

COULSDON COMMON CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 26 June 2013

Minutes of the meeting of the Coulsdon Common Consultative Committee held at the Merlewood Estate Office, Ninehams Road, Caterham, Surrey, CR3 5LN at 7.00pm

Present

Members:

Alderman Gordon Haines (Chairman)
Sylvia Moys
Rachel Adams
Chris Baguley
Gwyneth Fookes
Malcolm Jennings
Brian Longman

Sarah Lovatt
Dr Jane McLauchlin
Phil Rathbone
Avril Sleeman
Councillor Chris Wright
Richard Carter

Officers:

Bob Warnock - Superintendent of City Commons
Allan Cameron - Head Ranger
Alistair MacLellan - Town Clerk's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Deputy Stanley Ginsburg, Deputy Catherine McGuinness and Councillor Hilary Turner.

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

There were no declarations.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The public minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2012 were agreed as an accurate record subject to Dr Jane McLauchlin's surname being spelt correctly on page four.

Matters Arising

Superintendent's Update

The Superintendent of City Commons gave a brief update to the Committee. He noted that the West Wickham Common Consultative Committee had been formed and had met for the first time a fortnight ago. He informed the Committee that volunteer training courses had commenced on topics such as tree inspection, and that a Committee Visit had taken place on Kenley Airfield on 15 June. He concluded by informing the Committee that the minutes from each of the new Consultative Committees would be shared to ensure each committee membership was aware of current issues across the City Commons.

4. **COULSDON COMMONS CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Superintendent of City Commons introduced the proposed Terms of Reference of the Coulsdon Common Consultative Committee, noting in particular the format of an informal summer consultation meeting centred around a walk on the Common, coupled with a formal winter meeting at which current issues could be discussed.

In response to a question, the Superintendent said that if circumstances required it, reports could be brought to the informal summer meeting and, should it be necessary, issues could be dealt with in between meetings via email.

In response to a remark from a Committee Member, the Superintendent agreed to consider amending the Committee membership to include representatives from other local parish councils.

APPROVED

5. **CITY COMMONS MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES FOR 2013/14**

The Superintendent of City Commons introduced the agenda report on the City Commons Management Priorities for 2013/14, noting that volunteers were now part of the 'Making Connections' group on the scorecard, rather than the 'People' group. The scorecard would be used to assess the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of the City Commons, and the evaluation of the KPIs would be reported to the January meetings of the Committee. In response to a question the Superintendent confirmed that the KPIs included engagement with local stakeholders through site audits.

The Superintendent then introduced the management priorities for the City Commons. Overall management priorities for the City Commons include:

- *Visitor Experience* – implementing systems of inspection ahead of Green Flag assessments.
- *Marketing* – the development of a consistent 'brand' across all of the City Commons and its application in the use of Facebook and Twitter.
- *Condition Assessments* – implementation of systems of inspection to assess condition of City Commons sites against ESS, SSSI and Cross Compliance criteria.
- *Conservation Grazing* – the Head Ranger outlined plans to relocate breeding cattle to Epping Forest and the creation of a corral there.
- *Tree Wardens* – the Superintendent noted corporate concern over tree diseases such as Oak Processionary Moth and Ash Dieback and highlighted the survey work being undertaken involving City Commons volunteers.
- *Business Plan* – the Superintendent noted that the current Divisional Plan needed to be updated so that it was in line with the new 'Score Card'.

- *Visitor Survey* – this had been completed and an analysis of the data collected over the past two years would come to then next Committee in January.
- *Consultation* – work would be undertaken by City Commons staff to ensure that changes to the three new consultative committee's ensured City Commons staff worked more effectively with local communities.
- *Volunteers* – the Superintendent noted that a Volunteer Improvement Plan would be submitted to the January 2014 meeting of the Committee.
- *Education, Recreation & Events* – the Superintendent reported that the procedure for the provision of activities had been updated and that the City Commons staff would be maintaining the current annual provision of events.

The Superintendent concluded his outline of corporate management priorities by briefly discussing the benchmark corporate standards of sustainability, finance, health & safety, personnel and communication. He noted that a Head Ranger was responsible for each of these and that this involved oversight of improvement plans for each area.

The Head Ranger then outlined specific management priorities for the Coulsdon Commons. These include:

Farthing Downs & New Hill

- The continuation of the ten-year management plan for grassland and scrub management.
- Maintenance works at the "visitor hub" at Farthing Downs.

