



Mousehold Heath Conservators

14:00 to 14:50

17 March 2023

Present: Councillors Sands (M) (chair), Brociek-Coulton (vice chair), Champion, Galvin, Kendrick, Kidman, Peek and Schmierer and Marion Maxwell (Mousehold Heath Defenders) and John Trevelyan (Norwich Society)

Apologies: Councillor Lubbock and Matthew Davies (Norwich Fringe Project)

In attendance Susan Moore, Parks and Open Spaces Manager
William Stewart, Mousehold Heath Warden

1. Public Questions/Petitions

There were no public questions or petitions.

2. Declarations of interests

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2023.

4. Mousehold Heath Budget Monitoring to 31 December 2022

The Parks and Open Spaces Manager introduced the report and said that there were no updates since the publication of the agenda papers.

The chair welcomed that there had been an underspend of £6,854 due to reduced contract costs and increased income from Pitch and Putt.

RESOLVED to note the current budget monitoring and reserves positions.

5. Mousehold Heath Management Update 22 December 2022 to 5 March 2023

The Mousehold Heath Warden presented the report.

During the presentation, the Mousehold Heath Warden highlighted the contribution made by community volunteers who had contributed 624 hours over eight weeks from 22 December to 5 March 2023. The groups that had contributed were listed in

the report. In addition, the Easton College workplace student had contributed 80 hours out of 150 hours. Five volunteers had successfully passed the woodchipper course for Mousehold Heath and Norwich Fringe Project volunteers. This course, together with the scythe training, increased the transferrable skills of the volunteers and gave something back to them.

The Mousehold Heath Warden explained that the removal of the old leggy gorse was important to reduce the fire risk on the heath. In some areas, the only option was for the gorse to be chipped, for instance, large branches could not be dragged across the playing field or retained for natural habitat. Members were advised that there had been scrub clearance at St James Hill to maintain the historic views. The Monday and Tuesday Mousehold Heath volunteer groups had removed Sycamore saplings. Work in this period include bracken removal and was planned so that it was carried out before the commencement of the bird nesting season. Other works that the wardens had been involved in were guided walks and events, and collating wildlife and biodiversity data on the heath.

The chair welcomed that the Mousehold Heath Higher Level Stewardship agreement had been extended for five years to 2028, and that there was potential for current agreements to enter the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) in future and suggested that there should be some wider publicity on this. The Mousehold Heath Warden said that the press usually picked up on awards from the council's website.

During discussion, a member said that residents in Gertrude Road were concerned that their properties were overlooked as shrubbery had been removed. The Mousehold Heath Warden confirmed that he had spoken to residents and advised them that the areas of bramble had been cleared to provide an important firebreak. A line of Birch trees had been planted along the boundary and it was hoped that these would take quickly to form a barrier.

The Mousehold Heath Warden said that around 350 saplings had been moved from the heathland and grassland habitats to form a woodland area adjacent to Gilman Road. The Conservators were advised that a sapling popper was used to protect the saplings when pulled ready for transfer. The volunteers enjoyed this work. The tree stock was monitored and saplings from the heath had potential to transfer to other sandy soil sites in the city.

A member suggested that there should be some outreach work to encourage more corporate volunteer groups. The Mousehold Heath Warden said that there were two to three organisations that had approached them but would make a note to send out a letter to potential organisations about corporate volunteer groups. The Parks and Open Spaces Manager said that the volunteers were a valuable resource for Mousehold Heath, and together with the Norwich Fringe Project, for the 51 open spaces around the city. Volunteering outdoors was good for people's mental and physical health. It was noted that the Defenders had been joined by 7 new members, all young women.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the contents of the report;

- (2) ask officers to consider outreach to companies/organisations to encourage corporate volunteer work on the Heath and other natural spaces.

6. Annual Work Programme 2023-24

The Parks and Open Spaces Manager introduced the report. She added that following the Conservator's decision on toilet provision at its January meeting, there had been discussions with Zak's, the restaurant operators, about the electricity source and equipment to measure the energy supply to the toilet facilities. Scaffolding for the repairs to the pavilion roof would be erected on 4 April, and works would commence on 10 April 2023.

The Mousehold Heath Warden then advised members of the Volunteer Strategy. Numbers of volunteers had increased slowly after the pandemic. There had been around 4 to 5 new volunteers over the last few weeks, who had learned about it by word of mouth. Volunteers had been split into two groups, Monday and Tuesday, with around 8 to 15 members each, in order to make numbers manageable. The Assist Trust and the Mousehold Heath Defenders also provided regular volunteer work.

The Parks and Open Spaces Manager said that minor changes to the Annual Work Programme had been made. It was proposed to bring the Work Programme to each meeting to review progress. She advised the Conservators of the work of the two Mousehold Heath Wardens to contribute to habitat and species surveys, as part of the work to determine the Biodiversity baseline survey. This built on data gathered over several years. The Mousehold Heath Warden explained that details of the wildlife and species on the heath would be included in the Mousehold Heath Conservators Annual report, which would be considered at the next meeting. He explained that all biological records are sent to the county's wildlife recorders and Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service (NBIS).

Councillor Kidman said that she would like to volunteer to support school visits by providing short talks and slides. The Conservators were advised that the outreach programme was open to all schools in the area. The chair welcomed Councillor Kidman's suggestion.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report to secure the implementation and commitments made within the management plan objectives to deliver the works outlined in the work programme keeping within budget for the 2023-24 financial year.

CHAIR