

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MITCHAM COMMON
CONSERVATORS
(A Statutory Corporation constituted by the Metropolitan
Commons
(Mitcham) Supplemental Act 1891)
HELD on WEDNESDAY 18th March 2026 at 7.00pm**

Present:

Mr. J. Cheetham
Cllr R. Clifton
Mr T. Foster
Cllr. M. Johnson
Mr. N. Jones
Cllr. D. Tchil, Vice Chair
Cllr M. Whelton, Chair
Cllr M. Willis

In Attendance:

Mr. M. Boyle – Manager of Mitcham Common
Mr. P. Moorhouse - Warden of Mitcham Common
Mr. A. Kauffman – Head of Parks Services, Merton
Mr. W. Brice – Chair of the Friends of Mitcham Common
Ms. M. Nunzet – Friend of Mitcham Common
Ms. E. Onyejekwe – Friend of Mitcham Common
Ms. L. Parry - Minute Taker

Absent:

Cllr M. Griffiths
Cllr. D Johnston
Cllr. G Manly
Cllr. F. Zaman

1. Appointment of Conservators

London Borough of Merton: Councillor Matthew Willis

The Chair opened the meeting at 7:00pm and welcomed everyone. A particular welcome was given to Cllr Matthew Willis who had been appointed to the vacancy created by Cllr Gould's resignation, and introductions were made.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Griffiths, Cllr Johnston and Cllr Manly.

3. Declarations of Interest

None declared

4. Minutes (enclosed) of the last Meeting Held on 7th January 2026

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

5. Matters Arising

Meadows Planning Application: The Manager reported that a letter had been sent and acknowledged

Brookmead Rd-Redhouse Rd Footpath: The SES leak is now repaired. However Thames Water has not responded to the compensation claim for incurred staff costs for Beehive Bridge .

Thames Water burst main on Fairsite 3.2.26, has been repaired and the ground reinstated and claim for staff costs incurred has been submitted to Thames Water, with no response to date.

Conservators agreed that the lack of response to legitimate claims to Thames Water were extremely disappointing and frustrating.

6. Administration and Management Report

Management Plan: 2025 Annual Report.

Members considered the Annual Report which reviewed the work carried out on the Common over the last year. The report included a description and photographs of the key projects which had been undertaken including:

- Habitat management – clearance of scrub for establishment of acid grassland on identified parcels of land
- On-going heathland restoration around the Golf course and Mill House sites
- Maintenance of neutral grassland
- Clearance of scrub around Arthur's Pond
- Management /oversight of issues impacting the Common most notably the Thames water leaks and burst watermain

The report highlighted the very important contributions from Friends of Mitcham Common who had been involved in supporting clearance projects and litter picking .

Conservators extended their thanks to the Friends and to the Officers for their work throughout the year.

Cllr Clifton noted the positive impact of scrub clearance around the Mill Green area and the Manager said that this will be maintained.

Capital Growth Projects 2025 - 2026.

Conservators were in receipt of a report which provided an update

Fairsite: The barrier has been refurbished and is the best option for the area. The footpath into Fairsite would benefit from re-surfacing.

Byelaw Signage: A new design is being developed and will be taken forward over 2026-2027

Wandle Vista Interpretation Panel: On hold until Friends have capacity.

Replacement of All Terrain Vehicle: Carried forward to 2026- 2027

Management Plan: 2026 Work Programme

The Manager discussed the key projects to be taken forward during 2026/2027 including:

- Consultation on scrub clearance around Seven Islands Pond
- Installation of Bund on Commonside East
- Implementation of virtual orienteering project first discussed 2 years ago.
The Manager said that he would like to involve the Friends in checking information which is being put together for the outdoor app.

7. Income and Expenditure (Until end of February 2026)

The Manager said that over all there was no significant overspend, and a few areas of underspend. Investment fees income was higher by £9,000 than predicted at the start of the year. The only slight overspend was on officer salaries. There was an issue with Transport which was currently an area of dispute with Merton Council.

8. Investment Portfolio Valuation (enclosed for Members)

Conservators were in receipt of information from Richard Auld providing an update on the investment portfolio. Richard had made some recommendations as follows:

To sell 90 shares in AstraZeneca releasing £14,000

To use the proceeds of the sale of these shares to add to the holding of Blackrock American Income Trust.

Conservators formally approved this recommendation.

