

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MITCHAM COMMON CONSERVATORS
(A Statutory Corporation constituted by the Metropolitan Commons (Mitcham)
Supplemental Act 1891)
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 13th JUNE 2018 AT 6.30PM

Present:

Mr R. Bailey (Vice Chairman)

Cllr. J. Campbell

Mr. J. Cheetham

Cllr. N. Draper (Chairman)

Ms A. Fairweather

Mr. M. Groves

Cllr. R. Makin

Cllr M. Mansell

Cllr. A. Mundy

Cllr. C. Williams

In Attendance:

Mr. R. Auld - Investment Manager, Redmayne Bentley (present for items 1 - 11)

Mr. M. Boyle – Manager of Mitcham Common

Ms. M. Nunzet - Friends of Mitcham Common (present for Part 1)

Ms. L. Parry – Minute taker

Absent:

Mr. P. Moorhouse - Warden

Mr. D. Napier - Leisure & Culture Greenspaces Manager, Merton

Cllr. S. King

1. Appointment of Conservators

The Manager opened the meeting and the following appointments were confirmed. Introductions were made as there were some new appointees and everyone was welcomed.

London Borough of Croydon: Councillors J. Campbell, S. King, M. Mansell and Mr. J. Cheetham appointed until May 2019

London Borough of Merton: Councillors N. Draper, R. Makin, A. Mundy and Mr. M. Groves appointed until May 2019

London Borough of Sutton: Councillor C. Williams and Mr. R. Bailey already appointed until July 2018

Corporation of the City of London: Ms Anne Fairweather already appointed until May 2021

2. Appointment of Chairman

The Manager called for nominations for the position of Chairman for the forthcoming year. One nomination for Cllr N. Draper was received which was seconded. There were no other nominations and Cllr. N. Draper was appointed with unanimous agreement and thanked for taking on the role.

3. Appointment of Vice Chairman

The Chairman nominated Mr. Richard Bailey for the position of Vice Chairman for the forthcoming year, and this was formally seconded. There were no other nominations and Mr. Bailey was duly appointed with unanimous agreement and thanked for taking on the role.

4. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr King and from the two absent officers Mr Moorhouse and Mr Napier.

5. Declaration of Interest

The Chairman asked if anyone had any potential conflicts of interest and none were declared.

6. Minutes of the last meeting held on 14th March 2018

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a true account of proceedings and were signed and dated by the Chairman.

7. Matters Arising

Croydon Road Shared Path:

The Manager provided an update on the issue of parking along the path largely by customers to the establishment located at what was previously the Ravensbury Arms. Merton Council has recently passed a Clearway Traffic Order and from the following week the area will be a legally restricted parking zone and parking services officers will be attending. Cllr Makin agreed to monitor the situation during the forthcoming months and report back at the next meeting.

Rough Sleepers on the Common:

The Manager reported that there was and was likely always to be a continuing issue with rough sleepers on the Common but the relevant organisations work together well and are sensitive to the issues. The Manager clarified that the term Rough Sleepers applies also to people who are choosing to camp on the Common for seasonal work related reasons. Conservators agreed unanimously that help should be sought for individuals wherever possible.

The Chairman asked if the Friends had any specific comments to raise under Matters Arising and none were raised.

8. Administration and Management Report

The Manager highlighted some key issues addressed in the Administration and Management Report.

1) **Spring 2018 Inspection of the Common.** The Manager talked through the areas visited as recorded in his report. With regard to the snagging issues on Beddington Lane shared path, the Manager said that he was able to provide an update, as some issues had now been resolved; a gate was now in place and some of the issues on the golf course had been completed. Other matters will be followed up and resolved by Merton.

1.2.4) Further to the possible project proposal to install a bus stop on one side of Windmill Road, the view of members who had seen this area was that this would not be a sensible proposal nor would it serve a good function. The Manager had relayed this view to Merton.

1.2.1) Junction of Windmill Road and Croydon Road: The Manager explained that this junction was very difficult for pedestrians to cross and Merton was currently modelling ways to possibly address this with a pedestrian phased crossing. It was recognised that there were a number of issues which would need to be resolved in

order for this to happen, but if a proposal from Merton is forthcoming this will be brought to a future meeting of the Conservators for consideration.

- 2.1) **Bus Beacons on the edge of the Common.** Cllr Makin asked if TfL was still paying an annual fee of £300 and the Manager confirmed that this was the case. It was noted that the removal of the redundant posts was the responsibility of TfL.

