



Mousehold Heath Conservators

14:30 to 15:20

14 March 2025

Present: Councillors Kidman (Chair), Kendrick (Vice-Chair), Carrington, Champion and Fox. Marion Maxwell (Mousehold Heath Defenders) and Willem Buttinger (Norwich Society).

Apologies: Councillor Lubbock

In Attendance: Matthew Davies – Fringe Project Manager
Neil Wright – Service Accountant
Will Stewart – Mousehold Heath Warden

1. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Public Questions and Petitions

There were no public questions or petitions.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meetings held on 13 September 2024 and 17 January 2025.

4. Mousehold Heath Conservators Budget Monitoring to 30 November 2024

The Service Accountant presented the report. Members noted an underspend of £3,494. This was due to increased income against budget and a discrepancy on the income from Football due to a credit note being raised. This was being investigated. This underspend would be carried forward.

An increase in the budget for overtime of £1,144 was the result of a particular project and Bank Holiday pay.

RESOLVED to note the the current budget monitoring and reserves positions.

5. Mousehold Heath Management Update 2 January 2025 to 26 February 2025

The Mousehold Heath Warden presented a report providing an update on the Management of the Heath.

The warden was pleased to report that there were no fish in the Vinegar Pond and that there were 70 spawn bundles, which were in areas where they were unlikely to be disturbed. There were another 35-40 bundles at the Mustard Pond.

The common gorse had been cut back from the paths, it had been undertaken by the volunteers and had been undertaken in a sensitive way using handheld cutters rather than machinery.

The volunteers, made up of individuals from the community and from community organisations. They had collectively undertaken 491 hours. There were two groups on a Monday and a Tuesday and both groups contained 14-15 volunteers.

The last 'Mousehold to the Marshes' Walk had attracted 50 participants and received positive feedback. It went from the Heath to Sweet Briar Marsh and participants stopped 14-15 times as guides informed them of information about the area and provided local knowledge.

One committee member asked about people camping on the heath. The wardens explained that this was homeless people who struggled in the hostel environment. However, the occurrence of campers was very sporadic.

When asked about fly tipping the wardens were pleased to report that this had reduced.

Members asked about "The Common Lot" and were informed that they were a local theatre group who wanted to perform on the Heath.

One member queried the removal of saplings. The warden explained that many saplings had been removed for the grassland habitats and had been replanted elsewhere. Two hundred had been planted along Gilmans Road. Members were invited to contact the wardens if they wanted saplings to replant as there were over a thousand to replant. They were species, such as Birch trees, which were one of the top trees for wildlife and soaking up road particles. The wardens were working with the City and County councils to take advantage of the trees, and he would also "put the word out" for anyone who wanted to take advantage of the offer.

A suggestion was made that the "Common Lot" could use the bandstand for their performance. The warden explained that they had no jurisdiction over the event, and it was up to the group to make their own arrangements. However, he would contact them to make the suggestion.

The Chair extended the committees thanks to the volunteers. He was also pleased to note that there were still no fish in the Vinegar Pond and encouraged members to look up "The Common Lot".

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.

6. Mousehold conservators Subgroup meeting update and recommendations for work

The Fringe Project Manager presented the report.

The survey on the works needed on the pavilion had been completed and officers had contacted NCSL for quotes and would bring these back to a future meeting.

The memorial plaque would be installed in the new financial year.

A service agreement had been signed and Zaks would now be opening and closing the toilets. Therefore, the contract with NCSL had been amended to remove this element. Officers extended their thanks to Mark Brzeczek Property Services who had come in under budget for the refurbishment of the toilets.

Discussions were underway with Zaks regarding the ladies' toilets. They proposed to demolish the block and replace it with a building they could use to provide morning refreshments.

A crossing at Gurney Road was discussed at the sub-group meeting. A quote for £7000 for a scoping survey was considered by the committee. Members noted that a previous enquiry for a scoping survey had been estimated at £5000 so officers were keen for a decision as any delay would likely increase the costs again. Some of the income from the sale of the ranger house could be used to fund the survey. The survey would be valid for 5 years so there was no immediate need to earmark funds for providing the crossing. At this stage, as the cost of providing the actual crossing was unknown, it was not possible to allocate funds.

The subgroup had also discussed the refurbishment of the Fountains bandstand. NCSL had estimated £800 for clearing the bandstand and a further £8000 for repainting. At present there was no money to undertake the work. Wardens would review the Mousehold Heath budget throughout the year to identify funds to undertake the work.

Councillor Champion reported that he had been in discussion with the Pockthorpe Community Group regarding the possibility of organising a fair on the heath in 2026. The politically neutral group was keen to raise money to help fund the Gurney Road crossing. The Chair commented that the costs of the crossing would be discussed at a later date.

RESOLVED to

1. Agree to the use of the Capital Reserves of £7000, to fund a scoping survey for the suitability and location of a crossing on Gurney Road.
2. Note that Wardens would review the Mousehold Heath budget throughout the year to identify funds to undertake the work on the Fountain Grounds bandstand.

Chair