

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MITCHAM COMMON CONSERVATORS
(A Statutory Corporation constituted by the Metropolitan Commons
(Mitcham) Supplemental Act 1891)
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 8th January 2025 AT 7: 30PM

Present:

Mr. J. Cheetham
Cllr R. Clifton
Ms. A. Fairweather
Cllr J. Gould
Cllr J. Henry
Cllr.D. Johnston
Mr N. Jones
Cllr. D. Tchil
Cllr M. Whelton, Chair

In Attendance:

Mr. M. Boyle – Manager of Mitcham Common
Mr P. Moorhouse - Warden of Mitcham Common
Mr R. Auld - Investment Adviser (Present for items 1 & 5)
Ms E. Onyejekwe - Representing the Friends of Mitcham Common
Ms. L. Parry - Minute taker

Absent:

Ms. A. Dines
Cllr. M. Griffiths
Cllr M. Johnson
Cllr. F. Zaman

PUBLIC MEETING

1. Apologies for Absence

The Chair opened the meeting at 7.30pm and welcomed everyone. It was noted that the meeting open to the public was beginning half an hour later than usual as the meeting was preceded by an in committee item, restricted to Board Members only, as noted on the agenda.

Apologies for absence had been received from Ms Dines and Cllr M.Griffiths

2. Declarations of Interest

No conflicts of interest were declared.

3. Minutes of the last Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 25th September 2024 were agreed as a true and accurate account and were duly signed and dated by the Chair.

4. Matters Arising

Page 2 item 5.9 SGN UPDATE: The Manager reported that the new pipeline was installed within the 10 week licence period, however subsequent reinstatement is still on-going. The first phase, which involved hard landscaping (Fairsite re-surfacing, bund replacement and signage replacement), was completed by the start of December. The soft landscaping (re-seeding) and replacement path, near Brookmead Road, is scheduled for early Spring. SGN will also be required to fund the cost of replacement interpretation panel frames, that were damaged during the works.

5. Investments: Portfolio Valuation

Mr Auld said he believed that the portfolio was in good order and he had two recommendations to make to the Conservators:

1. Selling of the holding of Scottish American Investment Trust,
2. With the proceeds of the sale, buy a new holding of the Vanguard USA.

Mr Auld gave a full explanation for his recommendation based on his understanding of the changes in the global markets.

RESOLVED: Conservators formally approved the recommendation. Manager to email Mr Auld with a written instruction to go ahead with the recommendations

6. Administration and Management Report

Benches on the Common: The Manager reported that as per the Management Plan, Conservators had sought donations to replace benches on the Common. There had been a significant donation from the Friends of Mitcham Common to replace one bench, and further total donations of £162.

Officers had identified that there was a need for 4 new benches across the Common totalling £3,500. There was a shortfall of £2,500. The Environmental Trust had agreed to contribute this sum to enable replacement of benches.

RESOLVED: Conservators approved expenditure and replacement of 4 benches in the identified areas across the Common and authorised the Manager to go ahead and make the necessary arrangements for purchase and installation.

Arthurs Pond: Conservators were in receipt of a proposal to remove a volume of scrub from around Arthurs Pond, but leaving a scrub barrier, with a view to

improving biodiversity without compromising the protection from fly-tipping afforded by the roadside scrub barrier. There had been a consultation on this project and 10 responses had been received. There were no objections to the scrub removal.

RESOLVED: Conservators formally approved the go ahead with the clearance of scrub around the Pond. The first phase of the works will proceed this winter with further works over the next autumn/winter period.

Website Review: Conservators noted that the first stage of the website review had now been completed, and a new subscription notification had been added to the website.

The next stage is to review the text and make some additional enhancements to the website. One of the potential tasks identified by the Website working party is to look at creating a virtual tour of the Common using drone footage for upload on the website.

It was noted that the Management Plan and Works Programme is published on the website.

7. Income and Expenditure (Until December 2024)

Conservators noted that due to the unanticipated income from SGN, the income figures were higher than projected at the time the budget was set.

The Manager said that he had nothing he wished to draw to Conservators' particular attention as the figures were balancing, with no significant overspends.

A query was raised about current underspend on the budget allocation for flytipping and skips. In response the Manager and Chair noted that whilst there had been some reduction in flytipping, there were still some areas pending which are designated for clearance, but there will not be any danger of overspend by year end. A query was raised about the allocation of £10,000 for Admin and Tech. The Manager explained that this covers such areas as payroll services and maintenance of the building and represented very good value for money.

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

Emma Onyejekwe was welcomed to the table and she provided the following report:

- In March to October, The Friends carried out the National Reptile Survey on the Mill House and Bidders Pond subsite. The survey was successful as there were sightings of Slow worms and Common Lizards on both sites. A total of approximately 10.5 hours was spent during the survey period, with a total of 8 volunteers taking part.

- The Friends will be encouraging the group to participate in more citizen science surveys and hope to collaborate with other wildlife/nature groups. The first event of the year will be a bird walk and watch, coinciding with the RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch. There are also plans to create a wildlife recording form for Mitcham Common and this information will be shared with Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL).
- Following on from the Hedgehog Surveys in 2022 and 2023, Emma has created the Mitcham Hedgehog Project and plans to survey neighbouring greenspaces (eg. AFC Croydon Athletic grounds, Mitcham Road Cemetery and Mayfield Recreation Ground) this year to help the hedgehogs in and around Mitcham Common.
- The Friends would like to be involved in the Arthurs Pond Project and the reseeding of the area of One Island subsite next to Brookmead Road that had been cleared by SGN.

During discussion Conservators commented that they were very pleased to hear about the citizen science surveys and the planned activities this year. On behalf of all Conservators the Chair thanked Emma and the Friends for their work to support the biodiversity of the Common and for all the work they do in helping to keep the Common in good order.

Cllr Richard Clifton asked the Manager and Warden if consideration had ever been given to grazing sheep on Mitcham Common, noting that this practice is carried out on Banstead Downs. The Manager said that this is something that had been thought about and investigated in the past, as it is true that grazing animals can be very helpful. However, in the case of Mitcham Common the logistics of fencing off areas and ensuring the protection of the animals from dogs etc, was beyond the scope of the Conservator's resources.

9. Wandle Valley Regional Park Trust

Conservators were in receipt of the notes of the last meeting in 2024 sent through by Cllr Gould. The next meeting was likely to take place in February or March. Cllr Gould said that she understood that two priorities were to improve the Wandle Trail with National Trust signage, and to increase wildlife habitats.

10. Date of Next Meeting – Wednesday 19 March 2025

11. Any Other Business

Cllr Tchil asked if there were any updates on police presence and incursion onto the Common by motorbikes. The Manager and Warden said that some offenders had been caught by the police in the autumn, and since then incursions have been less of an issue. It was recognised that continued vigilance was necessary, and the Warden said that he does challenge individuals if he sees them behaving illegally. The regular patrols by the police were key to providing deterrence and ensuring that the problem reduces over time

The Chair closed the public part of the meeting with thanks to all Friends for their attendance.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Faint', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.