



## MOUSEHOLD HEATH CONSERVATORS

2.30 p.m. - 5.40 p.m.

13 March 2009

Present: Councillors Bradford (Chair), Bearman (Vice-Chair), Brociek-Coulton, Lay and S.Little and Mr M.Bryant, Mr D.Cannon, Ms M.Parker and Mr C.Southgate

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

Apologies: Councillors Banham and Divers and Mr M.Davies

### 1. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

#### Alternative Site for BMX Bikers

On behalf of the Mousehold Heath Defenders, Gill Webb asked what progress had been made in finding an alternative site for BMX bikers on the Heath including updates on the discussions with the Legal Section and the documents that were expected from the Forestry Commission in regards to their work at Rendlesham Heath.

The Green Spaces Manager said that he was waiting for Giles Brockman from the Forestry Commission to contact him with further information since their Ranger at Rendlesham had left. He had received a favourable response to the initial information he had provided to the Insurance Section. An officer had contacted Broadland District Council who had said that they had not had any problems with BMX on sites in their area. South Norfolk District Council had said that they did have problems and were looking into possible solutions but said that they were in the early stages and would need to explore the project further before they could provide any information.

**RESOLVED** to ask the Green Spaces Manager to continue the investigations into the alternative site and report progress at future meetings of the Conservators.

#### Vinegar Pond Restoration Proposals

Paul Scruton asked if the Conservators could confirm that the "no chemicals policy" could only be revoked at a full public Mousehold Conservators meeting and not authorised by the management sub-group or any other type of group or sub-group.

**RESOLVED** to note that the policy remained unchanged and that the matter of the Vinegar Pond was to be considered under Item 11 on the agenda.

### **‘Sudden Oak Death’ Disease**

Paul Scruton asked that in view of the fact that aggressive fungus-like plant diseases threatened woodland and that the Environment Minister had allocated £25 million in a bid to eradicate the diseases which were spreading across the country, would the Mousehold Conservators authorise the removal of rhododendron, and important carrier of the fungus from the Heath.

The Natural Areas Officer said that the Government were taking the Sudden Oak Death disease (*Phytophthora ramorum* & *P. kernoviae*) very seriously, and had recommended 'that the eradication of rhododendron was the most effective control measure to reduce disease [i.e. Sudden Oak Death] spread in the wider environment'. He explained how Rhododendron was very susceptible to the disease, and that its removal was also desirable on other biodiversity grounds. He said that the disease currently seemed to be most of a problem in Southern and Western England and that the Council's Arboricultural Officer was not aware of any cases in Norfolk so far.

The Natural Areas Officer said that Rhododendron was not widespread at Mousehold Heath, although there was a large specimen in location E6/E7 as shown on the Mousehold Grid Map. He said that removal of this example had previously been suggested on nature conservation grounds, before the government report was written, although this had not been done as the rhododendron was valued by some of the Mousehold Heath Defenders.

Based on the information currently available, the Natural Areas Officer said that he and the Arboricultural Officer would suggest that there was not an urgent need to remove the rhododendron at present, but that the Conservators might wish to review the situation at a future date and perhaps consider the rhododendron's removal as a precautionary measure.

Mr Scruton referred the Natural Areas Officer to the internet links to information he had provided with a copy of his question that highlighted outbreaks that had occurred in the local area.

**RESOLVED** to

- (1) ask the Natural Areas Officer and Arboricultural Officer to investigate the reports of an local outbreak further and report back to a future meeting of the Conservators.
- (2) ask Mr Scruton to provide the Natural Areas Officer with any samples that are suspected as being diseased for further investigation.

### **Winter Solstice Tree**

Paul Scruton asked that, if the Mousehold Defenders proposals for the winter solstice events were approved, would the decorations on the winter solstice tree be

removed on 6 January or another set date to prevent toilet rolls etc, being thrown over bushes or trees in an attempt to copy it.

The Natural Areas Officer said that the decorations had been removed from the winter solstice tree at the beginning of March and he had not received any complaints about the tree or any other bushes or trees that had been vandalised.

**RESOLVED** to ask the Mousehold Heath Defenders to note the request.

### **Zak's Restaurant Lease**

Paul Scruton asked if he could be provided with the exact date of the end of the lease held by Zak's Restaurant on the Heath.

