

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MITCHAM COMMON CONSERVATORS
(A Statutory Corporation constituted by the Metropolitan Commons (Mitcham)
Supplemental Act 1891)
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 14TH MARCH 2018 AT 6.30PM

Present:

Mr R. Bailey
Mr. J. Cheetham
Cllr. N. Draper (Vice Chairman)
Ms A. Fairweather
Cllr. T. Godfrey (Chairman)
Mr. M. Groves
Cllr. R. Makin
Cllr. I. Munn
Cllr. C. Williams

In Attendance:

Mr. M. Boyle – Manager of Mitcham Common
Mr P. Moorhouse - Warden of Mitcham Common
Ms S. Morgan - CEO Wandle Valley Regional Park Trust, present for items 1 - 5
Mr D. Napier - Leisure & Culture Greenspaces Manager, Merton
Ms. M. Nunzet - Friends of Mitcham Common (Present for Part 1)
Ms. L. Parry – Minute taker

Absent:

Dr. D. Coleman
Cllr. S. King
Cllr M. Mansell
Ms. J. Russell

1. Apologies for Absence

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

Apologies for absence had been received from Dr Coleman and Cllr King, and Ms Fairweather had apologised for her expected late arrival. The Chairman warmly welcomed Ms Fairweather when she arrived noting that this was the first meeting she had been able to attend since her appointment.

2. Declarations of Interest

Conservators were asked if they had any known conflicts of interest and none were declared.

3. Minutes of the last Meeting, 6th December 2017

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 6th December 2017 were agreed as a true and accurate account and were duly signed and dated by the Chairman, with one typographic change (Mitcham Council changed to Merton Council).

4. Matters Arising from the previous minutes, 6th December 2017

item 8 page 3: Changes to Environmental Stewardship from 2018.

The Manager explained that:

1. Environmental Stewardship (ES) has been replaced by Countryside Stewardship (CS).
2. CS agreements must start on 1st January (of any year) and will run for 5 not 10 years as with ES.
3. Landowners cannot enter into CS agreement if already in a ES agreement.
4. Mitcham Common's ES agreement expires on 31st January 2019. So the first possible date for a new CS agreement is 1st January 2020. Therefore this will mean the loss of 11 months of stewardship funding.
5. CS is competitive and not simply a case of transferring existing land parcels currently in ES to CS.
6. The Manager said that he will report to the December 2018 MCC meeting recommending land parcels that should be included in a CS application which would have to be submitted in April 2019 in order for a CS agreement to start 1st January 2020.

item 8 page 4: Finance

Nick Draper said that he was still in liaison with Martin Boyle to produce a narrative to be published alongside the end of year Income and Expenditure report. It had not be possible to write this as yet as the exercise was more complicated than anticipated.

5. Wandle Valley Regional Park Trust –Ms Sue Morgan, CEO, WVRPT

The Chair extended a warm welcome to Ms Sue Morgan who was in attendance to provide Conservators with an overview of the work of the WVRT.

Ms Morgan provided Conservators with a briefing paper which provided Conservators with background on the governance and funding of the organisation, a commentary on the core funding, and an outline of the strategy for future work.

She explained that the WVRPT came about in 2008, with the first CEO appointed in 2012. Ms Morgan was appointed to the role in 2014 with a mandate to develop core

documents and strategy, and to attract and apply for funding to enable sustainability.

A key strategy document was published in 2016:

<https://wandlevalleypark.co.uk/wandle-valley-regional-park/strategy/>

A successful funding application to the Heritage Lottery Fund was made, bringing in an award of £95,000 alongside cash match partner funding of £116,000.

The WVRPT has gone through a robust procurement selection process for consultants to work on a 9 - 12 month programme which will see:

- The creation of a robust business plan for the Trust
- Creation of robust governance structure
- A workable structure for delivery plan for the Regional Park, to the benefit of all the partners and stakeholders

The WVRPT has appointed a strong consultancy, Barker and Langham, from 5 strong candidates. There is strong confidence that the outcome of this work will put the organisation on a strong footing to access future funding and be put on a sustainable footing. The consultants will need to have a dialogue with all stakeholders and she hoped that Conservators would be willing to liaise. It was agreed that Nick Draper and Martin Boyle would be the key contacts.

In addition to the HLF, there have also been partner contributions from a range of organisations including the Living Wandle Partnership, Clarion and Wandle Housing, the GLA, LB of Wandsworth.

WRPT is seeking to realise an asset in Sutton, Culvers Lodge, which has a 99 year lease, and create a business plan for this and enable creation of a base which will release some income.

