

## COULSDON COMMONS CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 12 February 2014

**Minutes of the meeting of the Coulsdon Commons Consultative Committee held at the Merlewood Estate Office, Ninehams Road, Caterham, Surrey at 7.00pm**

### **Present**

#### **Members:**

Sylvia Moys (In the Chair)	Graham Lomas (Friends of Farthing Downs)
Alderman Gordon Haines	Sarah Lovatt (New Hillbillies)
Deputy Catherine McGuinness	Dr Jane McLauchlin (Croydon Natural & Scientific Society)
Sylvia Moys	Phil Rathbone (Croydon Conservation Volunteers)
Rachel Adams (Croydon Conservation Volunteers)	Councillor Hilary Turner (Tandridge District Council)
Alan Clifford (Old Coulsdon Residents' Association)	Councillor Chris Wright (London Borough of Croydon)
Malcolm Jennings (Association of Croydon Conservation Societies)	

#### **Officers:**

Alistair MacLellan	- Town Clerk's Department
Andy Barnard	- Superintendent of Stoke Common, Burnham Beeches and City Commons
Allan Cameron	- Head Ranger, Coulsdon Commons
Andrew Thwaites	- Head Ranger, Ashted Commons
Steve Wise	- Senior Ranger, Coulsdon Commons
Steve Bruce	- Ranger
David Wraith	- Ranger
Zuza Kukielka	- Ranger
Maria Traynor	- Support Services Officer, City Commons

### **1. APOLOGIES**

Due to Alderman Gordon Haines being delayed in traffic the meeting commenced at 7.00pm with Mrs Sylvia Moys in the Chair.

The Chairman welcomed those present to the meeting and introduced Andy Barnard, the new Superintendent of Stoke Common, Burnham Beeches and City Commons. She noted that Andy Barnard had replaced Bob Warnock, who had moved over to a new role as Superintendent of Hampstead Heath following the departure of Simon Lee to take up the appointment of Chief Executive of Wimbledon & Putney Commons.

Apologies were received from Deputy Stanley Ginsburg, Chris Baguley (Kenley Airfield Friends' Group), Richard Carter (South London Harriers), Gwyneth

Fookes (Bourne Society), Councillor Stephen O'Connell (London Borough of Croydon), Dr Jane Sidell (English Heritage) and Avril Sleeman (British Horse Society).

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

There were no declarations.

3. **MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the public minutes and summary of the meeting held on 26 June 2013 be agreed as an accurate record, subject to Ian Payne being listed as present.

**Matters Arising**

**Terms of Reference**

The Superintendent noted that his predecessor's commitment to considering the inclusion of local parish council representatives on the Committee would be dealt with under Item 4 on the current agenda. Graham Lomas added that it would be worthwhile considering including a representative from the village of Netherne given its proximity to Farthing Downs.

4. **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Committee considered its draft Terms of Reference. The Town Clerk noted that, whilst these had been approved at the previous meeting, they had come before the Committee once more given some minor amendments had been made to them since the last meeting. Furthermore, both the West Wickham Commons and Ashted Common Consultative Committees had or were shortly to be considering their respective draft Terms of Reference once more and therefore it was felt appropriate for the current Committee to be afforded the same opportunity.

*Alderman Haines joined the meeting at this point. It was agreed that Mrs Moys remain in the Chair.*

The Superintendent noted the fact that officers would consider including representatives from local parish councils as per the minutes of the previous meeting, and they would be considering Graham Lomas' suggestion that a representative of the village of Netherne be considered also.

**RESOLVED –**

- that the Committee's decision at the meeting on 26 June 2013 to approve the draft Terms of Reference be endorsed, subject to the minor amendments that had been made;
- that the Superintendent be authorised to invite further representatives to join the Committee, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman.

## 5. **INTRODUCTION TO STRUCTURAL CHANGES**

The Committee received a verbal report of the Superintendent on structural changes within the City Commons.

The Superintendent first took the opportunity to introduce himself, noting that he had been a member of staff at the City of London since 2001 and was taking responsibility for the City Commons in addition to his existing role as Superintendent of Stoke Common and Burnham Beeches. He noted that his background and experience was in business administration and countryside management, and he was particularly passionate about promoting sustainability.

He went on to explain that the staffing restructure had commenced in 2011 under his predecessor and he was now involved in completing the process. He added that whilst the overall team organisation and structure had been mapped out, each role remained to have a named member of staff allocated to it. He concluded by noting that the new organisational structure would be fully populated and in operation within 12 months.

Alderman Haines intervened to note that he had worked closely, in his capacity as the Chairman of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee, with both Bob Warnock and Andy Barnard. He placed on record his personal thanks and thanks on behalf of the Committee to Bob Warnock for the fabulous work he had performed as Superintendent of City Commons, and the superb support his team had given him. Similarly he had been privileged to work with Andy Barnard at Burnham Beeches and had witnessed the superb team that Andy had led there. He noted that he was really comfortable with the decision to allocate Stoke Common, Burnham Beeches and City Commons to Andy Barnard now that Bob Warnock had moved to Hampstead Heath and he wished to reassure both the Committee and the staff at the City Commons that change in this instance was for the best. He concluded by wishing both Andy Barnard and Bob Warnock every success in their new roles.