The Green Spaces Manager said that the lease was due to expire on 30 September 2010 although that the current lessee had the right to renew the lease under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954.

**RESOLVED** to note the position.

### **Rangers House Fly Tipping October 2007**

Paul Scruton asked if anyone had been charged for the fly tipping that been found in front of the Rangers House on 5 October 2007 in view of the fact that details of bank accounts and addresses had been provided from the rubbish.

The Green Spaces Manager said that the Environmental Services Manager had advised that removing the evidence from the crime scene site to give to the Police had compromised the evidence. The police had not passed the documents onto the Council as the chance of a conviction had been marginal. He said that if Mr Scruton had any further questions about the matter then he should contact Environmental Services direct.

**RESOLVED** to note that fly tipping should be reported direct to Norwich City Council for investigation and that evidence should not be removed.

## **2. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2008 subject to the following amendments:-

### **(1) Item 4 – Quarterly Budget Report:-**

- the following text being inserted after the second paragraph, 'Conservators wished to maintain the momentum of their programme of improvements works. Therefore they agreed to seek the maximum precept for 2009-2010'.
- the resolution being amended to read 'to note the report, seek the maximum precept for 2009-2010 and ask the Finance Control Manager to update the Committee on the finalised budget for 2009/2010 at the next meeting of the Conservators'

(2) Item 6 – Draft Annual Work Programme 2009/10:-

- the word 'recommended' being inserted at the beginning of the second line in the first paragraph.
- Resolution 1 being amended to read 'to note the report and approve the proposed work programme'

### **3. RE-PROVISIONING OF CITYCARE SERVICES**

The Strategic Contracts Manager presented the report. The Conservators were asked to note the proposed timetable, to determine the level of involvement they wished to have and delegate involvement in the design of contract services to the Management Sub-Group.

The Chair said that the Heath had more specific issues that would have be considered within the Green Spaces and Arboricultural contracts and that it should be accepted that the Mousehold Heath Conservators were the governing body for the Heath.

The Strategic Contracts Manager answered member's questions and gave further information on the possibility of the contracts being split into smaller sections or taking the Heath requirements outside of the contract. Members and officers discussed in detail what specifications could be incorporated into the new contract including how to get the best value for money for the Heath and introducing a Performance Management System.

In response to a question, the Green Spaces Manager said that due to the short timescale available it would not be realistic to try to discuss the issues at the quarterly meetings of the Conservators. He asked members to consider if the task should be undertaken by email or by a task group who had regular meetings.

**RESOLVED to:-**

- (1) ask the Green Spaces Manager to draft the specifications for the potential requirements for Mousehold Heath to be included in the re-provisioning of the CityCare Services and to circulate these to the Conservators.
- (2) then ask individual members to contact the Green Spaces Manager by email with their views on the specifications for the potential requirements for Mousehold Heath to be included in the re-provisioning of the CityCare Services

### **4. QUARTERLEY BUDGET REPORT**

The Finance Control Manager presented the report and referred to the up to date budget position for the third quarter of December 2008.

The Green Spaces Manager explained the charges contained in the appendices of the report. The total amount of under spend would not be known until the remaining re-charges had been deducted.

In response to questions, the Green Spaces Manager said that the money from the sale of the Rangers House was held in the Capital Expense Account. The annual payment for the Computer IT Services Contract covered the cost of two computers at City Hall and use of the Heathgate Office by the wardens including the cost of the systems and networks as serviced under the Steria contract.

**RESOLVED to:-**

- (1) note the current budget monitoring
- (2) ask the Finance Control Manager to obtain the actual amount to date for the Accommodation Charge as missing from Appendix A in the report prior to the next meeting of the Conservators.
- (3) ask the Green Spaces Manager to include the Capital Account Balance amount in future quarterly budget reports
- (4) ask the Green Spaces Manager to check with Asset and City Management as to the ownership of the steel container located on Mons Avenue and whether the Mousehold Heath Conservators were responsible for its costs.

**5. 2009/2010 BUDGET**

The Finance Control Manager presented the report and asked the Conservators to determine and approve the budget for the Heath for 2009/2010 and to agree a levy on Norwich City Council.

