



Mousehold Heath Conservators

14:00 to 15:10

30 September 2022

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

Apologies: 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 minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2022.

4. Management sub-group meeting dates

The chair welcomed Marion Maxwell, Mousehold Heath Defenders, to the committee and as the Defender's representative on the management sub-group due to Clare Cohen stepping down.

RESOLVED to agree the following management sub group dates:

- Friday 18 November 2022 at 2pm
- Friday 10 February 2022 at 2pm.

5. Mousehold Heath budget monitoring to 31 July 2022

The interim parks and open spaces manager presented the report.

The budget monitoring showed that the spend for the period to 31 July 2022 showed no unexpected expenditure and that the forecast outturn was likely to be achieved. A member asked whether the theatre groups that had used the football pitch had paid for this use. The Mousehold Heath warden said that he would take this away and update members in due course.

In response to a member's question the Mousehold Heath warden said that the concession stand at Britannia Road car park had decided not to continue with the business, however two applications had already been received for the space to be taken over by other stands. A member asked who had paid for the work to level off the area of the car park for the concession stand. The Mousehold Heath warden confirmed that it had been the Mousehold Heath Conservators who had paid for this from their budget as agreed at the committee meeting on 16 March 2022. A member queried whether the budget line 'Government Grants – Specific' fluctuated in the amount paid to the council. The Mousehold Heath warden said that this was from the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreement and was a fixed amount. The cabinet member for community wellbeing informed the committee that the recharges to Norwich City Services Limited (NCSL) would be paid on a six monthly basis.

RESOLVED to note the Mousehold Heath budget monitoring report.

6. Mousehold Heath management update 1 June to 5 September 2022

The chair introduced the report. The Mousehold Heath warden gave an update on the items discussed at the itinerant meeting on 2 September 2022. Due to the recent rain the fire risk on the Heath had decreased since the itinerant. The installation of cast iron bins to replace plastic bins had progressed. The interim parks and opens spaces manager said that over the next two to three months all plastic bins would be removed and replaced with the cast iron bins. The Mousehold Heath Defender said it was particularly positive to see the old plastic bins replaced due to the antisocial behaviour associated with them.

During the itinerant meeting the conservators had noted that the number of flowers in wildflower meadow had decreased significantly due to both the extreme heat during the summer and the higher numbers of visitors. The Conservators had agreed during the itinerant that wildflower seeds should be spread when the weather allowed. The warden informed the committee that on 26 September 2022 and 27 September 2022 a cub scout group had volunteered to help with this activity

In regard to the Gilman Road space the warden informed the committee that due to the extreme heat this space had been maintained through the use of an electric brush cutter and scythes rather than a drive-on tractor. He said that a report would be brought to a future meeting to allow for a contract variation so that this space would only be maintained by volunteers using the electric brush cutter and scythes rather than NCSL. The wardens would be organising a scythe day for volunteers to learn how to safely use these and welcomed members to attend.

Members noted that the Heathland area management was ongoing, and the wardens had been cutting back the Leggy Gorse which helped to reduce the fire risk on the heath. The warden also informed the committee that the HLS agreement was due to expire in October 2023, but it was likely that it would be extended further.

The warden said that since the itinerant meeting he had been in conversation with the contractor that had removed the goldfish from the vinegar pond and it was suggested that this should happen annually.

Members discussed fire risk. Due to the future likelihood of further periods of extreme heat a suggestion had been made about the use of fire beaters within Mousehold Heath. The warden said that this item would be taken to the management sub-group for discussion. Members thanked the warden for both the itinerant meeting and the work they do protecting the heath.

The Mousehold Heath warden highlighted to members the activities that had taken place on the Heath since the last meeting. Members noted that all surveys in the management plan had now been completed. Overall, the number of moth species had increased but the number of bats present on the heath had decreased. This decrease was likely to be because of the overall decrease in insects due to the extreme heat. In response to a member's question, the Mousehold Heath warden said that the numbers outlined in the moth surveys were the cumulative total of species found since moth surveys have begun. In response to a follow up question the warden said that it was possible that the number of moth species had decreased but overall, the number of species of insects found was increasing. This was because of the work that had taken place to create a mosaic of habitats. The warden said that the number of moths could be higher as the traps used could not be left overnight. The chair commented that it could be considered whether local residents would be willing to have overnight traps in their gardens to get more data. The warden said that enquiries could be made with local residents to find out if they were already trapping moths.

In response to the chair's question the warden said that the extreme weather had not changed how the surveys were conducted and that the surveys would likely continue to have the same methodology to ensure that trendlines could be tracked. Some of the data was submitted to national projects and full figures for each of the surveys would be included in the annual report. It was hoped that the development of the heathland would lead to more species being found.

A member commented that she had been contacted by residents of Britannia Road about the vehicular antisocial behaviour taking place on Britannia Road and Britannia Road car park. The chair said that he had spoken to the local police who were seeking a temporary closure order for the car park to close this overnight and the exact timings of this were still being discussed. He had previously suggested the installation of rumble strips on Britannia Road to reduce the number of cars speeding down the road. The police were in favour of this as was the county councillor for the division however the highways authority had raised some concerns about this. The cabinet member for community wellbeing said that cabinet were acutely aware of the issues that were ongoing and were committed to solving this. He said that Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO) were being drafted which would give the police greater dispersal powers. In order to take these further the police needed to provide evidence that they had taken other action to prevent the antisocial behaviour and whether these had been successful. The cabinet member said that an update would be brought to the next meeting.

A member commented that it seemed that both the PSPO and temporary closure order seemed very labour intensive for the police and the installation of rumble strips

could offer a more permanent solution. The chair said he would speak to the highways authority to understand the costs involved with this. A member commented that another solution could be to close the road overnight, the chair added that this had been suggested before, but this would need to be agreed by the highways authority. A member queried whether any engagement had taken place with the individuals who are committing the antisocial behaviour. A member commented that both residents and members had attempted to engage with individuals but had subsequently been harassed and threatened. The cabinet member for community wellbeing said that enforcement officers were in conversation with the Ministry of Justice about re-deployable CCTV cameras that could help to deter antisocial behaviour.

The interim parks and open spaces manager said that the public toilet provision item that had been discussed at the meeting on 17 June 2022 had not been brought forward as information from property services raised serious concerns about the option previously considered. Officers would need to discuss these concerns and the potential costs of these before they could be brought to the committee. A report would be brought to the next committee on a short-term solution for the block. The proposed solution was to close the women's toilet, as these were in the worst state of disrepair, making the men's toilet into a gender-neutral toilet and giving these a deep clean.

RESOLVED to:

- 1) note the management update;
- 2) thank the Mousehold Heath wardens for the itinerant meeting and their hard work on protecting and maintaining Mousehold Heath
- 3) invite the police to the meeting at which antisocial behaviour is discussed
- 4) ask the interim parks and open spaces manager to bring the following reports to the next committee:
 - a) contract variation for the maintenance of the Gilman Road space
 - b) antisocial behaviour related to Britannia Road and Britannia Road car park and the possible mitigations for this; and
 - c) public toilet provision at Gurney Road car park.

CHAIR