

<b>Report to</b>	Mousehold Heath Conservators	<b>Item</b>
	15 March 2019	
<b>Report of</b>	Head of citywide services	<b>6</b>
<b>Subject</b>	Mousehold Heath Conservators decision made under delegated powers for additional contractor days	

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### **Purpose**

To report to the conservators a decision made under delegated powers for two additional contractor days.

### **Recommendation**

To note the content of the report.

### **Corporate and service priorities**

The report helps to meet the corporate priority of a clean and safe city

### **Financial implications**

The additional costs of £500 are not in the budget and work programme approved for 2018-19. The additional spend will be made from the 2018-19 budget and covered by a Rural Payment Agency grant which is due to be received in March-April 2019.

**Ward/s:** Catton Grove, Crome and Sewell Wards

### **Contact officers**

Simon Meek - parks and open spaces manager 01603 212403

Bob Cronk – director of neighbourhoods 01603 212373

### **Background documents**

None

## Background

1. At a meeting of Mousehold Conservators 22 January 2016, Item 7 Report: Mousehold Heath Conservators Management sub-group terms of reference, available [here](#), a recommendation was approved for the head of local neighbourhood services, in consultation with both the chair and vice-chair of the conservators, to make changes to all future work programmes if the need arose between conservators meetings first taking the decision to the management sub-group (unless an urgent decision is required).

## Report

2. The stripping of the humus layer in the heathland reclamation areas is an annual task, which involves the removal of the organic material which forms in the top layer of the soil when plants and animals decay.
3. The layer needs to be stripped and removed to produce poor quality acidic soil which heathland plants require to become established.
4. On 19 February the Terrestrial biodiversity adviser from Natural England, who oversees the Higher Level Stewardship agreement visited the heath.
5. In the content of an email received following the visit, the adviser said that he was 'really impressed' with how the work is going and particularly pleased to hear how successful the turf scraping has been and to see the heather recovery.
6. The possibility of scraping more of the burnt areas to remove the organic residue prior to vegetation growing through it in the spring was discussed as this would be beneficial to the regeneration of the heath.
7. The removal of the organic layer has always been viewed as a positive step by the fire brigade, in terms of minimising the risk of the spread of fire through the underlying humus layer.
8. The contractor came on site on 25 and 26 February 2019 to carry out this year's stripping of the organic layer. It became evident through discussions with the contractor that he could remain on site for an additional two days but he needed confirmation by the end of his first day.
9. The cost of the work will be covered by a reduction in the volume of humus stripping work agreed in the 2019/20 annual work programme, unless other in-project savings can be found.
10. It was viewed as a priority to take up the opportunity of the contractor being able to remain two more days and to scrape the recently burnt areas before they regenerated, than completing four days in 2019/20 at this point in time.
11. Due to insufficient time available to take the decision to the management sub-group, verbal approval was obtained on 25 February from the chair and vice-chair and the director of neighbourhoods to approve £500 to cover two days work. It was confirmed in writing by the director of neighbourhoods on 26 February.