



**Mousehold Heath Conservators**

**14:00 to 15:30**

**17 January 2020**

Present: Councillors Maxwell (chair), Price (vice chair), Button, Kendrick, Lubbock, Osborn, Sands (M) and Sands (S) and Clare Cohen (Mousehold Heath Defenders), Matthew Davies (Norwich Fringe Project), John Trevelyan (The Norwich Society) and Will Stewart (Mousehold Warden)

Apologies: Councillors Brociek-Coulton

**1. Public Questions/Petitions**

There were no public questions.

**2. Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Minutes**

**RESOLVED** to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2019.

**4. Ninth World Ranger Congress, Nepal 11-15 November 2019**

(The chair took the item first)

The Mousehold Warden attended the International Ranger Federation's (IRF) World Ranger Congress in Nepal as the Norfolk Representative for the Countryside Management Association (CMA). The conference was the biggest gathering of Rangers globally and 600 attendees from over 70 countries attended this year's event. It provided a unique opportunity to share knowledge and experience and to speak to external audiences as one voice.

Plenary sessions covered ranger welfare, ranger and local communities, indigenous rangers, ranger capacity, women in the ranger workforce and technology. He attended a number of workshops, of particular interest was a workshop on how to establish and run a junior ranger programme, topics, activities and ways of measuring success. The ranger proposed the idea of starting a junior ranger's programme on Mousehold Heath and asked members to support the idea. The parks and open spaces manager said that the project was in line with the objectives agreed in the Mousehold Heath ten year work programme. The warden suggested that he could take an initial outline of the project to the next Mousehold Heath Committee (MHC) sub group meeting.

The ranger attended a workshop on Twinning programmes for European rangers and members discussed the possibility of making links with the areas that Norwich as a city was twinned with. Members noted the difficulties experienced in Australia recently and the impact of fires on biodiversity and the struggle this would present rangers in this area with.

**RESOLVED** to ask:

- (1) the Mousehold warden to present a draft project specification for consideration for inclusion into the Mousehold Management Plan to the Mousehold Heath subgroup for advice with any decision regarding altering the Management Plan to return to the Mousehold Heath committee; and
- (2) the chair to write to the twinning associations to suggest the building of greater links with rangers in those areas with the Mousehold Heath ranger.

## **5. Budget and Precept 2020/21**

The parks and open spaces manager presented the report. The report responded to the committee's request for advice on risks to the Conservator's financial position. The parks and open spaces manager advised that the Conservator's risk was incorporated within the corporate risk assessment but finance officers and he would provide a risk analysis separately for Mousehold Heath.

The parks and open spaces manager reminded committee that the aim was to establish and preserve 5% of the overall budget as an initial internal risk management resource; reserves currently stood at 4.7%.

The vice chair expressed concern that the prudent management of the Conservator's reserves could be undermined by a recharge from Norwich City Council. The parks and open spaces manager said it was possible that recharges could be received after the precept was agreed by the Conservators which then exceeded the allocated budget. This forecast spend would then be taken from reserves. He noted that there were no large maintenance outgoings planned for the next financial year with the aim to increase reserves by the end of the next financial year.

A member noted that recharges to the Conservators were proportional to that of the Council's overall expenditure and an increase in recharges to the Conservators represented an overspend to the whole Council. There was no evidence that recharges had been an issue previously and that the estimates provided by finance previously had proved accurate. Furthermore there was a reduction in recharges this year as opposed to the previous year.

**RESOLVED** to:

- (1) note the forecast balances position set out in paragraphs 3-4;
- (2) note the risk management arrangements set out in paragraphs 5-9;
- (3) note and approve the budget proposals set out in paragraph 10 and Appendix A accordingly;

- (4) place a precept on Norwich City Council for the relevant amount for the financial year 2020/21 as per paragraph 11; and
- (5) request that the finance business partner with assistance from the parks and open spaces manager consider the recharge risk to the Mousehold Heath Conservator's budget and how to curtail said risk and provide a response at the next Mousehold Heath committee meeting.

## **6. Ten year work programme and annual work plan 2020/21**

The parks and open spaces manager presented the report. He noted that paragraph five contained an error, there were no expected works as a result of landlord obligations expected in the next financial year. Expenditure was expected for the financial year 2021/22.

This was the first year that the annual work plan was aligned with the management plan and the report provided less detail on projects at the Conservators request. The cost lines listed in the report were used by the Mousehold wardens to manage spend within allocated budgets. It was a dynamic document and could be amended to consider and included new projects with Mousehold Heath committee's permission.

The parks and open spaces manager highlighted a change to the Council's corporate Tree Safety Policy following a change in legal caselaw which had resulted in local authorities reassessing their policies. It was proposed that the corporate policy was applied to Mousehold Heath, the parks and open spaces manager and the tree team would resource this.

There was an outstanding action to consider the formal and informal sports provision provided at Mousehold Heath and some scoping work would be carried out at the sub group with a report for consideration to return to Mousehold Heath Conservators next meeting.

In response to a member question the parks and open spaces manager said that the logo for the Conservators would be considered as part of the signage and interpretation strategy which was included in the ten year plan.

**RESOLVED** to approve the Mousehold Heath annual work plan 2020/21.

## **7. Mousehold Heath management update Q3 30 August 2019 – 17 January 2020**

The parks and open spaces manager presented the report. He referred to paragraphs 5 and 6 of the report regarding a request received to locate a mobile catering unit on Britannia Road car park. The sub group had expressed concerns regarding the environmental credentials of the provider and a report would be brought to the next meeting of Mousehold Heath Conservators to consider if it wished to apply environmental standards to concessions.

A member asked if there were any examples of environmental standards that were applied to mobile food catering units and members discussed that this was common practice at music festivals.

The chair advised that notification had been received from the Highways authority to advise that grass verge adjacent to the former café at Britannia Road was council owned land that formed a part of Mousehold Heath. Previously this had been considered to be part of the adopted highway. If the land belonged to the heath then committee could consider what action it wished to take in order to prevent parking on the verge which had been a persistent problem in previous years.

A member said that any action to limit parking on the verge needed to be considered in conjunction with any subsequent impact the loss of parking would have on the existing car park. Members were concerned to protect pedestrians using the verge as a walk way as no pavement existed in this area.

The chair said that following the Urban Commons Conference and workshop held at Brighton University which the chair attended, (feedback from which was heard at the last meeting of committee), the project team were coming to Mousehold heath. The Wastes and Strays project studied Urban Commons and the project team would meet with the warden to discuss the management plan, to explore issues which were important for the heath's future and to conduct oral histories with user groups. The date proposed was to be in March 2020. More information on the project was available from the website: <https://research.ncl.ac.uk/wastesandstrays/>

**RESOLVED to:**

- (1) note the Mousehold Heath management update Q3 30 August 2019 – 17 January 2020;
- (2) request that the parks and open spaces manager provide a report to the next meeting of Mousehold Heath Conservators to consider if concessions operating on heath land ought to adhere to environmental standards; and
- (3) ask the chair to write to the Highways authority requesting that yellow lines be installed along the Britannia Road adjacent to the location of the former café.

CHAIR