**RESOLVED** to agree with 7 members voting in favour and none against with 1 abstention to:-

- (1) approve the content of the budgets as shown in Appendix A of the report having regard to the comments provided in the report.
- (2) agree a precept of £198,501 on Norwich City Council for the financial year beginning 1 April 2009.

**6. PROPOSED TIMETABLE OF EVENTS – MOUSEHOLD DEFENDERS**

Members considered the proposed timetable of events on the Heath for 2009 as put forward by the Mousehold Defenders.

On behalf of the Mousehold Defenders, Gill Webb said that, further to Mr Scruton's earlier public question, she had not been aware of the problem with the toilet rolls being thrown over the bushes and trees. The Defenders would however in future consider setting time limits for the decorations.

In response to a question about to the Fun-Day, the Chair said that political parties would not be permitted to have stands or exhibitions as the Mousehold Conservators were non party political.

**RESOLVED to:-**

- (1) approve the timetable of the events on the Heath as proposed by the Mousehold Defenders
- (2) ask Claire Cohen, Publicity Officer for the Mousehold Defenders to forward the application forms for stands for the Fun-Day and any other relevant information to the Committee Officer for circulation before the next meeting of the Conservators.

**7. REPORT OF THE MANAGEMENT SUB-GROUP**

The Green Spaces Manager presented the report and updated members on the issues discussed by the Management Sub-Group on 20 January 2009.

A member said that there had been problems recently with tyres being fly-tipped at the Gilman Road entrance to the Heath. The Green Spaces Manager said that any reports of fly-tipping should immediately be made to the Customer Contact Team. The wardens would also make checks for any fly-tipping at the weekends.

**RESOLVED** to note the report

**8. REVIEW OF ACTIONS**

**Fly-Tipping on Valley Drive**

The Natural Areas Officer updated the Conservators on the latest position with the fly-tipping problem on Valley Drive. He, together with Councillor Alan Waters, officers from Citizen Services and a representative from CityCare, had visited the site on 12 February 2009.

The Natural Areas Officer said that they did not have the resources to remove the full volume of fly tipping as they would be required to fell a lot of trees to be able to reach it but that the non bio-degradable waste would be removed. He said that a scout group was interested in assisting with a large clean-up event later in the year, and other volunteers would also be encouraged to take part.

The Natural Areas Officer said that both the Environmental Protection Officer and Councillor Waters had written to all of the properties in the adjacent area and as a result people had come forward to report fly tipping. He said that the volume of new fly tipped waste was a lot smaller and would be monitored. It would be recommended to residents that they could get a brown bin for garden waste and they would also be informed of the other legal ways of waste disposal.

**RESOLVED to:-**

- (1) note the position
- (2) ask the Natural Areas Officer to investigate the fly tipping reports at Gilman Road

- (3) ask the Natural Areas Officer to consider the possibility of making a donation to the volunteers from the scouts and guides in preparation for the planned clean up, to look at ways to encourage other young people in the area to assist and to look at ways of publicising the event.

### **Traffic Calming – Gurney Road**

The Green Spaces Manager read out an email that had been received from the Head of Transportation and Landscape in regards to traffic calming on Gurney Road. This said that the focus for implementing traffic calming was in residential streets to help reduce casualties amongst pedestrians and that although traffic on Gurney Road severed the Heath for pedestrians, action was unlikely to be a priority compared to other locations in built up areas. Furthermore, all 'traffic calming' funds were presently being directed into the implementation of 20 mph speed limits in pilot areas and in the short term this had effectively placed a moratorium on other types of measure.

As part of the development of the growth programme and joint core strategy, the Norwich Area Transport Survey (NATS) was being revisited in the summer months, and as this may have an impact on Gurney Road that it would be sensible to await the outcome of this visit. One idea was for Gurney Road to be made bus only, albeit still providing for local access and cyclists and pedestrians but this was an emerging idea that was subject to at least two public consultation exercises were it to be taken forward to implementation.

Members suggested that Gurney Road could also be included in the 20 mph speed limit pilot scheme and asked if it would be possible for the Conservators to have input into the forthcoming NATS survey. A member said that although any implementation would be delayed it was still necessary to provide a practical solution for pedestrians.

