



Mousehold Heath Conservators

14:05 to 15:30

17 November 2017

Present: Councillors Maxwell (chair), Price (vice chair), Brociek-Coulton, Lubbock, Kendrick, Raby, Sands (M), Thomas (Va) (sub for Thomas (Vi)); and John Trevelyan (The Norwich Society).

Apologies: Councillors Bradford and Thomas (Vi); and Clare Cohen (Mousehold Heath Defenders) and Matthew Davies (Norwich Fringe Project).

1. Public questions/ petitions

The following public question was received from Mr Paul Scruton.

“I would ask that the committee comment on the following; a new boundary fence has been erected around the Rangers House on the heath, enclosing land which was not part of the original land boundaries as registered with the Land Registry. Further that trees have been chopped down and removed without the permission of the conservators and the city council in violation of conservation and tree protection Acts. That the back of the property is being accessed by motor vehicles across part of the heath. I am also concerned that these matters do not appear to have been reported to conservators by your Rangers whose job it is to patrol the heath and look for any occurrences which are in breach of the Mousehold Heath Act 1984”.

The chair asked the strategy and disposal manager from Norwich Property Services (NPS) to read the response:

“The site has been visited and as always it is difficult to get an exact position on the ground, however it would appear that the main points of the boundaries tie up with those that were originally demised. The corners tie up with the adjacent properties on the O.S. plan. A line on a plan can represent up to a metre on the ground making an exact position impossible to prove. Some of the lines are clearly incorrect as they would run into what is the new cycle track at the front of the property. The original hedge at the front of the property was in fact removed by the last occupant making that definition more difficult as well.

We understand that the new fencing has been put in place to prevent the public from cutting through what is the private garden of the property and the lease places a

responsibility on the leasee to erect and maintain fences. A planning application was approved on 28 June 2012 for the installation of the fencing. We understand that the trees have been managed by the owner, removing dead or dangerous trees in accordance with the requirements of the lease. There are no Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) in place and the property is not within a Conservation Area. The removal of trees was approved in the planning application approved in 2012 and in consultation with the council's tree officer. It is also clear from the photograph supplied that the removal of trees in the garden area has happened some while ago. The hedge which formed the southern boundary has been removed and replaced with the new close boarded fence. This again was done in conjunction with the tree officer, so roots were protected and new shrubs planted at the back of the new fence to replace the hedgerow removed by a previous leasee. Metal railings have been put in place at the front corner to enable an unrestricted view of the property for those using the footpath.

We therefore conclude that there has been no material encroachment and that the fencing works have been done with good quality materials in consultation with the city council. The tenant has complied with his lease terms as regard clause 30 in relation to boundaries and clause 31 in respect of the trees.

The wardens may not have reported any of these works as they may not have been aware of the terms of the lease and believed that the owner was operating within his boundaries and within the terms of the lease. The wardens have reported issues with previous tenants relating to problems on the heath itself on previous occasions when they have occurred. They have been in regular contact with the tenant and have found nothing untoward. The tenant works with the wardens in relation to the bollard at the end of the access track to prevent unauthorised vehicles accessing the heath, which deters misuses and reduces the likelihood of fly-tipping antisocial behaviour of this area.

With regards to access, the tenant does not have a car and the ground has no rutting, and good grass cover is present, which would not be the case if a vehicle was regularly accessing the property across this piece of land."

(The the strategy and disposal manager left the meeting.)

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2017.

4. Mousehold heath budget monitoring Q1 17-18

The service accountant presented the report.

In response to a member's question, the parks and open spaces manager confirmed that use of the football pitch was declining. He noted that the quality of the pitch was not comparable to modern ones. Discussion ensued regarding the reduction

nationally in the use of football pitches. It was agreed by members to ask the subgroup to look at the long term future of the football pitch.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the current budget monitoring position; and
- (2) ask the subgroup to look at the future of the football pitch and to come back to the committee with recommendations.

(The service accountant left the meeting.)

5. Mousehold Heath management plan 2018-2028 management plan review progress update and timescale amendment

The parks and open spaces manager presented the report.

He advised that the new plan addressed the green flag criteria. There were more maps associated with the new plan showing existing heathlands and where new heathland was being developed. It was planned to make the maps accessible to the public.

In response to a member's question the parks and open spaces manager said eight management objectives had been identified, and spend made under each objective would be available in due course.

Appendix two to the report provided a breakdown of the management objectives illustrating how these would be achieved.

(Councillor Brociek-Coulton entered the meeting at this point.)

Appendix three showed the project specification template. These would be produced for each project which contributed to delivery of the objectives.

A member suggested that an event could be hosted to commemorate the 100 year anniversary of the tramway which had run through the heath. The parks and open spaces manager advised that the annual work programme would be reviewed at March's meeting of the conservators and this could be discussed at that meeting if members wished.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the progress to date;
- (2) approve the plan format; and
- (3) approve the revised timescale and key stages for the review of the management plan.

6. Mousehold Heath Conservators annual report 2016-17

The parks and open spaces manager presented the report. It was noted that it included a greater number of images than previously as requested when the initial draft was presented to committee. (He advised that maps including links would be included in the new management plan.)

The report would be published on the council's website and the mousehold wardens will distribute copies around to local schools.

Members discussed how best to launch the document. It was agreed that the parks and open spaces manager would ask the council's communications team to announce the launch of the report on the council's website as a news item and as a tweet.

Discussion took place regarding the annual report. It was acknowledged that it was important to do an annual report to show the objectives had been met but the parks and open spaces manager questioned if it was the best document for schools. It was noted that much of the information did not change year on year and proposed that the report had a different emphasis every year. The chair proposed that the majority of the document could go online and a shorter pamphlet be produced each year.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the contents of the Mousehold Heath annual report 2016-17.
- (2) ask the parks and open spaces manager to liaise with the communications team to launch the report with a comment from the chair.
- (3) ask the parks and open spaces manager to review the format of the annual report prior to the next one being produced.

7. Mousehold Heath quarterly management update

The parks and open spaces manager presented the report.

Members discussed bee hives, and the possibility of hosting them. It was suggested Norwich prison could host members agreed the chair would approach the prison Governor to comment on the possibility of this.

A member asked how the initiative to work closely and share equipment with the friends of Ketts Heights was progressing. John Trevelyan noted that it had provided collective labour for the work to improve the view at St James' Hill but was unclear how the initiative would develop in the future.

The parks and open spaces manager confirmed in response to a question that disposal of sharps was include in the contract for litter disposal.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the content Mousehold Heath quarterly management report; and
- (2) ask the chair to approach the Governor of Norwich prison regarding the hosting of beehives.

CHAIR