



MOUSEHOLD HEATH CONSERVATORS

2.40 p.m. - 4.25 p.m.

5 December 2008

Present: Councillors Bradford (Chair), Banham, Brociek-Coulton, Divers, and S. Little, Mr M.Bryant, Mr M.Davies, Ms M.Parker, Mr C.Southgate

Also Present: Several members of the public were also in attendance

Apologies: Councillors Bearman and Lay and Mr D.Cannon

1. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Wheelchair Access to the Heath

On behalf of the Mousehold Heath Defenders, Gill Webb said that it was no longer possible to access the Heath from Gilman Road to Hill Farm Track with a wheelchair and asked if work could be carried out to clear the overgrowth situated next to the concrete ring on Gilman Road. She also asked what progress had been made to make the Heath generally more wheelchair friendly.

The Green Spaces Manager said that the Mousehold Heath Warden had looked at the site and the overgrowth had been cleared up. Members discussed the areas on the Heath that could be improved for wheelchair access.

RESOLVED to ask the Green Spaces Manager to look at possible routes to make the Heath more wheelchair friendly and report back to a future meeting of the Conservators.

BMX Bikers

On behalf of the Mousehold Heath Defenders, Gill Webb asked what progress had been made in regards to the BMX problem on the Heath.

The Chair thanked Gill Webb for her question and said that the matter would be discussed under the later item of Review of Actions.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2008.

3. MANAGEMENT SUB-GROUP

The Green Spaces Manager presented the report and updated members on the outcome of the itinerant and meeting that had taken place on 24 October 2008.

Members discussed the issue of constructing steps at St. James Hill and how the project could be funded and subsequently maintained. The Head of Community Services said that work had been undertaken to manage the vegetation on St. James Hill and this would be built into the annual work programme. The construction of steps was not included in the current management plan.

The Green Spaces Manager advised that the unsuitable storage box that CityCare had installed in the disabled toilet at Zaks Restaurant had now been removed.

In response to a question, the Head of Community Services said that the issue of the lease held by Zaks Restaurant would be looked at in the near future. Discussion took place on the options for the future use of the building, what security measures were currently in place and the possibility of getting the building listed with English Heritage. A member suggested that advice should be sought from the Council's Conservation and Design Officer and from the Norwich Society.

Members expressed their frustration that the work schedule on the Vinegar Pond project had been delayed by 5 weeks because of procedural queries with the Environment Agency and the Planning Department. The Green Spaces Manager pointed out that strict guidelines needed to be adhered to when it came to the Environment Agency and Council's Planning Service.

In the absence of the Natural Areas Officer, the Green Spaces Manager circulated a copy of the Section 17 agreement received from Norfolk County Council that confirmed that they would contribute a tax-free sum of £1,110 towards the costs of an earthwork survey, a brush cutter and ongoing vegetation work on the site of St. William's Chapel.

RESOLVED to:-

- (1) note the report
- (2) agree to make a donation of £2,500 to the Mousehold Defenders towards the cost of the Vinegar Pond project to be paid from the insurance claim suspense account balance.
- (3) refer the issues of the steps and management of St. James Hill to the next itinerant and to the Management Sub-Group for initial consideration with a report back to a future meeting of the Conservators.
- (4) ask the Mousehold Heath Warden to arrange the clearance of the overgrown vegetation behind Zaks Restaurant by the New Year.

- (5) refer the issue of the Zaks Restaurant lease to the Management Sub-Group for further discussion with a report to a future meeting of the Conservators.
- (6) ask Katherine D'est Hoare, Conservation and Design Officer to the next meeting of the Management Sub-Group and to ask Chris Southgate to email the Committee Officer with details of any information and advice that he receives from the Norwich Society for distribution.
- (7) ask the Green Spaces Manager to look into the complaint that a mobile caravan was seen possibly trading illegally beside the Ice Cream Van and to report back to the Mousehold Defenders.
- (8) refer the Section 17 agreement and the work to be carried at the St. William's Chapel site to the Management Sub-Group to oversee the project.
- (9) refer the issue of the city centre sign posts to the Management Sub-Group for further discussion and report back to a future meeting of the Conservators.

