

HIGHGATE WOOD JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
Wednesday, 24 April 2013

Minutes of the meeting of the Highgate Wood Joint Consultative Committee held at
Highgate Wood Offices, Highgate Wood, Muswell Hill Road, N10 3JN on
Wednesday, 24 April 2013 at 12.00 pm

Present

Members:

Jeremy Simons (Chairman)
Deputy Michael Welbank (Deputy Chairman)
Barbara Newman CBE
Stephanie Beer (Muswell Hill & Fortis Green Association)
Jan Brooker (Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee)
Marguerite Clark (Highgate Society)
Peter Corley (Tree Trust for Haringey)
Councillor Bob Hare (London Borough of Haringey)
Alison Watson (Friends of Queen's Wood)
Michael Hammerson (Highgate Society)

Officers:

Jacky Compton	- Committee and Member Services Officer
Alistair MacLellan	- Committee and Member Services Officer
Simon Lee	- Superintendent of Hampstead Heath, Queen's Park & Highgate Wood
Jonathan Meares	- Highgate Wood & Conservation Manager

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Jonathan Bloch and Lucy Roots.

2. MEMBERS DECLARATIONS UNDER CODE OF CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA

There were none.

3. MINUTES

The public minutes and summary of the meeting held on Wednesday 21 November 2012 were approved as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:

Page 3, paragraph 1 to read – Members asked officers to acknowledge that this decay would continue in their newsletters and to include the information on work being performed to prevent it.

Matters Arising

Local Nature Reserve Status – The Superintendent stated that he felt an application by Highgate Wood for Local Nature Reserve Status was superfluous and could potentially undermine the legal guarantees currently provided by the 1886 Act.

Sustainability – The Highgate Wood Manager stated that the new waste contractor was conducting their first visit on 25 April. The Superintendent stated that, whilst costs were slightly higher given the expense of incinerating waste versus sending it to landfill, this was offset by the fact incineration is more sustainable in the long term and that there was potential for cost savings on future contracts.

Infrastructure and Buildings – The Highgate Wood Manager reported that one remaining section (30-40m in length) of fencing remained to be installed along the Muswell Hill Road and that this would be completed this year.

4. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE REPORT

A report of the Superintendent of Hampstead Heath providing an update on matters relating to the management and enhancement of the Wood was considered.

Highgate Wood Conservation Management Plan

The Highgate Wood Manager informed the Committee that following the January stakeholder meeting, the Conservation Management Plan (CMP) had been amended to include material on Queen's Wood and had undergone some changes in terms of its timeline. It is hoped that the current draft is the final version of the plan before it can be published. The plan would be reviewed again after 5 years.

The Superintendent stated that Michael Hammerson had been involved in providing comments on the CMP. Furthermore the Superintendent advised that in consultation with the Highgate Wood Manager that they would produce a summary document, say 6-8 pages, that would be suitable for public consumption.

Highgate Wood Restructure

The Committee were advised that a new staff roster had commenced that included two playground attendants joining the team in being responsible for closing the Wood to the public at the end of the day. He stated that this needed to be reflected in their job descriptions. The Highgate Wood Manager advised that the attendants had been given conflict avoidance training given the likely nature of their interaction with the public in the evenings, and with potential anti-social groups within the Wood, and this training was underlined by mentoring and support from the wider team and the Hampstead Heath Constabulary.

The Superintendent provided context behind the need for the new staff roster, in that 10% budget reductions necessitated the need for staff to be more flexible. Furthermore as a public body facing a difficult funding climate it is likely further flexibility and new ways of working would be needed in future

years. The Deputy Chairman stated that the budget year 2015/16 is likely to be difficult for the City of London Corporation as a whole.

Sustainability

The Superintendent stated that the new Enterprise waste contract had been live for three months and that he was shortly to attend a site visit of the waste plant at Belvedere in Bexley. He advised that the estimates of the amount of electricity likely to be generated by proposed photovoltaic units suggest that generation will match demand from the machine shed. In response to a question from a Member, the Highgate Wood Manager advised that once funding was secured, installation of the photovoltaic system would take around two months.

