

HIGHGATE WOOD JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2011

Minutes of the meeting of the HIGHGATE WOOD JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE held at GUILDHALL on WEDNESDAY 9 NOVEMBER at 12.00 noon.

Present

Members:

Michael Welbank (Chairman)
Jeremy Simons (Deputy Chairman)
Deputy Dennis Cotgrove
Barbara Newman
Marguerite Clark
Alison Watson
Michael Hammerson
Stephanie Beer

Friends of Queen's Wood
Highgate Society
Muswell Hill & Fortis Green
Association
Highgate Conservation Area Advisory
Committee
London Borough of Haringey
Tree Trust for Haringey

Jan Brooker

Councillor Bob Hare
Peter Corley

Officers:

Sureka Perera
Edward Foale
Simon Lee
Jonathan Meares

Town Clerk's Department
Town Clerk's Department
Superintendent of Hampstead Heath
Highgate Wood & Conservation
Manager

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Lucy Roots.

2. DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF PERSONAL OR PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS IN RESPECT OF ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THIS MEETING

There were no declarations.

3. MINUTES

The public minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2011 were approved, subject to the following amendment:

Superintendent's Update (Item 4)

The Highgate Wood Manager stated that he believed that approximately half of the oak trees that had been surveyed (out of a total of 327) were showing some degree of decline.

MATTERS ARISING

Anti-Social Behaviour Order Update

It was reported that the extension to the original ASBO judgement had been upheld and this applied to the Wood and the immediate vicinity. In response to a question, it was confirmed that the holder of the ASBO had conformed to his initial ASBO.

4. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE REPORT – HIGHGATE WOOD**

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

Sustainability The Highgate Wood Manager reported that LED lighting had been installed. It was noted that the LED bulbs lasted approximately six years depending on use, which amounted to a payback period of about three-four years.

Staffing

The Highgate Wood Manager reported that it was possible to keep the woodkeeper position until early 2013. He also reported a number of productive months with regard to volunteers: more sessions were planned in December. It was hoped that the core group of volunteers could be built upon.

Heritage and History The Highgate Wood Manager reported that, with regard to the Roman Kiln, officers were exploring the possibility of an HLF bid in partnership with the Museum of London. The Chairman referred to the Heritage Assessment (Appendix 4 of the report) and welcomed questions and comments from the Committee. Members commented that the document was both very detailed and fascinating. The Highgate Wood Manager thanked Michael Hammerson for his assistance and for providing a vast bank of information. In response to a Member's question about references to Queen's Wood in the document, the Highgate Wood Manager confirmed that there were references and linkages to this and other similar open spaces nearby and their significance.

Members referred to the oak survey. The Friends of Queen's Wood representative stated that a similar survey was being conducted at Queen's Wood. It was noted that this would provide a useful comparison.

Conservation Management Plan The Highgate Wood Manager referred to the successful Workshop on 9 September. The Workshop notes were set out at appendices 2 and 3. This had been a very positive day and a lot of useful material had emerged. The Highgate Wood Manager stated that there was considerable overlap between heritage and conservation.

Buildings and Infrastructure The Highgate Wood Manager advised the Committee that the office was now fully operational. He also informed the Committee that there remained 400m of perimeter fencing to install on Muswell Hill Road. He added that the aim was to get most of this stretch done before the end of the year; the cost of the fencing was £100 per metre.

Play area and Recreation The Highgate Wood Manager reported that the woodland sculpture, created in 2009, would receive a special oil treatment to extend its life.

Events The Highgate Wood Manager reported that the Highgate Wood Heritage Day had been very successful despite the wet weather. The tree climbing activity had proved popular and the Chairman commented on the excellent steel band.

Questions

Walk Talks

A Member suggested that the core team of volunteers could be trained up to take up some of the 'walk talks' for primary schools children, thus freeing up staff time and preventing the loss of this valuable community facility for local school children. The Member concerned cited Epping Forest volunteers who had been recently trained in this way to lead groups. The Highgate Wood Manager took this on board and recognised that the relevant CRB checks would need to take place. The Member stated that this matter needed to be considered now, so that if the idea was to go ahead, it could be implemented in time to mitigate any staffing reductions.