Coulsdon Common

- The creation installation of wood pasture at The Grove. The Superintendent noted that there was an issue with the planning application for fencing by the roadside.
- City Commons staff are working with a water consultant, Thames Water and the Environment Agency to resolve a flooding issue in Stites Hill Road in the south eastern area of the site, which is prone to flooding by foul water sewage.
- The Head Ranger introduced proposals to install posts along Holmfield Road to help protect the Common from erosion. In response to a question from the Chairman, the Head Ranger confirmed that the proposed solution would not inhibit strimming of the grass verges.
- Coulsdon Common Consultation Area, as discussed on the site visit of the same day. Consultation has begun on developing a model for the management of the area adjacent to the Merlewood Estate Office. The consultation centres around the appropriateness or not of the introduction of a grazing programme in this area and will include such options as the use of the "invisible fence" system currently being trialled at Epping Forest and Burnham Beeches. The Superintendent

suggested a site meeting to Burnham Beeches could be useful for the Committee to learn more about the “invisible fence” project.

Kenley Common

- Drainage and vegetation management work continues to be undertaken by City Commons staff to help conserve the heritage features on Kenley Common.
- City Commons staff are committed to retaining and restoring open areas of species rich grassland on Whyteleafe Bank and protecting the residential boundary by carrying out tree safety management.

Riddlesdown

- A review on boundaries and site safety was being undertaken to ensure the site is protected and the safety of people and livestock. The Head Ranger noted that a form of height control barrier for vehicles was being considered. In response to an observation the Superintendent said that whilst a height control feature would not be a 100% guarantee of site security, although he was confident it could act as a deterrent. He noted that the barrier was a compromise between site security and aesthetics.

A brief discussion of the Coulsdon Commons management priorities followed during which a member of the Committee said that there had been a noticeable increase in traffic using Stites Hill and Holmfield Road. In response to this observation the Head Ranger noted that the installation of a short section of rumble strips had been installed through a partnership with Croydon Council. The concrete sections had been laid parallel to the road edging to encourage drivers to reduce their speed and to protect the Common from erosion.

6. FRIENDS' GROUPS UPDATES

6.1 Kenley Airfield Friends Group (Chris Baguley)

Chris Baguley reported to the Committee the passing of Mr Mike Simpson due to illness and expressed his sense of loss for a man who had been a dedicated Friend of Kenley Airfield.

Mr Baguley updated the Committee on recent work undertaken by the Friends of Kenley Airfield. This included:

- The Friends had handed the Heritage Lottery Application project over to the City of London given its greater resources and experience in such applications. Mr Baguley noted that the finalised application had been submitted on 6 June and the decision would be announced in September 2013.
- The Friends continued to give presentations on the history of the Airfield.

- The Annual General Meeting had been held recently, at which over 65 persons heard a presentation from a local Wing Commander. Mr Baguley noted that he had been elected Secretary at the meeting and furthermore the Friends had authorised expenditure for dog waste bins on the airfield.
- The Group was holding an exhibition at a local fun day in July 2013.
- The airfield was hosting an air show on the weekend of 7/8 September 2013.
- The Group was undertaking a Grand Litter Pick over the airfield on 29 June 2013.

6.2 Friends of Farthing Downs (Ian Payne)

Mr Payne updated the Committee on current issues being dealt with by the Friends of Farthing Downs. These include:

- The steps on Downs Road have been identified for upgrading.
- The Friends had noted more pressure on Farthing Downs due to new housing schemes such as Cane Hill in Coulsdon.
- The Friends were exploring the feasibility of a North Downs National Park.
- The Friends were currently involved in developing a nature trail in partnership with Croydon Council in respect of Happy Valley.
- The Friends were the subject of a £400 promotion campaign at Coulsdon South Train Station. The display frame was being provided by the station operator.
- The recent pop-up Cake Sale had been a success but it is unlikely to be repeated due to the need for a Level Two Food Hygiene certificate.

7. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Access to Legal Expertise

In response to a question from the Committee regarding the ability of the City of London Corporation to provide specific legal expertise to local societies and resident groups to help defend and preserve the Green Belt, the Superintendent advised that much of the legal basis for the management of the City of London Open Spaces arose from specific Acts of Parliament that governed particular Open Spaces (e.g. Hampstead Heath, Queen's Park), and that any legal expertise that did exist within the Corporation would be centred on the interpretation of those Acts in particular.

8. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**
There was no urgent business.

9. **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday 12 February 2014 at 7.00pm at the Merlewood Estate Office, Ninehams Road, Caterham, Surrey, CR3 5LN.

The meeting closed at 8.35pm

Chairman

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