The Green Bid document sets out a framework for a number of projects which the Trust wants to support and deliver. Part of this is a pan London learning programme. Work has begun on a project Get Active, and training employment opportunities have been created.

There is also a Wandle Ranger programme.

Q: How will this function?

A: The aim is to appoint 12 rangers, 3 in each borough, linked to identified spaces. They will have a base in refurbished shipping containers.

Q: What will the rangers be doing?

A: Talking, providing information, engaging with walkers along the Wandle trail

Q: Could this be an apprenticeship scheme?

A: The Trust is working with housing associations with a view to providing opportunities for residents who are currently economically inactive.

Q: Are there any plans to develop allotments as part of the WVRPT?

A: No, not at the present time because the WVRPT doesn't have any assets/land.

At the conclusion to discussion the Chair thanked Sue Morgan for providing an update. It was agreed that it would be helpful for Conservators to receive future updates, perhaps every 18 months.

RESOLVED: Martin Boyle and Nick Draper to respond to interface requests with the consultants working for the Trust. Arrangements for future updates on the work of the WVRPT to be made every 18 months going forwards.

6. **Administration and Management Report**

Motorbikes on Gunsite: The Manager said that this has been an issue mainly because the adjacent area has become over the years an unofficial scramble circuit. The Warden reported that he had met with the Cricket Green and Pollards Hill Safer Neighbourhood Teams for a site meeting. The police are very clear that the issue needs to be tackled, as this is a health and safety risk to walkers, and recognised the need to repair the fencing that separates the area of land because at present there is no barrier. He explained that he and the police had been trying to contact the SITA representative to discuss the repair but to date has not been able to get a response.

Rough Sleepers: The Manager said that the issues with rough sleepers on the Common has to be dealt with sensitively and it does take time reach a position where people can be moved off. This is an on-going London-wide problem. The relevant agencies are inevitably very stretched but they are co-operating fully in trying to reach workable solutions as quickly as possible.

Croydon Road Shared Path: The Manager reported that in February Merton Council received a complaint from cyclists concerning several patches of broken glass on the shared path. An Inspection revealed that the glass was from vehicle mirrors, possibly broken as a protest against cars being parked on the path.

The Saturday after the complaint the Manager was travelling from Croydon at approximately 10pm and noted over 40 cars parked on a 250 metre section of the path. The parked vehicles were completely blocking the path and therefore preventing safe passage by either cyclist or pedestrians. The assumption was that the vehicles belonged to customers visiting the Ravensbury Arms.

Merton's Parking Services Team has been alerted and asked to take appropriate enforcement action. Martin said that he was confident this will be resolved soon as officers in the parking team are keen to stop this.

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

Melanie Nunzet came to the table and provided the following update:

- Although there was a big gap between last Summer's Magpie and the Spring edition which has just come out (with thanks to Darren Stillwell for producing this and to Andrew for printing) the Friends have been active with one litter pick last month and two more coming up.
- Although it has previously been reported that there is a lack of volunteers the Friends are pleased that there are commitments from committee members which means that they will be able to have a stall as usual at the Mitcham Carnival in June.
- The Friends will also be holding a Big Lunch and hope to involve more local communities this year, in particular some church groups in Pollards Hill. The Friends are hoping to purchase a new display banner for both the Carnival and the Big Lunch.
- The Wandle Valley Regional Park Trust has kindly provided the Friends with 15 branded hi-vis vests with the Magpie symbol at the front and Friends of Mitcham Common at the back in large font. The Friends are very pleased about this as it provides visibility and lets people know who is out there picking up the litter. One of the hi-vis vests was shown to Conservators.
- The Friends are grateful to Liz Sherwood for taking time out from her hard work organizing the litter picks at Morden Park to run Friends' events and for providing refreshments at the end. It is hoped to hold one litter pick per month going forward.
- The Friends extended their thanks to Martin Boyle for providing the black bags for the litter picks and for arranging to collect the rubbish the day after.

A number of questions had been raised which Melanie put to Martin Boyle on behalf of the Friends

- 1) **Q:** It has been suggested that we litter pick the area between Walton Way and Commonsides East but in the middle of this area there is the large amount of fly tipping which has been there for a few years now. It doesn't seem to make sense that it will all be clear of litter but the large items will remain.

A: Martin Boyle said that there appeared to have been a misunderstanding by the Friends as he had never suggested that they undertake a litter pick in the area where there is currently a fly tip. He showed the area on the map.

With regard to the fly tip, it was not the case that it had been on the Common for a number of years. All fly tips are cleared, though the Conservators are not able to react immediately, bearing in mind that funding has been cut. Fly tips are cleared within 2 months on average.