In response to a suggestion from Graham Lomas, the Superintendent committed to circulating an updated team structure document to members of the Committee once the new structure had been finalised.

## 6. **SUMMARY REPORT OF THE VISITOR SURVEY 2012**

The Head Ranger introduced a report of the Superintendent of Stoke Common, Burnham Beeches and City Commons on the Visitor Survey 2012. He noted that the survey had been conducted throughout 2011-12 using a recognised survey methodology and that highlights among the results included:

- Over 1 million visits to the City Commons, with 189,000 to Farthing Downs, 58,000 to Coulsdon Common, and 145,000 to Kenley Common. Riddlesdown was the most popular site, with 227,000 visits.

- Farthing Downs had a greater density of visits to the amenity areas of the site, e.g. the mown areas, and had an even proportion of male and female visitors to the site.
- 60% of visitors to Coulsdon Common brought a dog.
- Kenley Common had twice as many visitors at the weekends compared to weekdays. By comparison, Riddlesdown had no great difference in visitor numbers between weekends and weekdays.
- Visitor patterns across each of the sites reflected a national picture of 'honeypot' sites that attracted intensive visitor numbers. Nevertheless the actual number of visits were below the national average when compared to similar sites nationwide.

He went on to note that conclusions to be drawn from the survey included:

- The profile of visitors reflected the communities that were local to the Commons.
- Visitors to the Commons did not include many children – this could be due to the perception of the high number of dogs across the different sites.
- Persons with disabilities appeared to be poorly represented among those persons visiting the Commons.

The Head Ranger finished his introduction by noting that the survey results would help inform future planning for the management of the various sites, and that the emphasis on future surveys would be to move away from a quantitative approach to a qualitative one.

In response to an observation from Phil Rathbone that there appeared to be a lack of public awareness over the number of paths around Kenley Common, the Head Ranger agreed that more effort could be made by rangers to educate the public, and for the potential for signage to be explored.

In response to an observation by Councillor Chris Wright that sports had not been included within the Visitor Survey, the Head Ranger agreed that this theme would be something to be included in any future survey work.

The Committee went on to discuss the use of Coulsdon Commons by children, noting that some use was made of football pitches at Riddlesdown but generally sites such as Farthing Downs were arguably too far for visits by children except in the case of exceptional events such as heavy snowfall.

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7. **VOLUNTEER IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2013**

The Head Ranger introduced a report of the Superintendent of Stoke Common, Burnham Beeches and City Commons on the Volunteer Improvement Plan 2013. He noted that:

- Good progress was being made in implementing the plan.
- A key emphasis of the plan was the development of volunteer leaders.
- There was a particular opportunity to train and develop livestock volunteers.
- A volunteer Tree Warden scheme had been launched during 2013 and was ongoing.
- Rangers carried out spot checks on the work of volunteers to maintain oversight of the work carried out across the Commons.
- Given the high number of volunteer hours of work on Coulsdon Common, rangers planned to encourage consistent volunteers to become volunteer leaders.

The Chairman noted the significant contribution of volunteers to the City Commons as a whole and suggested the City's appreciation for their hard work and dedication be reflected in the City Commons newsletter.

In response to a suggestion from Graham Lomas that the City provide guidance to local groups on how to identify and encourage volunteers from within their memberships, Phil Rathbone commented that often it was simply a case of talking to people and inviting interested persons along to voluntary activities to give them an idea of what was involved.

The Head Ranger noted that rangers had secured some corporate volunteers following a mailshot to local homes and businesses.

Sarah Lovatt commented that it would be worthwhile exploring the potential to involve Duke of Edinburgh students in voluntary activities on the Commons.

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8. **KEY PROJECTS AND ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2013/14**

The Head Ranger and Senior Ranger delivered a presentation on Key Projects and Annual Work Programme activities carried out during 2013/14. The Head Ranger explained that the Annual Work Programme was underpinned by themes (a 'balanced score card') of *vision, service, open spaces, people* and *making connections*. The rationale behind these themes was to make corporate values explicit and to prevent an overemphasis on any one area at the expense of others. Each theme was measured using detailed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and, by being linked to the Annual Work Programme, helped management set overall priorities.

The Superintendent noted that the balanced scorecard was designed to provide a framework to how work across the Commons was planned and implemented. It therefore provided a useful benchmark and would be reviewed in a year's time. He stressed that the formulation of such themes did not detract rangers from their real, core focus, which was maintaining the City Commons.

Graham Lomas commented that it was difficult to relate the balanced scorecard to the projects listed in the Annual Work Programme – that whilst it may seem evident to City staff who had been involved in drafting both the scorecard and the Annual Work Programme this was arguably not the case to an outsider considering the documents for the first time. He added that, as a local stakeholder, he would welcome the information being presented in such a way as would help local groups and societies readily identify areas in which the City was – given the limits on available resources – in need of additional assistance in managing the Commons from local groups such as his.