Heritage and History

The Highgate Wood Manager reported that the five recent Woodland Archaeology courses had been a success and in response to a question from Alison Watson, he stated that it was hoped that the courses would be repeated next year around May or June 2014.

The Highgate Wood Manager advised that the Roman Kiln Project Working Group meetings had been well attended, and that attendees included members of the original excavation in the 1960s. In response to a question from a Member, the Manager reported that the date of a new Education building being opened depended on the success of the forthcoming Heritage Lottery application. He noted that budget priority for the current year was the installation of the photovoltaic cell system which meant that the likely the Roman Kiln Project would be deferred until 2014.

Tree Management and Woodland Conservation Work

The Manager stated that usefulness of the new mobile elevating work platform in clearing deadwood from the canopy over pathways through the Wood. He also noted that coppicing had been carried out on the trees located along the Muswell Hill Road perimeter fence to improve their stability, as many of these trees were located on the old wood bank, a common area for root failure.

The Manager updated the Committee on the new GPS equipment that was being used by staff for inspecting trees within the Wood. In response to a question from the Deputy Chairman, the Manager confirmed that the GPS technology was being used by other authorities such as Haringey.

At the request of the Director of Open Spaces, the Manager advised that a report on Oak Processionary Moth had been reported in Brent, ten miles from Highgate Wood. The Superintendent reported that DEFRA had set aside £5m for the eradication of OPM in the London Region.

The Manager suggested that, given the risk of OPM transfer by vehicle, that City of London vehicles transiting between Queen's Park and Highgate Wood be singled out for disinfection.

Play Area and Recreation

The Highgate Wood Manager reported that the tree sculpture adjacent to the play area may be further reduced in 2015. He went on to report that the Cricket Season had recently started. He stated that the recent winter weather, although affecting tree stability, had also attracted visitors to the Wood thanks to picturesque snow scenes.

Dogs in Highgate Wood

The Manager advised that the use of the Wood by dog owners was increasing and the issues arising from this had been highlighted in the local magazine. The Superintendent stated that complaints were arising around the tethering of dogs outside the café whilst their owners used the facility. This exacerbated poor dog behaviour and increased noise due to barking and whining.

Councillor Bob Hare suggested that dog tether points be provided on the outside of the café open area fence, at spaced intervals, that corresponded with tables within the fence perimeter. This would allow owners to have their dog nearby and therefore easier to monitor and control. Alison Watson advised that this technique was in use at other sites.

The Superintendent suggested that the café open area could be extended to provide more tables and chairs, thus increasing capacity, footfall and revenue.

Community and Events

The Manager advised of the dedication and excellent work of Heath Hands and their contribution to the Wood. The Manager informed the Committee that a traditional woodworker was in the process of completing a new wooden bench for the use of visitors. It would be ready for inspection by the Committee on their next visit.

5. QUESTIONS

Compaction – In response to a suggestion from Councillor Bob Hare, the Manager stated that the use of concrete stepping stones to create pathways through areas prone to compaction was a possibility that could be investigated.

Mobile Elevated Working Platform – In response to a question from Councillor Bob Hare, the manager confirmed that MEWP would continue to be used to remove deadwood from above woodland paths, to fulfil health and safety requirements.

Impromptu Noticeboard – Muswell Hill Road – In response to a question from Marguerite Clark, the Committee agreed on principle that the fence adjacent to the bus stop on Muswell Hill Road continued to be used as an informal noticeboard for the local community, provided it could be cleared on a regular basis to ensure the area did not become cluttered or prone to litter.

6. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

Deputy Chairman

The Chairman informed the Committee that this was the Deputy Chairman's last meeting as he would be stepping down. The Chairman, on behalf of the Committee thanked the Deputy Chairman for his 6 years work on the Committee and wished him well in his other City of London duties.

7. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

RESOLVED: That the next meeting would be held at 2pm on 20 November 2013 at Guildhall.

The meeting ended at 1.05 pm

Chairman

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