

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MITCHAM COMMON CONSERVATORS
(A Statutory Corporation constituted by the Metropolitan Commons
(Mitcham) Supplemental Act 1891)
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 10th July 2024 AT 7: 00PM

Present:

Mr. J. Cheetham
Ms. A. Dines
Cllr. M. Johnson
Cllr M. Whelton, Chair
Ms. A. Fairweather
Mr. N. Jones

In Attendance:

Mr. M. Boyle – Manager of Mitcham Common
Mr P. Moorhouse - Warden of Mitcham Common
Mr. J. Jenner - Founder and CEO of The Outdoor Classroom
Ms. L. Parry - Minute taker
Ms. M. Nunzet - representing the Friends of Mitcham Common

Absent:

Cllr R. Clifton
Cllr J. Gould
Cllr M. Griffiths
Cllr J. Henry
Cllr D. Johnston
Cllr. D. Tchil
Cllr. F. Zaman

THIS MEETING IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

1. Appointment of Conservators

The meeting was opened at 7:00pm and the following appointments were confirmed.

London Borough of Croydon: Councillors Matt Griffiths, Mark Johnson, Fatima Zaman and Mr John Cheetham appointed until May 2025.

London Borough of Merton: Councillors Jenifer Gould, Joan Henry, Dan Johnston, Martin Whelton appointed until May 2025

London Borough of Sutton: Councillors Richard Clifton and Dave Tchil, Ms Alison Dines and Mr Norman Jones already appointed until July 2024.

Corporation of the City of London: Ms Anne Fairweather appointed until May 2025.

2. Appointment of Chair

There was one nomination for Cllr Martin Whelton which was formally seconded. There were no other nominations. Cllr Whelton was then formally appointed as Chair with unanimous agreement and thanks.

3. Appointment of Vice Chair

The Chair called for nominations for the position of Vice Chair. There was one nomination for Ms Anne Fairweather which was formally seconded. There were no other nominations. Ms Fairweather was then formally appointed as Vice Chair with unanimous agreement and thanks.

4. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr. Clifton, Cllr. M. Griffiths, Cllr. J. Henry, Cllr. D. Johnston and Cllr. D. Tchil

5. Declarations of Interest

No conflicts of interest were declared.

6. Minutes of the last Meeting Held on 20th March 2024

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

7. Matters Arising

P2 Project completed

P3 Over the last few months meetings have taken place with the Hackbridge Safer Neighbourhood Team and together with the Cricket Green SNT, they will aim to patrol the Gunsite more frequently at weekends in the future. However they want intel so if motorbike activity is witnessed it should be reported to hackbridgesnt@met.police.uk. Motorbike activity on other parts of the Common e.g. Seven Islands Pond and Bidders sub-site should be reported to the Pollards Hill SNT

P6 2024 Work Programme

Public sponsorship for replacement benches: a few donations (£230) have been received to date.

Countryside Stewardship Agreement: An Expression of Interest has been submitted to the Government's new scheme, now called Sustainable Farming Incentive.

Review of Golf Club Licence: A potential consultant has been identified and the Club notified but as yet have not responded. Matter to be discussed under confidential part of meeting.

Friends of MC

Further to the enquiry concerning the flooded footpath from the Cedars Ave/Commonside East junction, this autumn an optioneering exercise will be undertaken, the scope of which will include the Cedars Avenue footpath.

8. Virtual Orienteering - Presentation by Josh Jenner

Josh Jenner thanked Conservators for the opportunity to present to them. He explained that The Outdoor Classroom has an official partnership with British Orienteering, a collaboration aimed at promoting outdoor education and fostering a love for navigation and exploration among learners of all ages and abilities. As pioneers in Outdoor Learning, The Outdoor Classroom is dedicated to providing innovative digital Outdoor Learning and the partnership with British Orienteering aligns with the aims of enhancing the learning experience through outdoor activities and bringing the sport of orienteering into focus through the use of digital technology.

Merton has commissioned the services of this collaboration and the team will be working across 13 sites, including Mitcham Common.

Josh described the creation of a digital app, with a QR code, which can be accessed offline and with a pin location. The plan is to create a variety of trails on the

Common which could be linked to different themes eg, history, nature, stories etc. These can easily be updated and changed according to requirements and public responses etc. It is anticipated that there will be 20 - 30 posts across the whole site which will include a plaque that can be scanned to provide specific information.

Q: Do you have any comparable projects that provide some feedback on how the trails have been received by the public?