- 2) **Q:** The Friends are concerned about the impact of removal of maintenance from key paths - this is now causing issues and is set to be a major problem after next summer's growth. Some of these routes have seats donated by the Friends along them that risk becoming redundant if the path falls into disuse.

A: Martin Boyle said that all seats will continue to be accessible.

It is true that some paths on the Common can no longer be maintained because Conservators have had funding cuts and have had to take this decision as part of a savings strategy. The Chair commented that the Friends and any other interested parties should lobby local councillors and raise concerns about the withdrawal of funding for maintenance of the Common.

- 3) **Q:** Regarding the Red House area which is being cleared a Friend has asked if there are any plans to install new display boards on either or both sides of the Croydon Road at the entrances to the Common. Friends present indicated that they would consider funding the boards.

A: Martin Boyle said that there were no plans to install new display boards. Conservators would be happy to consider a proposal if the Friends were willing to fund the project, but cautioned that display boards are very costly.

- 4) **Q:** Are there plans to install pedestrian crossing lights at the junction between Windmill Road and Beddington Lane when those works have finished?

A: Martin Boyle re-iterated that this is a matter for Transport for London and Merton Council. Crossing lights were not included in the licence agreement. A meeting has been held with officers and it is recognised that crossing Croydon Road to get to Beddington Lane is very dangerous. Merton are modelling a

potential change on the phasing of the traffic lights, but the final decision will be based on impact on traffic flow, and will be taken by TfL.

- 5) **Q:** We are concerned about the impact of works along Beddington Lane, especially the risk of there being no vegetation between the road and the new cycle lane which is on the Common.

A: Martin Boyle and Conservators explained that the design of the new cycle path was no different from that on Croydon Road in respect to clearance of vegetation. The Friends were reminded that this issue had already been discussed with them at their AGM. Conservators were satisfied that engineers had worked hard to minimise the land take from the Common and that the design therefore was the best it could be.

- 6) **Q:** What action are the Conservators taking to sort out the Blue Houses issue? Have they objected to the planning application and are they encouraging enforcement action against the massive containers now on the site?

A: Martin Boyle said that this relates to a parcel of land which is not part of Mitcham Common. It is a planning matter. In order to object Conservators have to have very strong grounds and be prepared to defend their objections, and in this case there were not sufficient grounds for Conservators to raise an objection. However, there was nothing to stop Friends and other interested parties from raising objections.

- 7) **Q:** An email from a Friend dated 16 February 2018 detailed damage done to a tree by a lorry which took place at the new entrance being formed on the land adjacent to The Old Ravensbury Arms restaurant. Can you please give us an update as to whether any prosecution took place and also about the issues there with the proposed access onto Carshalton Road?

A: Martin Boyle said that he had recognised that a tree had been damaged and had discussed this with the Tree Protection Officer in Merton. She had advised that unfortunately there was not enough evidence to prosecute because no one had actually witnessed the damage taking place.

At the conclusion to these items the Chair thanked the Friends for their report and input. The Vice Chair extended his thanks to the Friends and re-iterated the gratitude of all Conservators for the very valuable work they do in litter clearances, community use of the Common, raising issues and lobbying politicians etc.

8. Income and Expenditure (Until end of February 2018)

The Manager took Conservators through the Financial Expenditure and Income report, commenting on any variances.

- As previously discussed there had been a slight overspend on salaries due to inflation uplift which had not been factored in when the budget had been set.
- There was a predicted underspend on Services and Suppliers of £12,216
- Investment income is higher than anticipated when the budget was set, by £11,917
- The Environmental Stewardship figure is higher than budgeted for because the funding does not follow the pattern of the financial year, as previously discussed.
- Income from Facility Licences is always difficult to predict when setting the budget and this year there is a positive variance of £3,635

Q: Is the figure of £70,000 capital expenditure for clearance of the Red House Road project the sum which was agreed by Conservators?

A: The Manager confirmed that Conservators were always liable for the costs of clearance and considered that the cost of £70,000 was a very reasonable charge bearing in mind that 100 tons of tyres were cleared.

9. Annual Programme of Meetings 2018/2019 – Proposed dates

Spring Inspection: Sunday 13th May 2018

June Board Meeting: Wednesday 13th June 2018

Annual Inspection: Sunday 23rd September 2018

September Board Meeting: Wednesday 26th September 2018

December Board Meeting: Wednesday 5th December 2018

March Board Meeting: Wednesday 13th March 2019

The proposed dates for meetings were noted and formally approved by Conservators.

10. Date of Next Meeting : Wednesday 13th June 2018.

11. Any Other Business

None.