The Head Ranger then went on to outline some of the key activities that has been carried out on the Coulsdon Commons during 2013. These included:

#### *Rangering and Visitor Experience*

- Preparation for, and securing of, 4 Green Flag and 2 Green Heritage Awards.

#### *Marketing*

- Development of the City Commons webpage and the planned appointment of an Information Ranger for 3-6 months.

#### *Condition Assessments*

- Two successful inspections by the Rural Payments Agency.

#### *Conservation Grazing*

- Development of a Grazing Business Plan
- Overwintering of livestock at Epping Forest
- Appointment of a Livestock Ranger in 2014

#### *Tree Health*

Volunteer monitoring of tree disease, particularly relevant given the presence of Oak Processionary Moth at a nearby site.

#### *Kenley Revival*

- Project Officer in place following successful application for phase one Heritage Lottery Funding

The Head Ranger of Ashted Common took the opportunity to provide more detail on the Kenley Revival Project. He explained that the successful bid for phase one Heritage Lottery Funding provided monies to help develop a more detailed application for phase 2 funding. The detailed application would consider aspects such as encouraging greater access to the Kenley site, given there was no existing car park or visitor toilets. The phase 2 application deadline was December 2014 which meant the City was bound by a tight-timescale given it was hoped the Kenley Revival Project would be completed by Summer 2015 in time for the Battle of Britain Anniversary.

The Chairman registered thanks on behalf of the Committee for all of the hard work rangers had put into making the Kenley Revival Project a success thus far.

The Head Ranger concluded his outline of key projects undertaken in 2013:

#### *Consultation*

- The formation of the Coulsdon Commons Consultative Committee.

#### *Sustainability*

- The use of Aspen chainsaw fuel and greener vehicles.

#### *Finance*

- Revenue income of £13,000 from the sale of cattle and £1,900 from timber.

The Senior Ranger then provided a brief update on some projects that had been undertaken across the Coulsdon Commons during the past year. These included works to Coulsdon verge; Grove extensions to restore wood pasture; boundary and grassland management at Whyteleafe Bank; and works to footpaths and fencing at Norfolk Bank on Riddlesdown.

A Ranger then updated the Committee on the restoration of open areas of grassland at Farthing Downs and New Hill. In reply, Malcolm Jennings voiced his concern over the total loss of woodland and its visual impact on the landscape. Councillor Hilary Turner added that it would be sensible for the City to carry out some publicity to raise awareness over why trees were being removed at a time when flooding was such a prominent issue in the national news.

The Senior Ranger concluded by noting that small branch debris and fallen trees from recent bad weather would be dealt with once ground conditions improved.

9. **MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES AND ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15**  
The Head Ranger introduced and summarised a report of the Superintendent of Stoke Common, Burnham Beeches and City Commons on Management Priorities for 2014/15. He noted that key issues would be grassland and scrub management; stock fencing; wood pasture; boundaries; drainage; and conservation. He added that the City Surveyor's Department would be carrying out works on a stormwater drain for Coulsdon Common.

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### 10. **FRIENDS' GROUPS UPDATES**

#### 10.1 **Kenley Airfield Friends Group (Chris Baguley)**

The Chairman noted that it had been necessary for Chris Baguley to present his apologies for the meeting at short notice for personal reasons. She wished Mr Baguley and his wife all best wishes on behalf of the Committee.

#### 10.2 **Friends of Farthing Downs (Graham Lomas)**

Graham Lomas provided an update on the work of the Friends of Farthing Downs, including:

- The Friends had been reviewing their role and contribution to the Downs over the past year;
- The Friends planned to evaluate the work of their counterpart organisation at South Downs National Park to identify best practice;
- Regular walks, meetings and events were planned for 2014, with a March-November 2014 programme being published recently;
- The Friends were in touch with Southern Rail to explore ways in which Farthing Downs could be promoted on the rail network – ideas included poster and signage at Coulsdon South Station; large promotional pictures within the station building; and the installation of a wildlife garden upon the station platform.
- A Friends website was being developed;
- The Friends were working to see whether QR-codes could be installed upon the trailposts across the Downs.

### 11. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

#### **Kenley Air Show**

In response to a question from Phil Rathbone the Head Ranger confirmed that the next airshow at Kenley was planned for 2015.



### **City Commons Consultative Committee Minutes**

In response to a question from Dr Jane McLauchlin the Town Clerk confirmed that the draft minutes from each of the City Commons Consultative Committees' early 2014 meetings would be circulated once the meeting of the Ashted Common Consultative Committee had taken place on 18 February 2014.

### **Farthing Downs Barn**

Graham Lomas requested that the Friends of Farthing Downs be included in any consideration given to the disposal of potential surplus assets such as the barn at Farthing Downs.

### **Committee Dates**

In response to a comment by Alan Clifford the Town Clerk agreed to circulate the next meeting date of the Committee to its membership by email. The Town Clerk reminded those present that future Committee dates were also available online on the City of London website.

### **12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

There was no other business.

### **13. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The date of the Summer visit was scheduled for Tuesday 8 July 2014. The Town Clerk agreed to circulate details on venue and timings once these had been agreed.

**The meeting closed at 8.36pm**

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Chairman

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