

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MITCHAM COMMON CONSERVATORS
(A Statutory Corporation constituted by the Metropolitan Commons
(Mitcham) Supplemental Act 1891)
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 26th September 2018 AT 6.30PM

Present:

Mr R. Bailey (Vice Chairman)
Mr. J. Cheetham
Ms. A. Dines
Cllr. N. Draper (Chairman)
Ms A. Fairweather
Mr N. Garratt
Mr. M. Groves
Cllr. R. Makin
Cllr. C. Williams

In Attendance:

Mr. M. Boyle – Manager of Mitcham Common
Mr. P. Moorhouse - Warden
Mr. D. Napier - Leisure & Culture Greenspaces Manager, Merton
Mr. P. Miles - Merton Highways engineer, present for items 1 - 6
Ms. M. Nunzet - Friends of Mitcham Common (present for Part 1)
Ms. L. Parry – Minute taker

Absent:

Cllr. J. Campbell
Cllr. S. King
Cllr M. Mansell
Cllr. A. Mundy

1. Appointment of Conservators

London Borough of Sutton: Councillor C. Williams, Mr. R. Bailey, Ms A. Dines and Mr N. Garratt appointed until July 2019.

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

The appointments of new members from Sutton were noted and all new Conservators were welcomed and introductions were made.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Campbell, Cllr King, Cllr Mansell and Cllr Mundy.

3. Declarations of Interest

Conservators were asked if they had any conflicts of interest in the current agenda. During the meeting Cllr Russell Makin declared that he is a member of the Planning Committee for Merton and Ward Councillor for Mitcham Cricket Green.

4. Minutes (enclosed) of the last Meeting 13th June 2018

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

5. Matters Arising

- **Croydon Road Shared Path:** The Manager reported that although a Clearway Traffic Order was now in place for the area around the old Ravensbury Arms, the order was not being properly enforced at the present time, and there is still parking late at night and at weekends.
RESOLVED: Cllr Draper, Mr Groves and Cllr Makin to liaise with a view to trying to ensure that the issue of illegal parking is addressed by Merton.
 - **Noise Pollution:** Residents had raised some complaints about noise on the Common with claims of raves. The Manager had investigated and been unable to find any evidence of rave activity. The most logical explanation was noise created by users of the Ravensbury establishment which has a late licence for Friday, Saturday and Sunday. It was noted that when a re-application for a licence is made there can be conditions imposed.
 - **Appointment of Honorary Conservators:** Mr Godfrey and Dr Coleman had both accepted the award of Honorary Conservators and extended their thanks to Mitcham Common Conservators for their appointment.
 - **Autumn Inspection:** The inspection of the Common scheduled for the previous weekend had to be cancelled due to the weather.
-

6. Croydon Road: Pedestrian Phase - Presentation by Paul Miles

The Chairman welcomed Paul Miles and reminded the meeting of the role he has played in developing cycle links around the Common.

Plans had now been drawn up to put in a pedestrian signalised crossing on Croydon Road, just before the junction with Beddington Lane and Windmill Road. Conservators were in receipt of the plan of the proposed works. It was explained that a pedestrian island was being modelled by TFL. To facilitate the realigned footway there will be a need to take commonland .

Q: How wide is the traffic island?

A: 2.5 m

Q: Will there be drop kerbs?

A: Yes

Paul Miles explained that pedestrian counts had been undertaken and the results showed that over 200 pedestrians per day crossed at this area which is currently extremely dangerous with restricted vision.

Q: Will the existing lights remain?

A: Yes, but a pedestrian phase will be incorporated.

Q: When will the work take place?

A: The aim is to implement the work this financial year, with finalised plans by Christmas

Conservators agreed that the plans looked very strong and agreed that they would like to have a site meeting to review the plans in situ. **This was set for Monday 5th November at 10am. Friends were also invited to join the meeting.** On behalf of everyone the Chairman extended thanks to Paul Miles for his work on this issue which was very much appreciated.

