



MINUTES

Mousehold Heath Conservators

14:30 to 15:30

15 September 2023

Present: Councillors Sands (M) (chair), Peek (vice chair), Champion, Francis, Fox, Kendrick, Kidman, Lubbock and Schmierer and Marion Maxwell (Mousehold Heath Defenders) and Willem Buttlinger (Norwich Society)

Apologies: Matthew Davies (Norwich Fringe Project)

In attendance Andy Summers, Head of Environment Services
William Stewart, Mousehold Heath Warden
Councillor Giles, cabinet member for communities and social inclusion
Mark Brzeczek – project manager - delivery

1. Declarations of interests

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Public questions/petitions

There were no public questions or petitions.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2023, subject to noting that Councillor Carrington had been present at the meeting.

4. Household Heath budget monitoring to 31 July 2023

The head of environment services presented the report. There was currently no variance anticipated in expenditure or income. Some of the items within Appendix A to the report were currently showing as £0 as the spend would occur later within the financial year. The service was still waiting for the income from the football pitch to be transferred from Norwich City Services Limited (NCSL) to the council.

RESOLVED to note the current budget monitoring and reserves positions.

(The chair agreed to update the order of the agenda so that the project manager – delivery could attend for the Household Heath Management Update – 6 March to 29 August 2023 item)

5. Household Heath Management Update – 6 March to 29 August 2023

(This item was taken next)

The Household Heath Warden presented the report. He gave a summary of the itinerant meeting that had happened on 1 September 2023. The Conservators had visited a number of different habitats within Household Heath and had discussed aspects of the grounds maintenance contract. Following significant investment by the committee into Household Heath several volunteers and the Wardens had been trained in the use of electric brush cutters and scythes which meant some areas could now be maintained more sensitively by volunteers and the Wardens. This would mean some aspects of the contract with NCSL would need to be amended to reflect the changes in the maintenance in specific areas discussed. These changes had also been necessary due to changes in the way the Heath was used by visitors and the changes in weather patterns.

During the itinerant meeting the Conservators had discussed the importance of biodiversity on the Heath and that even small areas of unimproved grassland could be beneficial. The Warden highlighted that the Conservators had also considered the maintenance of the Giant Redwood and that he would be speaking to an arboriculturist to understand the best approach to managing the tree. Conversations had also been initiated with The Household Defenders to discuss the war memorial on Household Avenue.

A member queried whether the fly-tipping was a regular occurrence. In response the Warden said that it happened on an ad-hoc basis and had been more frequent in the past, but the area was a hotspot for this. The chair commented that it would be prudent to monitor the area and if an issue occurred this could be reported.

In response to a question the Warden said that there were no detailed maps produced by the city council of Household Heath, but a map based on the Earth Heritage trail was available on the council's website. The member commented that maps would be useful at each car park for members of the public.

A member asked for an update on the vehicle that was parked on Household Avenue in contravention of the byelaws. The Warden confirmed that they were engaging with legal services.

A member asked what neighbouring residents should do if a fire broke out on the Heath. The Warden said that due to the recent hot summers the service had updated their approach to dealing with fires and this included liaising with the fire service. If a member of public spotted a fire, they should contact 999 immediately, attempt to give as accurate a location as they can and then move away quickly. The Heath was easily accessible for fire vehicles and fire breaks had been created by the clearing of gorse. For neighbouring gardens, it was prudent to avoid combustible materials near boundaries. If the Heath were to be evacuated, then the police would lead this.

The project manager – delivery, provided an update on the progress of the toilets on Gurney Road. Following the itinerant meeting and discussions, he had been in contact with the manager of Zak's restaurant to arrange a meeting to discuss the electricity to the toilets. The most cost-effective option would be to install a sub-metre from Zak's. The meeting would involve an electrical engineer so that it could be

understood if this option was feasible. If this was not an option, the property services team would need to explore routing electricity from Mousehold Avenue but this would attract a significant cost.

Members were informed that property services had considerable concerns as to the moveable hoist that had been agreed at the meeting on 20 January 2023. These concerns were related to the future servicing of the hoist, potential for vandalism or theft and the structure of the building being able to accommodate a more permanent option. The refurbished toilets would be a large accessible space which would allow a wheelchair user to use these without a hoist. The committee considered that the service should reach out to local disability groups and Changing Places to understand their view on the proposed toilets and what the specification would be for a Changing Places toilet.

The works to the pavilion roof had now been completed. Unfortunately, one of the lights had been damaged whilst the scaffolding had been taken down and property services would repair this in due course.

The chair commended the Mousehold Heath Wardens, the Mousehold Heath Defenders and other volunteers for their work on the Heath. Mousehold Heath had recently been awarded the Green Flag award.

RESOLVED to note the Mousehold Heath Management Update – 6 March to 29 August 2023 report.

6. Mousehold Heath work programme 23-24

The Mousehold Heath Warden presented the report. He provided an update to the Conservators on the items that had been completed or were ongoing.

As a number of volunteers had been trained in the use of scythes the service had purchased additional scythes to maintain the Heath. As part of this, 20 paths had been cut to maintain access to these. The Wardens strove to maintain the balance between ensuring access to members of the public and maintaining biodiversity on the Heath. The Mousehold Heath Defenders had recently donated new benches to replace rotting benches.

The Warden referenced the works that had been conducted under management objective E). This included ongoing bracken management and a number of species surveys that had been completed. The list of fungi had increased so it was likely that new species would be found. There had been fish found within the Vinegar Pond, and as in the previous years these would be humanely removed and relocated as their presence was detrimental to the local frog population.

The Wardens had been working closely with local volunteer groups and interested from schools in the area. A teacher from Sprowston Community Academy had been contacted to arrange an Environment Day for students on the Heath.

A member said that the representative from the Mousehold Heath Defenders had held an illustrated talk to local schools which had been well received. This had encouraged children to ask their parents to visit Mousehold Heath. Another member

added that he was in contact with Open Academy about a similar event and would like to work with the other members on this.

A member queried why the interpretative panels were listed as "should" within the works programme. The Warden said that these were a priority as they were important for visitors of the Heath. A member suggested that when the signposting was updated that it should be made more accessible for people who may have issues with written English.

In response to a member's comment on the roadworks to Heartsease roundabout the chair said that the issue of a pedestrian crossing on Gurney Road should be raised with the county council and Norfolk Constabulary. With the additional traffic on this road the issues for groups crossing the road would be exacerbated.

RESOLVED to:

- 1) Note the contents of the Household Heath work programme 2023-24; and
- 2) Ask the parks and open spaces manager to change project/Map reference code MI20/05 – Interpretative panels from a 'should' to a 'must' within the works programme.

CHAIR