- 5) **Travellers on the Common.** Some questions were raised about access to the Common and how the travellers had been able to gain entry on 25th May. The Manager explained that a barrier lock had been cut through. The management team had reviewed security and made improvements, that included the deepening of a ditch, which would hopefully prevent future incursions.
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9. Friends of Mitcham Common: To report on recent activities and to raise any relevant matters

Melanie Nunzet came to the table and provided Conservators with an update on Friends' activities:

- There have been monthly litter picks which have been attended by a wide range of people of different age groups. The Friends litter picked in different areas each month: In March the litter pick was opposite the Meadow, in April at the area around the junction of Windmill Road and Croydon Road, and in June around the Mitcham Golf Club Willow Lane area. The personalised fluorescent vests have helped to demonstrate who is undertaking the litter picks and attracted new members.
- The Big Lunch was held on 3rd June which had been a happy and successful occasion; people attending had an age range of 9 months old to 95 years old.
- Martin Sharpe has designed a new banner for the Friends which would be on display at the forthcoming Mitcham Carnival. The Friends will also be selling new greetings cards and a calendar for 2019 will be produced.
- Melanie had been asked to raise some questions by Friends as follows:

Q: Is there any action to remove the fly tip where there is a lot of domestic waste near the Beddington Lane tram stop.

A: Martin Boyle thanked Friends for raising the issue and noted that there had been some exchange of emails. He said that he had visited the site with the Warden and had been unable to identify any issues after the area had been

cleared 6 weeks previously. Nevertheless, he was happy to have another look particularly if there was any more information on the specific location of the problem.

Q: A Friend has raised a concern about the verges along Croydon Road being now seriously over grown.

A: Martin Boyle said that there had again been an email exchange with Merton about this issue and they had agreed that the condition of the verges/cycle path was not as they should be. The verges are cut down annually by around July, and Merton is responsible for the cutting and clearance of litter and leaves etc on the path. In actual fact some of the problematic vegetation is coming from the leaf litter which has fallen on the path and not been cleared previously and this needs to be tackled. There has been an on-going conversation Merton on this matter and today Paul Miles has raised this matter with contractors. Cllr Draper said that he too recognised that the issue was the responsibility of Merton council and he would be meeting with Idverde/Veolia on a regular basis because this sort of issue should not be occurring.

Q: A Friend has been cutting back the grass/vegetation on the path parallel to Cedars Avenue and had asked if he could purchase a strimmer through the Friends. Melanie had subsequently spoken to Martin Boyle about whether there were any insurance issues.

A: Martin Boyle stressed that this is public land and anyone using power tools must have proper training and full risk assessments must be carried out. This is not something which can or should be undertaken lightly. Cllr Mansell said that it would be important for individuals to wear appropriate clothing ie protective gloves and goggles as a minimum and also ensure that they had an awareness about animal habitats and the possibilities of disturbing wildlife.

An audience member who was also a Friend spoke in support of the advice offered by Martin Boyle.

At the conclusion to the discussion it was agreed that the Friends will have further discussions and decide whether or not this is something they wish to go ahead with bearing in mind the strict requirements and advice.

Q: A Friend had raised a concern that the litter bins around Seven Island Ponds were overflowing during the recent Bank Holiday weekend and queried whether the bins could be emptied more frequently, whether more bins could be provided, and whether signs in different languages could be provided.

A: Martin Boyle explained that the bins were emptied straight after the Bank Holiday weekend and are emptied every Monday during the summer months. The bins are very large, at 1 metre wide, and in fact whilst some of the bins were

rammed full of litter on the Bank Holiday weekend, there were others which were not full, so there was still potential room for depositing of litter. During wider discussion it was agreed that provision of additional bins was not a practical or desirable action at the present time, and would further increase costs.

Nevertheless it was agreed to maintain a watching brief over the summer and the issue could be revisited again if necessary.

There was also support for a wider campaign to encourage people to take litter home with them if bins are full.

Q: A Friend had asked a general question about land exchange in cases where areas of the Common have been removed to enable a specific project.

A: Martin Boyle explained that there is a land bank on the edge of the Common and it is Conservators' policy to ensure as far as possible that small land exchanges are made when projects take place. However, with the development of the cycle paths the land bank was not extensive enough to cover an exchange. Therefore the Conservators' opt to grant a licence agreement which allows Merton to undertake the works on condition that they provide added benefits to the Common . The licence is for a 20 year period and this will need to be renegotiated or land exchanged when that period is up. The Conservators confirmed that commonland is not being sold and that individual projects are very carefully considered by Board .

At the conclusion to discussion the Chair once again extended his sincere thanks and gratitude to all Friends on behalf of Conservators, for their work and support of the Common.

