

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Mitcham Common Conservators**

**Held on Wednesday 8th March 2017 at 6.30pm**

**At the Mill House Ecology Centre, Windmill Road, Mitcham**

**Present:**

Mr. R Bailey  
Mr. J. Cheetham  
Dr. D. Coleman  
Cllr. T. Godfrey (Chairman)  
Cllr. J. Henry  
Cllr. S. King  
Cllr. R. Makin  
Cllr. C. Williams

**In Attendance:**

Mr. M. Boyle – Manager of Mitcham Common  
Mr. P. Moorhouse – Warden of Mitcham Common  
Mr. D. Napier - Leisure & Culture Greenspaces Manager Merton  
Mr. D. Stillwell – Acting Chair, Friends of Mitcham Common (Present for Part 1)  
Ms. L. Parry – Minute taker

**Absent:**

Mr. M. Groves  
Cllr M. Mansell  
Mr. D. Mobsby MBE (Vice Chairman)  
Cllr. I. Munn  
Ms. J. Russell

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**1. Apologies for Absence**

The Chairman opened the meeting at 6.30pm and welcomed everyone. Apologies for absence had been received from Maurice Groves and Douglas Mobsby.

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**2. Declarations of Interest**

Conservators were asked if they had any known conflicts of interest to declare them now or at any relevant part of the agenda during the meeting. None were declared.

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**3. Minutes of the last Meeting Held on 7th December 2016**

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting and were duly signed and dated by the Chairman.

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**4. Matters Arising**

**Item 4: Ravensbury Arms:** It was noted that the Ravensbury Arms had re-opened at Christmas and was now an Indian restaurant.

**Item 5 3.3: Former Windmill Road Industrial Estate, Junction of Commonside East and Windmill Road:** The Manager reported that the wall on the boundary of the Common with the junction of the new development has now collapsed. The site owner had been informed that they would require a licence from the Conservators to come onto the Common to undertake the necessary works. The licence fee has been granted and the next stage will involve the input of quantity surveyors.

**Item 5. 3.4.5 Mill Green:** The Manager reported that he had submitted a claim to Vodafone insurers following the damage to a tree caused by trench work and installation of a duct at the edge of Mill Green.

**Item 5. 3..5.3: Refurbishment of Harvester Restaurant:** The refurbishment work had been completed and the new Miller and Carter Steak House has now opened.

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**5. Administration and Management Report**

Conservators were in receipt of the Administration and Management Report which the Manager said was largely for information.

**Item 1. Acid Grassland Restoration Project:** All clearance work has now been completed. A scrape of the top organic layer will take place in May/June.

**Item 2: Future of the Mitcham Common Environmental Trust:** The Conservators were provided with information following the previous instruction to investigate voluntary revocation, and were also in receipt of a recommendation that the Trust applies for voluntary revocation.

**RESOLVED: The Conservators informed the Trustees of the Mitcham Common Environmental Trust that they should apply for voluntary revocation.**

**Item 3: Environmental Stewardship: Inspection of the Common:** It was noted that the latest inspection took place in January 2017. The Manager drew Conservators' particular attention to 3.5: He had discussed the proposed heathland creation project

on the lower fields near Mill House with Natural England's inspector. The inspector had acknowledged the success of the heathland which had already been created, but voiced a concern that the further extension of heathland would result in the loss of high quality meadowland and thereby be in breach of the current agreement. This agreement expires in February 2019 and it was therefore agreed that this will be the time to explore the potential project.

Under 3.6 the Manager asked Conservators to note that there is uncertainty around Environmental Stewardship Agreement and funding, because at this stage Natural England is not sure of the implications of Brexit on future funding. At the current time the Conservators are in receipt of a grant of £12,066 for the Environmental Stewardship Agreement.

At the conclusion to the report the Chairman thanked the Manager for his presentation.

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**6. Friends of Mitcham Common -To report on recent activities and to raise any relevant matters**

Darren Stillwell came to the table to update Conservators on the Friends' recent activities and concerns.

