was the first record for the site.

Bumblebees.

RA82/01 ST JAMES' HILL BUMBLEBEE SURVEY

89. Seven, monthly, Bumblebee Conservation Trust, BeeWalk surveys, have been undertaken by the wardens with the help of a member of the Mousehold Heath Defenders. A total of 80 bumblebees, including Buff-tailed, Red tailed, White tailed, Common Carder, Tree and Early bumblebee species, along with 94 Honey bee, 5 Hairy-footed flower bee and 1 Ivy bee, were recorded along the transect route on St. James Hill. Most of these records were from bees feeding on Bramble sp. flowers in June. Species were also recorded feeding on Green Alkanet, Apple sp., Common Dandelion, Red and White dead-nettle.

Bats.

RA92/01 NATIONAL BAT MONITORING PROGRAMME SURVEY

90. Two, National Bat Monitoring Project (NBMP), Bat Conservation Trust Field Surveys were completed in July by the wardens assisted by volunteers, using a bat detector. A total of 74 Common pipistrelle passes (48 in 2021), 18 Soprano pipistrelle (5 in 2021), 1 Noctule passes (10 in 2021), 5 unidentified pipistrelle agg., were recorded during the transect survey, starting 20 minutes after sunset. This annual national survey was started on the heath in 2018. Bat population trend line analysis will help assess bat species and abundance on the site in future years.

Plants.

RF22/02 MUSTARD POND SURVEY

91. A monthly flowering plant survey has been undertaken by members of the Mousehold Heath Defenders, recording many beautiful and nectar-rich species in the sunny, woodland glade habitat. 22 new species for the Mustard pond area were identified during the surveys this year.

RF22/03 ST JAMES' HILL SURVEY

92. A warden and a member of the Mousehold Heath Defenders carried out a monthly flower survey, identifying a number of new flowering plant species and bringing the total number up to 135 species in the last 12 years.

Objective F: To safeguard the historic landscape, archaeological features and buildings of Mousehold Heath.

MC03/01 ST WILLIAMS CHAPEL – VEGETATION REMOVAL

93. Invasive bracken and bramble have been cut and removed from chapel paths, banks, interpretation board and viewpoints by The Conservation Volunteers (TCV), Mousehold Mousketeers and the Mousehold wardens.

MC81/03 CAVALRY TRACK

94. Under the supervision of a warden, volunteers have cleared vegetation, leaves and other dead vegetation to keep the historic track open and accessible.

Objective G: To provide opportunities for local communities to be involved in all aspect of our work.

AT50/01 VOLUNTEERS GENERAL

95. A total of 3202 volunteer work hours were contributed, in the last year, by the following groups:
 - The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)
 - Mousehold Heath Defenders
 - Assist Trust (based at the Lazor House)
 - Mousehold Heath Mousketeers
 - Natwest, WPS, Crown Commercial, Anglian Water and Aviva Corporate Groups
 - GoodGym Norwich

- Norwich High School For Girls
 - 8th Norwich cub scouts
 - Harford Manor volunteers
 - Individual volunteers from the community
96. An Easton College student has completed a 150 hour work placement with a Mousehold warden. This workplace experience has increased the student's skills and knowledge by undertaking a wide variety of practical site management tasks. This has been mutually beneficial experience, with the student obtaining a Safe Use of Chipper and First Aid certificates and is attending a Pole-saw course with a Mousehold warden in June. He is starting a two-year Arboriculture course next year and is planning to complete another work placement (completing Autumn/Winter habitat and tree management works) with the Mousehold wardens in the Autumn term.
97. Since July 2008, there has been over 53,782 volunteer hours safely undertaken on the site. Volunteering has provided an opportunity for the community to become involved with the management of the heath, to increase their understanding of the projects being undertaken, the importance of the heath and to engender a sense of ownership and pride in the space.

Objective H: To promote Mousehold Heath to increase awareness, knowledge, understanding and a sense of pride.

MI10/01 GENERAL INFORMATION SIGNS

98. Two disabled parking signs and the No Overnight Parking sign have been replaced after being vandalised at Britannia Road public car park.

MI60/01 EVENTS

99. Four ROOTS environmental education and play activity session, for young people, organised through Norwich City Council Events Team, have taken place on the heath.
100. Eight Enchanted Woods Forest School environmental activity groups have taken place increasing knowledge, interest and enjoyment of nature for young people.
101. One Tribe gathering event has taken place providing environmental play and education activities organised through the Events Team.
102. A Norwich High School for Girls Activity Day took place on the heath in June organised by the Mousehold wardens and school staff. Activities included a history walk, litter picking and heathland management.
103. Tri-Anglia cross country club undertook a cross-country run-on Wednesday 2nd November, roughly 150 runners attended.