A: This is actually planned as one of the first 5 pilot projects.

Q: How would you raise awareness of the of the trail so that people know they are available on the Common?

A: We plan to set up a website. We will also provide a display board to be situated at an agreed suitable point and anticipate that Merton will also be promoting the scheme.

Q: Are there any costs to Conservators?

A: No, the whole project is funded. There are no costs to Conservators and no costs to members of the public.

Q: Would we get feedback on how many people are following the trails using the digital technology?

A: Yes we will track the number of scans, the number of starts and the number of finishes, and update this data regularly.

Q: How would the routes be planned?

A: We can map out the Common and site the posts, but will obviously be happy to do this in discussion with Conservators.

Q: What is the timescale for getting the project off the ground?

A: We anticipate being able to begin and set up initial trails during the summer

During discussion the Conservators agreed that they supported the proposal in principle and recognised that it had the potential to encourage people to use and enjoy the Common with specific opportunities for learning. Conservators also felt that this was likely to be a project that will grow over time, and recognised that the timescales for developing the routes will be dependent on the work priorities and demands on the Manager and Warden's time.

The Chair thanked Josh Jenner very much for his attendance and presentation.

9. Administration and Management Report

The draft SGN Licence was sent to MCC's solicitor this week. The work will take 10+ weeks with a proposed start date at end of July. Before the Licence is signed-off the outstanding Redhouse Rd reinstatement must be completed.

Footpath re-surfacing will be undertaken over the next few months.

10. Income and Expenditure (Until end of June 2024)

In light of the website review discussed under Item 9, the current Base Estimate of £1000 is unlikely to cover the cost of the additional work arising from the review.

RESOLVED: Budget to be increased to £3000 for costs of website review.

11. Investment Portfolio (enclosed for Members)

The portfolio was noted and included for information.

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

1) The Friends held their **AGM** immediately before the Open Day and the current committee and Chair were all re-elected.

2) **Carnival and Open Day** – Both these events were successful and had a good attendance. It was noted that some people came to the Open Day, specifically to attend one of the three walks, history, birds and plants. There were not as many entries as we had hoped for the photography competition which was organised by Emma but those which were entered were of high quality. There was a beautiful display of all the submitted photographs on boards in the Ecology Centre, again organised by Emma. There was a lot of interest in Emma's Citizen Science project and the RSPB stall.

Thank you to Councillor Clifton for suggesting that we invite the Mayors of Sutton and Croydon as well as the Mayor of Merton. Unfortunately, due to extenuating circumstances the Mayor of Merton was unable to come. However, the Deputy Mayor of Sutton attended for a long time and enjoyed herself. The Mayor of Croydon was able to fit us into his busy schedule and came along at the end.

3) **Benches** – we would be interested to hear about the donations made for benches so far. *The Manager confirmed that this was £230*

The Committee have agreed to donate £800 for one of the three new benches which are needed. Regarding the replacement bench for the OPM tree can you please tell us the planned location for this?

The Manager confirmed that this will be outside the tree's drip-line, some 2-4m from the previous location.

4) The Chair of the Friends was asked by the Mayor of Croydon at the Open Day whether the local councils contributed to the Conservators' costs. He told him, quoting the financial statement that was published, that Merton paid about £24,000 last year, while Sutton and Croydon paid nothing, although they had contributed in the past.

He asked why Croydon paid nothing and was told that we didn't know, but that we would ask the Conservators and get back to him.

The Chair confirmed that when Sutton stopped paying a contribution, Croydon also withdrew funding back in 2014. The Conservators would welcome contributions resuming.

13. Wandle Valley Regional Park Trust – Report from Cllr Gould

This item was deferred to the next meeting as Cllr. Gould was not present.

14. Appointment to Mitcham Common Environmental Trust- LB Merton

Martin Whelton was appointed into the vacant position for a Merton representative on the Mitcham Common Environmental Trust.

15. Date of Next Meetings

Annual Inspection: Sunday 15 September 2024

MCC Board meeting: Wednesday 25 September 2024

16. Any Other Business

Mitcham Golf Club held an event on May 25th and was attended by Cllrs Gould, Griffiths, Mr. Jones and the Manager. The event was to celebrate 100 years of the Club and launched the publication of two interesting books.

The Chair closed the public part of the meeting and thanked all those observers who had attended. The Chair re-iterated his gratitude to the Friends of Mitcham Common for all their support and valued work.

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