7. Administration and Management Report

Fly-grazing on the Common

The Manager explained that in mid-August three horses were reported grazing on the hill overlooking One Island Pond. The horses were tethered on long leashes and provided with a water supply. Given that the horses were frequently moved to differing locations on the hills, there were no concerns about the horses' welfare and it seemed that they were being fly-grazed rather than abandoned. However, this is illegal and it was explained that it will be necessary to engage a specialist contractor to remove the horses, if the owners do not respond to notices to remove them from the

Common. Conservators were asked to note that this could be expensive if the horses have to be stabled by the contractor.

RESOLVED: The Manager to go ahead and arrange for the removal of horses being fly-grazed on the Common. Update at the next meeting.

The Chair said that further to traveller invasions earlier in the year Merton was looking to pursue injunctions to deter incursions, which will grant the right to seize vehicles.

Pond Fishing.

The Manager asked Conservators to give consideration to destocking both One Island and Seven Islands pond. Large groups of people were now fishing Seven Islands Pond and taking the fish out rather than returning them. Low water levels over the Summer months had resulted in fish mortality in One Island Pond.

Options for consideration were:

- To de-stock both ponds (which can only be done in the winter months)
- To put up signage (although previous experience has found that this is expensive and has no impact)
- To make a designated controlled drinking zone around the ponds with enforcement

There was a detailed discussion around the issues looking at the pros and cons of destocking. Some Conservators expressed the view that allowing people to fish was better than destocking. With regard to animal welfare it was noted that fishing line was a constant problem and this has been very dangerous for swans and other wild fowl, particularly during the breeding season. The views of the Friends were also sought and it was agreed that Melanie Nunzet would take the issue back to the Friends for a detailed consultation.

RESOLVED: Friends to have a detailed discussion and report back their views to the Manager. Final decision on way forward deferred to the December meeting.

BBQs in Merton

The Manager reported that Merton Council is considering prohibiting BBQs on Council-owned greenspaces. Members' views were sought on whether Mitcham Common should be included in the list sites where BBQs are not permitted.

After discussion Conservators agreed to be listed within the Merton paper where BBQs are banned, but they also recognised the issue of enforcement. Conservators agreed that for a future discussion they would like to look at possibly having some designated barbecue areas. Conservators also said that a future agenda item should include a look at bin management across the Common

RESOLVED: Manager to communicate the decision of the Conservators to Merton. Future agenda to include discussion on management of waste bins across the Common

Redhouse Road

The Manager reported that The Redhouse Road Industrial Unit has closed, with the only business left being the driving test centre. Cllr Williams was asked to investigate whether or not the owner has gained planning permission to redevelop the site.

RESOLVED: Update on plans for the Redhouse Road site to be reported at a future meeting.

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

Melanie Nunzet was welcomed to the table to give a report from the Friends, as follows:

Since the last report the Friends have attended Mitcham Carnival where quite a few new Friends were recruited, including three Councillors (there are currently just under 300 members). It was an enjoyable day, as always, and the new pop-up banner made sure everybody knew who the Friends were. The story boards which were borrowed from Martin Boyle were also popular and made the stall look very attractive.

This year the stall was next to the Commonsides Trust stall and there was some discussion with Naomi Martin, the Director, which resulted in a joint effort to produce a new quiz for children. Naomi used it for a summer event and the Friends are looking forward to using it at the Carnival next year.

The Friends have been offered a fungal foray walk on the Common by Fabrice Boltho who leads walks for the South London Botanical Institute and was hoping to get a date booked in for November if enough people were interested.

During this year's drought the Friends were approached by Jane Plant, Merton Tree Warden Volunteer Coordinator and asked to help with encouraging residents to water new street trees. So Friends knocked on a few doors and sometimes got existing Friends involved. People were very receptive and it is hoped that the Friends helped to raise awareness of how new trees need more attention than the Council are able to give them if they are to survive.

Due to a lack of time the Friends have been unable to organise more litter picks this year although they are badly needed. Friends are still struggling with a shortage of volunteers and unfortunately not producing the Magpie as regularly as once did. This is why the AGM scheduled for the previous week was postponed. Friends are now looking at options for the way forward, including different ways of operating and communicating. As ever new volunteers are needed to step forward. The Friends have been around for 70 years and like all organisations will need to refresh themselves to be effective in the years to come.