104. Two, fully booked Heritage Open Day walks, covering the story of St William's Chapel, Kett's Rebellion and Geodiversity, have been enjoyed by members of the community. These walks were led by local experts and a Mousehold Warden on Friday 16th and Sunday 18th September.
105. A Fungi walk was led by a local expert and a Mousehold warden on Tuesday 25th October. A number of new species for the site were recorded bringing the total site list up to 302 species.
106. Three community moth survey evenings took place on Monday 2nd May, Thursday 21st July and Thursday 25th August, with 17 species of moth identified and released. Of these, there were eight new species bringing the site list up to 270 species.
107. Three Community Wildlife Workshop's took place this year, focusing on Moths, Butterflies and Winter Birds, led by a local expert and a Mousehold Heath warden.
108. On Thursday 6th May, in connection with International Dawn Chorus Day, a Dawn Chorus Common Bird Census Breeding Bird survey was undertaken, starting at 4.15am and finishing at 6.15am. The transect survey was led by a Mousehold warden and was followed by breakfast on the heath. Seven people attended the 'celebration of nature's daily miracle', on their doorstep.
109. A Forest bathing event run by the Nest Project discussing relaxation was organised through our Events Team and took place on Friday 6th May.
110. A new community theatre performance, inspired by the events of local history, took place on Mousehold Heath. The event was spread over three weekends in September and October. Limbik, a Norwich-based theatre company lead audiences on a walk in the woods with some wonderful surprises as they retrace the steps of Kett's Rebellion of 1549.

Rebel Rabble is part audio trail and part theatrical performance where the cast interacted with an audience of up to 30 people at a time. Each audience member was provided with a pair of "silent disco" headphones, through which they simultaneously listened to an audio journey.

As a group, they were guided through the woods, listening to the fictional retelling of Kett's Rebellion.

ME06/03 INFORMATION PANELS

111. The public notice board was stolen from the Pitch and Putt public car park on Gurney Road. The old board was made of metal and thought to have been stolen for scrap metal value. A new notice board has now been installed made from recycled plastic to mitigate future theft.

MI60/02 GUIDED WALKS PROGRAMME

112. The walks, workshops and wildlife survey events making up the Mousehold Heath Guided Walks and Surveys Programme 2022, has been successfully

implemented by the wardens, inviting members of the community to learn more about, and enjoy, the sites biodiversity and natural features. One of the highlights was the Fungi Foray on 25th October, when 19 participants helped locate and record 45 species, with 4 new species for the site, increasing the site cumulative list to 302 fungi species.

RC30/01 HISTORIC LANDSCAPE

113. Local historians, involved with the research and restoration of the WW2 RAF/USAF Air Base at Newman Road, Rackheath, have been researching military training/war activity on the heath with a Mousehold warden. A number of historic features of interest have been identified and the Historic Environment Record Team at Gressenhall have been notified.

Consultation

114. This report is based on previous quarterly updates presented to the Conservators.

Implications

Financial and Resources

Any decision to reduce or increase resources or alternatively increase income must be made within the context of the council's stated priorities, as set out in its Corporate Plan and Budget.

115. There are no proposals in this report that would reduce or increase resources at this time.

Legal

116. There are no legal implications to this report.

Statutory Considerations

Consideration	Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:
Equality and Diversity	None
Health, Social and Economic Impact	None
Crime and Disorder	The Mousehold Wardens will continue to work with Norfolk Constabulary to ensure that the Heath is a safe place to visit.
Children and Adults Safeguarding	Safeguarding is a priority for the Mousehold Wardens, and they will continue to signpost vulnerable individuals to the services that they require.
Environmental Impact	The Mousehold Wardens will continue to improve habitats and the natural environment for wildlife to enhance the biodiversity of Mousehold Heath.

Risk Management

Risk	Consequence	Controls Required
Financial	Failure to adequately plan and monitor activities could result in insufficient resources being available to deliver the aims and objectives of the Management Plan	Ensure that sufficient management information is available to continue management and maintenance programme
Operational	Failure to adequately plan and monitor activities could result in insufficient resources being available to deliver the aims and objectives of the Management Plan	Ensure that sufficient management information is available to continue management and maintenance programme
Legal	The Council cannot comply with its legal duty to ensure that buildings are safe for users to access	Ensure that sufficient management information is available to continue management and maintenance programme

Reasons for the decision/recommendation

117. This report provides an annual summary of the activities on Mousehold Heath in the financial year 2022/23.

Background papers: None

Appendices: None

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