



MOUSEHOLD HEATH CONSERVATORS

2.00 p.m. – 4.00 p.m.

11 December 2009

Present: Councillors Bradford (Chair), Bearman (Vice-Chair) and Little (S), Mr Malcolm Bryant, Mr David Cannon, Mr Matt Davies and Mr Chris Southgate

Also Present: County Councillor Edwards, Acting Sergeant Robinson and 6 members of the Mousehold Heath Defenders

Apologies: Councillors Brociek-Coulton, Divers and Lay

1. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Mrs Gill Webb, on behalf of the Mousehold Heath Defenders, asked the following question:-

‘Will the Mousehold Heath Conservators please agree to have the Mousehold Heath bye-laws displayed on Mousehold?’

She said that the Defenders had been asking for this for a long time and that this would help with the problems of people cycling on the Heath.

The Chair explained that it had been necessary to defer the report on the situation with the BMX and other bikers on the Heath to another meeting and that it was proposed to hold a meeting in February for this purpose. The issue of the bye-laws being displayed would be looked at in conjunction with this report.

The Head of Community Services said that the wardens carried a copy of the bye-laws with them and showed them to people when undertaking work under the bye-laws. As reported to the Mousehold Heath Management Sub-Group, advice was being sought from Legal Services so that the bye-laws could be summarised in order to display them on the notice-board.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2009 subject to the following amendments:-

- (1) in respect of Item 4, Review of Actions, delete all 3 paragraphs under the heading Possible Local Listing of Pavilion and replace with the following:-

'Possible Local Listing of Pavilion

Chris Southgate revised information given earlier to the Conservators. He emphasised that the Norwich Society intended to compile a separate list of worthwhile buildings deserving special care. The buildings selected would be outside the conservation areas, but be important to Norwich, even if they do not have national significance or meet national standards. So the Society's list would be in addition to the formal "local listings" maintained by the City Council, which are typically highlights within a conservation area or meet national standards and have exceptional importance.

The Norwich Society had already visited the Pavilion for an initial appraisal and had found the building to have interesting features. However, it would be a year or more before they had finished their studies of other local buildings. The Society's list of valuable heritage buildings could not be completed until then.

Members discussed how the Conservators could ensure that the Pavilion was properly maintained and how best to protect its character. In response to questions, Chris Southgate said he was unaware if the Norwich Society would be producing a brochure of their studies but would enquire and report back.'

- (2) in respect of item 6, Mousehold Heath Management Plan Progress Report, first paragraph, for each bullet point, delete 'Defenders' and insert 'warden' and after the '2 volunteers' insert 'from Mousehold Heath Defenders'.

3. QUARTERLY BUDGET REPORT – BUDGET MONITORING STATEMENT APRIL – SEPTEMBER 2009-12-15

The Financial Control Manager presented the report and together with the Head of Community Services answered questions.

The Financial Control Manager explained that there needed to be better communication between Financial Services and Community Services staff if the forecast outturn was to be improved and more accurate. During discussion it was suggested that the Conservators would be in a better position to identify any under-spend in the budget at the February meeting and this should be used as an opportunity to fund a worthwhile project.

Councillor Little suggested that in order to get a better idea of how the budget was faring an element of seasonal variance should be introduced which would provide a comparison with previous years' budgets. The Financial Control Manager explained that the Council's budget management system did not hold this information but it could be inserted at an extra cost.

The Head of Community Services assured members that any payments to CityCare contractors would be tied up by the end of the contract.

RESOLVED to note the current budget monitoring position.

4. REVIEW OF ACTIONS

Gurney Road Traffic Calming

Councillor Bradford referred to the response he had received from the Chair of the Norwich Highways Agency Committee (NHAC) in relation to the Conservators' request to traffic calming in Gurney Road.

Mr Chris Southgate expressed disappointment that no action could be taken until the outcome of the consultation on the Norwich Area Transport Strategy (NATS) and said that it was important that the Conservators were kept informed.

Councillor Little said that he had been acting as a substitute member at the NHAC meeting and that the response was as he had expected. He had pointed out the unique situation of the road crossing the Heath but traffic management schemes were prioritised on the grounds of the number of accidents that had taken place.

Discussion ensued in which Conservators and Defenders expressed their views on the proposals for a rapid bus transit lane and the closure to general traffic except for access in Gurney Road. There was general consensus that the removal of traffic from the road would be beneficial for the Heath and that more people would use the Fountain Ground if it was easier to cross the road from the car park.

Councillor Bearman suggested that the members of NHAC should be invited to undertake a site visit of Gurney Road.

RESOLVED to ask the Chair to write to the Chair of the Norwich Highways Agency Committee requesting to be kept informed of the consultation on the Norwich Area Transport Strategy in relation to proposals for Gurney Road, and to invite the members of the committee to undertake a site visit of Gurney Road and the Heath.