The following questions were raised by Friends:

1) *When will the Conservators review the Management Plan for the Common and involve us in its scoping and preparation?*

A: Plans are in place to review the Management Plan during the course of the next year. Friends will be invited to comment on the draft proposals and policies in the Plan. Martin Boyle explained that there had been delays with the reviewing process for the Plan because of uncertainty over funding. This year the Environmental Stewardship comes to an end and Conservators will be re-negotiating next year. The outcome of this will to some extent dictate sections of the Plan.

2) *Do the Conservators have a response to Susan Crawford's request for a bench by Seven Islands Pond?*

A: Conservators gave very careful and sympathetic consideration to the request for a bench. It was agreed that Conservators had a duty to be mindful to ensuring that areas were not overcrowded with too much seating. The Manager explained that at present there are a good number of seats already around Seven Islands Pond. There were potentially other locations where a bench would be more suitable such as at One Island Pond. Another possibility was looking at the possibility of re-inscription. It was agreed that the Friends would discuss the options at the earliest opportunity. It was also agreed that there should be a policy for Conservators to refer to when dealing with such requests. Ms Fairweather said that there was a significant waiting list on Hampsted Heath for memorial benches, and a memorial dedication lasted for 10 years.

RESOLVED: Friends to discuss the options put forward and liaise with the Manager.

3) *Can anything be done about the vegetation overhanging the pavement on Windmill Road past the steakhouse and the Ecology Centre? It is a very busy, narrow road with a narrow pavement. Pedestrians are inevitably forced to walk very close to the traffic and it is quite dangerous where the vegetation is overhanging so much.*

A: The Manager explained that this is a very busy area and was dangerous for pedestrians. The necessary work will be done as soon as possible to improve pedestrian safety. With regard to highway sightlines, this is a matter for the local authority.

4) *Will the grass on the patch between Walton Way and Commonsides East be mowed at some point?*

A: The Manager confirmed that this would be carried out in the near future.

9. Income and Expenditure (Until end of August 2018)

Conservators were in receipt of the Income and Expenditure Report. The Manager said that he did not anticipate any overspend at year end.

Income and Expenditure: This was on course in line with expectations although at the start of the year the Circus Vegas income had been unanticipated.

Under Signage and Wayleaves it was noted that all payments had been received.

There were no questions arising.

10. Investments: Portfolio Valuation (enclosed for Members)

The Manager reported that the Sub Group was keeping a watching brief on the portfolio and will report back at Conservators' meetings. The Chair and Vice Chair confirmed that the Sub Group agreed the recent recommendations made by Richard Auld and he would be instructed to proceed with the transactions.

11. Wandle Valley Regional Park Trust

Nick Draper and John Cheetham had both attended the last meeting on 6th September and were due to attend the next meeting on 17th October. John Cheetham reported that the draft recommendations for the future direction of the Trust should be ready for formal approval shortly. The Trust would not be involved with the Culver's Lodge Development due to potential future liabilities.

The Trust was asking for projects which it could potentially take forward and trying to make its purpose clearer and reforming the Trust as it moves forward. A key initiative has been to establish the importance of the River Wandle from many perspectives, including ecology, health and wellbeing, leisure, industry.

RESOLVED: Conservators to be kept updated on future planning of the WVRPT

12. Appointment to Mitcham Common Education Trust

It was noted that the Education Trust has enough members to be viable but at present there is no representation from Sutton or City of London, so the opportunity to sit on the Trust was made to Sutton and City of London members. It was noted that this body is aiming to wind down and responsibly allocate the remaining funds to suitable projects.

RESOLVED: Next meeting of the Education Trust to take place in December after the Conservators' meeting. Agenda to include plans for allocating remaining funds to suitable educational projects perhaps in tandem with Merton Public Health.

13. Appointment to Mitcham Common Environmental Trust

The Environmental Trust currently only has Richard Bailey and Nick Draper as members and a Croydon member was required. John Cheetham volunteered to join the Trust. It was noted that this Trust has the responsibility for overseeing expenditure of £19,000 over time on suitable projects.

14. Date of Next Meeting – Wednesday 5th December 2018

15. Any Other Business

It was noted that fly tips discussed at the previous meeting had been cleared by Veolia