10. Income and Expenditure (Until the end of May 2018)

It was noted that the Income and Expenditure Report now includes an additional column to provide any explanatory notes on the figures which Conservators agreed was very helpful.

Cllr Mundy asked if there was any mechanism in place for facilitating donations as there was some indication that some residents may be keen to make some financial contributions to support maintenance of the Common. At present there was not a specific fundraising element to the work of the Conservators, but it was agreed that this should be a matter for discussion going forwards. In the meantime Cllr Mundy said that he was happy to write to constituents who had indicated a willingness to make financial contributions to find out about whether they would wish to make one off or regular contributions.

Ms Fairweather spoke about crowd funding campaigns for Hampstead Heath which had been set up to gain funds for match-funded community projects, and it was noted that the Wimbledon Common Conservators have a Just Giving facility on their website and have had past campaigns to raise money to improve footpaths.

RESOLVED: Fundraising and mechanism for receiving donations to be an item for discussion at a future meeting.

11. Investments - Portfolio Valuation Report from Mr R. Auld

Mr Auld had provided a Valuation Report detailing the holdings for Mitcham Common Conservators at the present time which he spoke to.

Mr Auld made a series of recommendations to the Conservators as follows:

- To reduce the holding of Johnson Matthey by 194 shares raising circa £7,300
- To reduce Diageo by 400 shares raising £10,800
- To sell the holding of BNY Newton Real Return raising circa £19,700

Following these sales added to cash on account, the Conservators would then have circa £73,500 for new investment.

The following recommendations for new investments were made:

- £10,000 to add to the existing holding of Aviva
- £15,000 for a new holding of Taylor Wimpey
- £15,000 for a new holding of Barratt Development
- £15,000 for a new holding of Murray International
- £15,000 for a new holding of Scottish American Inv Trust

Mr Auld explained the rationale for making all these recommendations and pointed out that all the transactions were in line with Conservators' risk profile (medium) and investment objectives. There was a continuing emphasis on spreading of investments and not over exposing investment in any one sector.

During discussion a Conservator asked if the on-going Brexit position was likely to have an impact on investments.

Mr Auld said that he anticipated that this was likely to be a volatile period and this was factored into his recommendations.

At the conclusion to Mr Auld's presentation and discussions, the Chair asked Conservators if they supported all recommendations made by Mr Auld, and there was unanimous agreement.

RESOLVED: All recommendations as outlined above to be implemented following the unanimous agreement of the Conservators

At this point the Chair extended his sincere thanks to Richard Auld for his work and valued advice and Mr Auld then left the meeting.

11a. Appointment of Sub-Group

The following Conservators were appointed to the Investment Sub Group: Cllr Draper, Mr Bailey, Cllr King.

It was noted that the purpose of the group was to scrutinise recommendations and ensure that Conservators had a thorough handle on the investment portfolio and recommendations, noting that this group had worked very successfully since it was set up during the last year.

12. Wandle Valley Regional Park

John Cheetham reported that the last meeting of the Wandle Valley Regional Park Trust had taken place on 15th May and the next meeting was scheduled for 15th July 2018.

The Trust was continuing to evaluate the best ways of developing strategic and operational working systems and there will be a full report and review in September.

A Conservator asked if the consultants employed to undertake the review were able to exercise independence and John Cheetham said that he felt confident that this was the case.

13. Appointment of Honorary Conservators

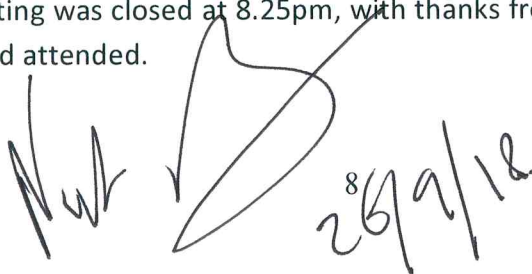
Conservators were in receipt of a recommendation and report from the Manager inviting them to consider the appointments of Mr Timothy Godfrey and Dr Derek Coleman as Honorary Conservators. Both had given long and dedicated service to Mitcham Common Conservators.

Conservators agreed unanimously that they wished to endorse the appointment of Mr Godfrey and Dr Coleman. The Manager said that a ceremony will be held at the summer inspection when both will be invited for a presentation and a vote of thanks for their dedicated years of service and the very valued contributions they have made.

RESOLVED: Mr Godfrey and Dr Coleman to be appointed as Honorary Conservators for Mitcham Common.

14. Date of Next Meeting - Wednesday 26th September 2018

Part 1 of the meeting was closed at 8.25pm, with thanks from the Chair to all members of the public who had attended.



Handwritten signature and date: 26/9/18