4. QUARTERLEY BUDGET REPORT

The Head of Community Services introduced the report which provided members with an up to date budget position for 2007/08. He asked the Conservators to consider the budget proposals for 2009/10 in conjunction with the draft work plan for the year.

The Finance Control Manager answered questions about individual items in the budget report and explained how the 2009/10 budget would be set. He pointed out that in Appendix A, in the 2009-10 Proposed Budget column under the Net Expenditure Before Recharges line, the figure £199,211 should read £169,611.

Discussion took place on the amount of predicted under spend from the last financial year which would be known once all re-charges had been accounted for. Options would be to bring the Work Programme forward or to roll the under spend over to the next year.

The Head of Community Services said that officers would aim to bring indicative costs for the proposed 2010/2011 Work Programme to the September 2009 meeting of the Conservators.

RESOLVED to note the report and ask the Finance Control Manager to update the Committee on the finalised budget for 2009/2010 at the next meeting of the Conservators.

5. REVIEW OF ACTIONS

Fly-Tipping on Valley Drive

RESOLVED to ask the Natural Area Officer to circulate members with any updates prior to the next meeting of the Conservators.

Mousehold Heath 2009 Fun-Day

On behalf of the Mousehold Heath Defenders, Gill Webb circulated a paper advising members of news and progress made on the Fun-Day since the last meeting of the Conservators.

A risk assessment of the area had been carried out. A meeting with the Council's Events Manager, the Police and Traffic Section would be held on 9 December 2008 to discuss the plans including the problem of car parking.

RESOLVED to:-

- (1) note the position
- (2) thank Claire Cohen, Publicity Officer for the Mousehold Heath Defenders for all of her hard work in organising the Fun-Day.

Mountain Biking Activity on the Heath

The Green Spaces Manager advised that on 19 November 2008 he had visited a BMX site at Rendlesham in Suffolk with Giles Drake-Brockman from the Forestry Commission. The site had been a major piece of work but the Forestry Commission had been able to find a way to provide a self managed facility to bikers.

He said that the proposals for a site on the Heath would have to be discussed with the Council's legal section. The Forestry Commission would be able to provide us with documents to show how they had carried out the work at the Rendlesham site. If the proposals were agreed meetings would need to be held with the bikers, other users of the Heath, local people and residents groups to discuss the options for the project.

Further discussion took place on the size and specifications of the site that would be required. The Green Spaces Manager said that one suggestion was that the bikers should take responsibility for the management of the site including keeping it litter free and maintaining the jumps. If they did not comply then they could face the prospect of losing their facility.

RESOLVED to:-

- (1) note the position
- (2) ask the Natural Areas Officer to look at the piece of land on the Heath that used to be the firing range as a potential site and to report back to a future meeting of the Conservators.

- (3) ask the Green Spaces Manager to contact officers from Broadland and South Norfolk District Council to discuss involving them in the project and to report back at a future meeting of the Conservators.

6. DRAFT ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10

The Green Spaces Manager presented the report and advised members of the Mousehold Heath Work Programme for 2009-2010. He said that detailed implementation of individual projects would be overseen by the Management Sub-Group.

The Head of Community Services said that if any questions, problems or maintenance issues arose then they should be reported straight away to the Wardens and Officers so they could be investigated and any necessary work carried out as quickly as possible.

RESOLVED to:-

- (1) note the report
- (2) ask the Head of Community Services to provide an update on the issue of traffic calming on Gurney Road to the next meeting of the Conservators.

7. REPORT ON RECENT ACTIVITIES

The Green Spaces Manager presented the report and updated members on recent survey, management work and events undertaken at Mousehold Heath since the last meeting of the Conservators.

The Green Spaces Manager circulated an information sheet on the Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (BMS) for the Heath in 2008.

RESOLVED to:-

- (1) note the report.
- (2) thank the Mousehold Defenders and volunteers for their efforts with the site management work.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED to note the date of the next meeting of Friday 13 March 2009.

CHAIR