Staffing Reductions

In response to a query from a Member regarding the staff changes, the Superintendent of Hampstead Heath added that his staff had to be reduced by one employee; this would be achieved following the end of a fixed term contract which would not be renewed. The team would be restructured and the playground attendant posts would be evaluated with a view to the roles taking on a wider function. This would assist with the roster so that unlocking and locking up, for example, could be undertaken by the whole team. He added that whilst the 10% reduction was difficult to bear, it also opened up opportunities and offered officers the chance to be innovative.

Heritage Day

A Member commented on what he perceived to be a movement away from the heritage theme. However, he added that the increased focus on ancient woodland was not only an attractive theme, but also part of heritage.

The Superintendent of Hampstead Heath referred to the Conservation Management Plan and the process involved. At present, a draft Plan was being prepared for wider public consultation in the summer. Prior to this, the draft document would be brought to the Committee outside of the meeting cycle via letter, as the Committee only met twice a year, and then to the Hampstead

Heath, Highgate Wood and Queens Park Committee in March. It was anticipated, that a year from now, the final Plan would be approved. The Highgate Wood Manager stated that he hoped to have a draft available to circulate early in the New Year. In response to a question regarding the circulation, the Highgate Wood Manager confirmed that this document would have a wide circulation including the Mayor's Office. The Chairman inquired about the circulation list: the Superintendent stated that this included statutory undertakers and other organisations – the list of consultees was extensive. He added that he planned to put on a series of events/roadshows on site, on-line surveys and postcards to engage with the public regarding support for the overall vision. The Superintendent stated that the aim was to develop a comprehensive consultation plan and he would prepare a short paper for Members for comment.

RECEIVED

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Makeshift Noticeboard outside bus stop on Muswell Hill Road

A representative from the Highgate Society referred to a makeshift noticeboard outside the bus stop on Muswell Hill Road, which looked cluttered and messy.

The Highgate Wood Manager explained that a number of wooden noticeboards had been erected next to each entrance gate; there had been a quality control issue and the wooden noticeboards were replaced with aluminium ones and these were the only ones which the City owned at Highgate Wood. The noticeboard in question carried notices of local community events as well as commercial notices. The Committee agreed that there would be no harm in leaving notices promoting community events and would leave it up to responsible citizens and Highgate Wood volunteers, where possible, to take down commercial notices; the noticeboard would be monitored. The Committee agreed that it would be useful to view the noticeboard on its next visit to Highgate Wood.

Hive

In response to a Member's question, the Highgate Wood Manager explained that the possibility of setting up a hive had not been fully explored as yet, and he undertook to look into the matter. The Superintendent of Hampstead Heath added that his division had good links with the North London Beekeepers Association and would explore this further.

Disposal of Christmas Trees in Highgate Wood

In response to a Member's question, the Highgate Wood Manager explained that Haringey Council provided this service to its residents for a charge; providing this service at Highgate Wood was very time-consuming for staff and took them away from other important work and it was decided that Highgate Wood would no longer offer this service. The representative from Haringey Council supported the City's decision not to offer this service as Haringey was already offering it and there seemed little point in a duplication of service, particularly, when it tied up Highgate Wood staff and removed them from other

activities. The Superintendent explained that the volume of the resulting woodchip mulch caused acidity problems in the soil. The woodchip mulch was also used on horserides, but there were hardly any horses now on Hampstead Heath. Composting it was also labour intensive as it required turning three times a year. He added that, on the Heath, LB Camden took all the Christmas trees from the Heath, with the Heath acting as an agent for Camden. It was suggested that notices be put up at each entrance gate to inform people of the situation post-Christmas with regard to the disposal of Christmas trees.

Painting in the Wood

A representative from the Highgate Society suggested holding an exhibition in the garden outside the café which would create local interest. The Highgate Wood Manager stated that at the Heritage Day local artists were a regular feature, however, he added that he would be interested in developing the idea. It was noted that the Highgate Society had a longstanding watercolour group. The representative from Haringey Council stated that local schools had an Art Day and this could be included in the wider proposal regarding local artists. The representative from the Friends of Queen's Wood mentioned that there was artwork on display at the café at Queen's Wood and that this was for sale.

6. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

RESOLVED: That the next meeting will be on Wednesday 2 May 2012 at Heathfield House, starting at 12 Noon.

The meeting closed at 12:50pm

CHAIRMAN

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