

Minutes of the Meeting of the Mitcham Common Conservators

Held on Wednesday 27th September 2017 at 6.30pm

At the Mill House Ecology Centre, Windmill Road, Mitcham

Present:

Mr. R Bailey
Mr. J. Cheetham
Dr. D. Coleman
Cllr. N. Draper (Vice Chairman)
Cllr. T. Godfrey (Chairman)
Mr. M. Groves
Cllr. S. King
Cllr. R. Makin
Cllr. I. Munn

In Attendance:

Mr. M. Boyle – Manager of Mitcham Common
Mr P. Moorhouse - Warden of Mitcham Common
Ms. M. Nunzet - Friends of Mitcham Common (Present for Part 1)
Ms. L. Parry – Minute taker

Absent:

Ms Anne Fairweather
Cllr M. Mansell
Ms. J. Russell
Cllr. C. Williams

1. Appointment of Conservators

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

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. The re-appointments of Cllr Williams and Mr Bailey were confirmed.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Williams, Ms Fairweather and Mr Doug Napier

3. Declarations of Interest

The Chairman asked if anyone had any conflicts of interest and none were declared at this point or any other time during the course of the meeting.

4. Minutes (enclosed) of the last Meeting Held on 14th June 2017

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

5. Matters Arising

Page 2. Item 3. Further to the appointment at the last meeting of Cllr Nick Draper as Vice Chairman, the Manager sought Conservators' permission to confirm Cllr Draper as a signatory to the main bank account held with the Unity Trust.

RESOLVED: Cllr Draper to become a signatory to the main bank account on behalf of Conservators

Page 3. Item 5.3.4.5. The Manager reported that there were ongoing issues with the damaged tree. In spite of attempts by the Manager to reclaim compensation from the contractors there had been no resolution. The Manager sought Conservators' permission to take legal advice on enforcement of payment. Conservators agreed that the principle of enforcing wayleaves was vital in their responsible management of the Common.

RESOLVED: Manager to take legal advice on recouping payment for damaged tree.

Page 3. Item 8. 1.2.2. The Manager reported that it had been necessary to bring in the services of a contractor to oversee removal of horses from the Common. Having put up enforcement signs the horses were removed by the people who were grazing them on the Common.

Page 4. Item 8. 5.2: The Manager reported that in addition to the Clapham Chasers Cross-Country Race on 11th November, another race was booked to take place on 1st November organised by the London University Colleges Association. Neither organisation had been concerned about the new charges made by the Conservators for the use of the Common for their events. Cllr Draper commented on the very positive use of the Common for organised races.

Page 6 Item 14: The Manager requested that the Board should defer the appointment of a new Trustee of the Mitcham Common Environmental Trust to the next meeting on 6th December in order that Ms Anne Fairweather may have the opportunity to be appointed.

RESOLVED: Appointment of new Trustee of the Mitcham Common Environmental Trust to be deferred to 6th December 2017 meeting.

6. Administration and Management Report

1). Public Space Protection Orders. The Manager said that he had provided information on the consultation of PSPOs from Merton Council and invited any questions.

Q: Will the PSPO cover any other issues on the Common other than dog related issues?

A: The Manager said that the purpose of the PSPOs was specifically to address the issue of dog control.

Clr Draper commented that he was very pleased that Merton was taking this action and it was important for protecting public spaces and the public users and also talked about the impact of changing law and making it known.

Q: Is it anticipated that the Manager and Warden will be expected to enforce the PSPOs?

A: With regard to the PSPO, which, if adopted would limited the number of dogs one person may walk, this is likely to be enforced by a Merton contractor. The Manager said that the key issue of dog walking with multiple dogs is only ever likely to be a problem in areas where parking is easy. To enforce this PSPO on Mitcham Common it would be relatively easy to do by simply stationed an appropriate person at the Ecology Centre car park.

It is possible that the Manger and Warden may be authorised to instructed a person to put an uncontrolled dog on a lead.

2). The Meadows Development: Land at the corner of Commonsides East and Windmill Road.