Future Events on the Heath

The Head of Community Services reported that the Council's Events Team had 3 concerts booked for 2010; on 6 June, 4 July and 22 August. The Chair confirmed that provided the Conservators were kept informed, events on the Mousehold Heath could be booked through the Events Team. The Events Team would consult the Chair and Vice-Chair if necessary between meetings and would handle all requests for events on Mousehold Heath, including health and safety assessments.

Mrs Pat Siano, Mousehold Heath Defenders, suggested that local school bands should be encouraged to use the band stand, and that the Events Team should consider using the Heath when arranging events such as Kidzones and Theatre in the Park.

RESOLVED to:-

- (1) note the role of the Events Team and that 3 events have been booked for 2010;
- (2) ask the Head of Community Services to speak to the Events Team to flag up opportunities with the Community Engagement Team to encourage the use of Mousehold Heath.

Pavilion Update

Mr Southgate said that the Norwich Society intended to prepare a database of buildings put on to its list of valuable heritage buildings. A few paper copies would be available but no decisions had been made on its wider distribution.

RESOLVED to note.

5. PROGRESS TO RESOLVE CYCLING ISSUES

The Head of Community Services presented the report and explained that it had been necessary to defer consideration of the cycling issues to enable the Mousehold Heath Management Sub-Group an opportunity to undertake a site visit.

Discussion ensued on the arrangements for the site visit. It was noted that Mr Bryant, the Mousehold Heath Defenders' representative on the Conservators, was a member of the Sub-Group and would be advised of the date of the site visit. The Chair said that 3 Defenders and 3 cyclists would be invited to attend the site visit.

RESOLVED to note:-

- (1) the report;
- (2) that arrangements will be made for a site visit in early January 2010 subject to the availability of members of the Mousehold Heath Management Sub-Group, cyclist representatives and the Mousehold Heath Defenders.

6. REPORT ON THE MINUTES FROM THE MOUSEHOLD HEATH CONSERVATORS MANAGEMENT SUB-GROUP

Access Track

Members discussed the issue of the subsidence of the track to the Pavilion. This could be caused by large vehicles servicing the restaurant.

The Head of Community Services said that the Head of Asset and City Management had been asked to clarify the arrangements for the lease, including any restrictions on the use of vehicles permitted to use the track. It was necessary to establish what arrangements were in place to achieve a solution.

Changing Facilities

The Chair referred to the minutes of the meeting held on 28 October 2009 and said that the Sub-Group had discussed replacing the changing rooms on the Fountain Ground.

Litter Pick Contract

The Head of Community Services confirmed that the contract with CityCare did not require a litter pick to be carried out every day on Mousehold Heath. He suggested that incidences of litter should be reported to CityCare. The contribution of members of the Mousehold Heath Defenders who voluntarily conducted litter picks was noted and appreciated.

Cavalry Track/St James Hill Steps

The Natural Areas Officer said that the wardens were meeting with BTCV to discuss a scheme to install steps up St. James Hill. It might be possible to fund the work via a scheme administered by the BTCV. Mr Bryant said that Councillor Brociek-Coulton and Mrs Webb had brought the issue to the Management Sub-Group's attention.

Cycle Racks

It was noted that the wardens had the supply and installation of cycle racks in hand.

RESOLVED to receive the minutes of the Mousehold Heath Management Sub-Group held on 28 October 2009 and 2 December 2009.

7. REPORT ON RECENT ISSUES, WORKS AND EVENTS AT MOUSEHOLD HEATH

The Head of Community Services and the Natural Areas Officer presented the report and answered questions.

The Natural Areas Officer said that Mr Brian Cushion, Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Services, had met with him and would be undertaking an archaeological survey at St William's Chapel site. The archaeologist would start on the earthworks in January 2010 and it was expected that the report would be finalised by April 2010. Some banks did not appear to be on the existing plan and depending on how the archaeologist interpreted these would add to the evidence.

Mrs Bush, Mousehold Heath Defenders, said that she had spoken to David Robertson, Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Services, about records held on the site. Norwich Cathedral library might hold records of the site which could provide a reference point for the new survey, and was something that she might pursue.

Discussion then ensued on the management work undertaken on the Heath. Mr Bryant said that the contractors had removed a lot of the weeds from the Vinegar Pond. He explained that the pond had a layer of clay loam 3m down and that in dry

weather the level in the pond fell until the water table rose again. (A photograph showing the Vinegar Pond was circulated at the meeting.)

Councillor Little welcomed the scrapes that would encourage heather regeneration. Discussion then ensued on the removal of gorse. Mr Davies said that Natural England had a gorse cutter which could be hired for £400 a day and would clear a large area. Mr Bryant said that because of nesting birds the work would need to be carried out between October to early March. There was a lot of dead wood and it might be possible to find a place on the Heath where this could be left to rot down.

In response to a question the Natural Areas Officer said that he would include the wildlife surveys in the annual report, but in the meantime would be able to answer individual queries.

RESOLVED to note the report.

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED to:-

- (1) hold an additional meeting on Friday, 12 February 2010 at 2.00 p.m. :
- (2) note the dates of meetings on Friday, 12 March 2010 and Friday, 18 June 2010.

CHAIR