RESOLVED: Manager to contact Richard Auld after the current meeting and authorise him to go ahead with the sale of 90 Astra Zeneca shares and to add to the holding of Blackrock American Income Trust with the proceeds.

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

Mr Brice came to the table and presented the Friends' report as follows:

1) We have a new member for our committee. Roger Steele, whom you all may know from his volunteering at the Wandle Industrial Museum, has agreed to be our Finance Officer.

2) We thank the Conservators for asking us to contribute comments about the proposed pocket park on the Common. We forwarded a pdf document of 16 responses from our members, made via WhatsApp and email. In addition, on the 10th February 2026, we wrote to the Monitoring Officer at Merton Council querying the legality of the proposal. Disappointedly, as at 4th March 2026, we have not received a reply.

3) On 4th February 2026 we attended a 3-way meeting at the Ecology Centre with Martin Boyle, Manager of the Common; Ben Abensur, author of the Revive Mitcham Eastfields Petition; and members of our Committee, Melanie Nunzet, Rose Chandler and Wade Brice. We had the impression from the petition that Mr Abensur thought that the Common was Merton Council's responsibility, and we thought that after the meeting, that had been cleared up. However, social media posts by Mr Abensur subsequent to the meeting haven't mentioned this clarification.

4) One public perception that came out of the meeting with Mr Abensur was that the Common is covered in litter. Apart from specific areas that are targets for our litter pickers, we find that on the whole the Common is free of litter. The exception is at the roadside edges, and this may explain the perception, as the observations are typically made while driving. Accordingly, we ask the Conservators to remind Merton Council of their obligation to clear litter from pavements, verges and drainage ditches on the public roads alongside the Common.

5) We ask the Conservators to suggest to the Council the use of technology to combat litter thrown from vehicles. The 'LitterCam' system has been trialled in England, which uses A.I. to detect objects thrown from vehicles, and takes a photo of the vehicle's number plate. A trial in Loughborough resulted in a 40% reduction in verge litter.

6) The recent botched drainage ditch clearances, where trees and bushes along Carshalton Road were damaged by the Council, prompts us to ask a question about the Council's legal role in maintaining them. We appreciate that laws exist that impose obligations on Merton Council, viz. the Highways Act 1980, the Land Drainage Act 1991, and the Flood & Water Management Act 2010. However we are not legal experts and ask the Conservators to give a definitive answer on the Council's responsibility with respect to the drainage ditches alongside the A roads in the borough.

7) We have a bench funding suggestion. Are the Conservators willing to contribute a third to the cost of a replacement bench? Our suggestion is a 'triple-matching' approach where, for each pound contributed by the public to the bench fund, the Friends will match that with a pound and the Conservators will do the same. This might encourage more donations to the bench fund as people will appreciate that their pound is actually trebled towards the cost of replacement benches.

In response to the questions raised by the Friends the Manager made the following comments:

Point 3-6: The Manager will schedule a meeting with the Neighbourhood Warden to discuss roadside fly-tipping and littering and report back to June meeting.

Point 7: The Manager said that there was no objection in principle but asked Friends to be minded of the 2024 report which confirmed no new bench locations and some locations "reserved" for memorial benches. Also, donations via website must make it clear that if after a 12 month period not enough money has been raised for a new bench then donations may be used for general maintenance tasks on the Common. It was important that people making donations had some clarity and timescale about when/if/how their donations will be used.

Conservators confirmed their agreement and support with the points raised

10. Annual Programme of Meetings 2026/27 – Proposed dates

Spring Inspection: Sunday 17th May 2026

June Board Meeting: Wednesday 10th June 2026

Annual Inspection: Sunday 13th September 2026

September Board Meeting: Wednesday 23rd September 2026

January Board Meeting: Wednesday 6th January 2027

March Board Meeting: Wednesday 17th March 2027

11. Date of Next Meeting Confirmed as Wednesday 10th June 2026

12. Any Other Business

Emma Onyejekwe informed Conservators that she, alongside colleagues, has set up a new community organisation called Our Wild Life. The aims of the group are to build a supportive friendly community which is wide and diverse, supporting citizen science projects and collaboration with Friends groups and widening of access to green spaces. There will be an Instagram page and website and a membership programme which will be free to join. Emma said that she will be working on a reptile survey on Mitcham Common this year and looked forward to collaborating with Conservators.

The Chair thanked Emma very much for her update.

There being no further business the public part of the meeting was closed. The Chair thanked Friends for their attendance at the meeting and for their continuing work in support of the Common.