The Manager provided Conservators with an overview on the planning history for a proposed development on land at the corner of Commonsides East. When proposals were first announced the Conservators submitted a representation objecting to the vehicle access which in their view was not wide enough to accommodate vehicles and pedestrians. However, the planners did not consider this to be an issue and the proposals for implementing the scheme have gradually developed.

The Manager had become aware that the plans submitted by the developer included a path on Mitcham Common land. No response was received from the architects when the Manager raised concern. Subsequently the Manager expressed concern to the planning officer and also wrote to the Project Manager and the new firm of architects. The Architect responded and sent an ammended plan which no longer shows hard landscaping on Common land. However, there was still an issue with the extent of the re-built boundary wall, which initially had a gap where the aforementioned path would have crossed on to the Common; after discussion with the architects and project manager it was agreed to extend the wall up to the vehicular access. The Manager said that he would like to propose that if this is not implemented as agreed, the Conservators will go ahead and fence the area.

Secondly, the Manager proposed putting up a bund to discourage pedestrians from walking on undesigned paths across the Common.

After some discussion about whether or not there was any merit in asking the developers to put in the bund, the Board agreed unanimously to the proposals from the Manager, noting the poor communication and dissatisfaction to date the Manager had experienced in dealing with the personnel and planners involved with this project.

RESOLVED: Conservators to maintain a watching brief over The Meadows Development, with authorisation given to the Manager to arrange for the erection of fencing if the wall is not extended as agreed, and for putting up of a bund.

7. 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 the Friends' activities.

1) As previously reported, Darren Stillwell has stood down from his position as Acting Chair and the Friends are continuing to seek nominations for the position of Chair and struggling to find people willing to stand. There is currently a membership of 350 people, and a second email has been sent to request candidates for the position of Chair. The Volunteer Service Council has also been approached but to date there has been no response.

2) The Friends will be holding a Christmas Party at Elborough Tennis Club this year, as the cost of holding the party at the Ecology Centre is prohibitive. Date to be arranged.

3) The recent Lost Paths walk was very popular. For those who had attended, the walk had highlighted that proper clearance is needed in some areas particularly by Cedars Avenue.

4) A series of walks on Saturday afternoons are scheduled through until February 2018.

- 5) During the Wandle Valley Fortnight, people who were enjoying events and walks had been concerned and intimidated by a group of motor bikers on the gun site
- 6) The Friends continue to be concerned by the implications of the loss of funding from the local boroughs and hope that the funding situation will change.
- 7) An issue of The Magpie was published this summer, the first for some time.
- 8) A positive relationship has been established with the Avanti Mental Health group based at the New Horizon Centre on Pollards Hill, with a view to encouraging participation in Friends' events/walks etc.
- 9) Although there are currently a lack of volunteers, Friends are nevertheless keen to offer support and help where they are able.

At the conclusion to her report, the Chairman extended his grateful thanks to Melanie Nunzet and all the Friends for their support.

8. Income and Expenditure (Until end of August 2017)

There were no significant variances on the budget. The Manager explained that where there were apparent variances, these were due to the time of year and would balance out by year end.

Conservators noted the report with thanks.

9. Investments: Portfolio Valuation (enclosed for Members)

There were no recommendations for changes to the current portfolio at the current time.

10. Wandle Valley Regional Park Trust

John Cheetham provided Conservators with an overview of some recent successful bids acquired by the Wandle Valley Regional Park Trust including £95,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund, £10,000 over three years from TFL Bikes Scheme, £10,000 from Awards for All. There are still some applications where decisions are pending, including an application for £355,000 from the Good Growth Fund.

The recent meeting had included another discussion about the issues of quorum as this had again been a problem at the meeting of 13th September.

John Cheetham said that he would like to propose that the CEO of Wandle Valley Regional Park Trust is invited to attend the next Board of Conservators' meeting to provide an overview on the current position and vision for the future. This was agreed by Conservators.

RESOLVED: CEO of Wandle Valley Regional Trust to be invited to attend the next meeting for a half hour slot on the agenda

11. Date of Next Meeting – Wednesday 6 December 2017

12. Any Other Business

None.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the public part of the meeting at 19.19