**RESOLVED** to ask the Head of Transport and Landscape to attend the next meeting of the Conservators for further discussion of the issue.

### **Possible English Heritage Listing – Pavilion**

Chris Southgate informed members of the history of the Pavilion which was currently home to Zaks Restaurant. He said that he was consulting with the Norwich Society who were working with the Council to examine buildings in the area for local listing. He outlined the points that would be considered as follows:-

- Townscape Values
- Architectural
- Historic
- Archaeological
- Community Values
- Condition (as seen from public views)

Chris Southgate said that although the Pavilion might not qualify for national listing, he had nominated it for local listing and preliminary assessments would be made on the building. He asked the Conservators to consider how they would want to endorse a course of action if successful.

**RESOLVED to:-**

- (1) note the position
- (2) thank Chris Southgate for the work undertaken so far and ask him to update the Conservators of any progress at future meetings or through the Committee Officer

**Anglian Bus – Beech Drive**

A member said that a vehicle belonging to Anglian Buses had been seen most afternoons for a period of 2 or 3 hours in the lay-by on Beech Drive. The bus was parked so that motorists on Britannia Road were unable to see it and its position made it difficult for pedestrians to be able to cross the road.

**RESOLVED** to ask the Natural Areas Officer to investigate the position.

**9. REPORT ON RECENT ACTIVITIES**

The Natural Areas Officer presented the report and updated members on recent survey, management work and events undertaken at Mousehold Heath since the last meeting. He also commented on the progress towards achieving the objectives of the Mousehold Heath Management Plan.

In response to a question about whether the new wooden cycle racks would be installed in time for the Fun Day, the Natural Areas Officer said that there was no specific timescale. A member said that he was concerned that timber cycle racks would be easy to chop through or set fire to. Members discussed the option of metal alternatives that could possibly be painted so that they were in keeping with the area.

The Natural Areas Officer said that the findings from the surveys as per paragraph 4 of the report would be publicised and included in the next update of the Mousehold Heath Management Plan. A member commented that it would be useful to build up a database on the findings.

**RESOLVED to:-**

- (1) note the report
- (2) record the Committee's appreciation of the work done by the 26 work parties totalling 1,355 volunteer hours involving the Mousehold Defenders, BTCV, other volunteers and the Mousehold Wardens over the period of December 2008 to February 2009.
- (3) ask the Green Spaces Manager to look at the material options for the new cycle racks and consult with the Chair and Vice-Chair accordingly
- (4) ask the Natural Areas Officer to include the findings from the surveys, as per paragraph 4 in the report, in the updated Mousehold Heath Management Plan.



## **10. VINEGAR POND PROJECT**

The Green Spaces Manager presented the report and the Natural Areas Officer outlined the 4 options for the removal of the invasive reed sweet-grass as follows:-

1. to excavate the pond to remove the Reed Sweet-Grass
2. to chemically treat the invasive Reed Sweet-Grass
3. to excavate the pond and line with a bentonite liner
4. to excavate the pond and line with puddle clay

A member circulated a photograph which was taken in 1990 when the pond was last scraped. He said that he knew of a local contractor who could scrape out the pond without disturbing the base or causing any damage to the first layer of the pond, and this would cost a maximum of £1800. He said that when they were green, the reeds above the water could be sprayed but the roots underneath should not be touched as they went through the pond base.

Following discussion of the 4 options, the Chair moved and the Vice Chair seconded Option 1.

**RESOLVED** to:-

- (1) agree with 8 members voting in favour, to adopt Option 1 as set out in the report to excavate the pond to remove the Reed Sweet-Grass
- (2) to review the work in progress and processes concerning the work on the Vinegar Pond at a future meeting of the Conservators

## **11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**RESOLVED** to agree the dates and times of the future following meetings as follows:-

- Friday 12 June 2009 at 2:00pm
- Friday 18 September 2009 at 2:00pm
- Friday 11 December 2009 at 2:00pm

## **12. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED** to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of Item 13 below on the grounds contained in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

## **\*13. ZAKS RESTAURANT (PARAGRAPH 3)**

The Asset Management Officer presented the report and answered member's questions.

**RESOLVED** to note the position.

**CHAIR**