- He had written a lengthy article about borough funding issues and the implications for the maintenance of the Common, and this had appeared on the front page of The Magpie. To date there had been no response to the article which had been disappointing. A further article and update will be produced for the May edition.
- Friends had noted the works on the pavement near the Ravensbury Arms and asked if this had resulted in any encroachment on the Common, if so whether there will be any replacement land via the land bank scheme, and whether this was part of a project for widening cycle links? Martin Boyle said that he was able to confirm all the above points and explained that there was a licence agreement with Merton for this work. He also confirmed that the map of the Common which was updated two years ago is still current as it accurately reflects the boundaries of the Common. The Conservators undertake licence agreements because actual land exchange takes many years.

**Question:** Will the land exchange for this scheme be attached to the Common?

**Answer:** Yes

- He drew attention to concerns highlighted by Merton Cycling Club about the junction of Croydon Road/Beddington Lane as there is no pedestrian or cycle



phase on the crossing. The Manager clarified that Merton/TFL has agreed to undertake a feasibility study.

- He asked if there was any intention of the Conservators to write to Sutton Council to request a replacement bridge following the recent demolition of the bridge at Hackbridge due to lack of maintenance. It was noted that there is a petition due to be debated by Sutton Council, and any replacement structure would need to be simpler with lower maintenance requirements.
- Friends sought the views of Conservators with regards to whether it would be appropriate for speed cameras to be installed along Windmill Road, following two recent car crashes which had resulted in cars coming off the road and onto the Common. Councillor King commented that the introduction of speed cameras was the responsibility of the Metropolitan Police in liaison with TfL, rather than the local borough. Cameras are usually only installed where there is evidence of serious danger, and where serious injury or death has occurred.
- Friends were keen to ensure that anti-social behaviour on the Common is minimised and sought the support of Conservators in asking the Police to make regular patrols. The Warden reported that he had recently met with the Police who had stated that they were committed to patrolling the Common as Spring approaches.
- **RESOLVED: Friends and Conservators to write a joint letter to the Police reiterating the importance of police patrols to minimise anti social behaviour.**

At the conclusion to the report from the Friends, the Chairman thanked Mr Stillwell and stated again the thanks of Conservators to the Friends for their continuing support and work. With the challenges presented by funding issues, the support of Friends in raising awareness will be ever more important.

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## **7. Income and Expenditure (Until end of February 2017)**

The Manager took Conservators through the report, noting that it was relatively self explanatory. He highlighted the variances, which had previously been discussed :

- expenditure on salaries for Manager and Warden which had not taken account of annual uplift at the time the budget was set resulting in a variance of -2,564
- reduction in funding from local authorities, resulting in a variance of -6,207
- Environmental Stewardship shows a variance of -6,033 because the payment cycle does not accord with MCC's financial year cycle

**RESOLVED: The Conservators formally approved the Financial Expenditure and Income report up to the end of February 2017.**

**8. Investments - Portfolio Valuation**

Conservators were in receipt of the investment portfolio. Richard Auld had stated that there were no recommendations for change at the current time.

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**9. Wandle Valley Regional Park Trust**

John Cheetham provided the Manager with a Draft Strategy plan for the Wandle Valley Regional Park Trust for his information.

He explained that the Trust was currently working on a large application for grant funding including an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for £250,000. The LAs and Conservators were being asked if they were minded to support the application. Conservators commented that they would need to see details of the bid in order to make an informed decision on giving support for the bid application. Doug Napier said that from his knowledge of the bid he understood that the application will include a lot of different projects up and down the valley which will be of positive benefit to the future legacy.

**RESOLVED:** Chair given delegated powers to make a decision on providing written support once further information and detail on the application bid has been received.

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**10. Annual Programme of Meetings 2017/2018 – Proposed dates**

**Spring Inspection: Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2017**

**June Board Meeting: Wednesday 14<sup>h</sup> June 2017**

**Annual Inspection: Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> September 2017**

**September Board Meeting: Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2017**

**December Board Meeting: Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2017**

**March Board Meeting: Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2018**

The programme of future meeting dates was noted.

The Manager recommended that the Spring Inspection should include a further visit to Beddington Lane and a visit to Red House Lane, and this was agreed by Conservators.

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**11. Date of Next Meeting 14th June 2017 6.30pm**

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**12. Any Other Business**

Cllr Makin recorded his thanks to the Manager and Warden for the recent clear up of tyres from Mitcham Garden Village.

