

HIGHGATE WOOD CONSULTATIVE GROUP
Wednesday, 21 April 2021

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Highgate Wood Consultative Group held on
Wednesday, 21 April 2021 at 4.00 pm

Present

Members:

Anne Fairweather (Chair)
Deputy John Tomlinson
Stephanie Beer
Councillor Bob Hare
Michael Hammerson

Officers:

Jonathan Meares - Highgate Wood, Conservation & Trees Manager
Bob Warnock - Superintendent of Hampstead Heath
Leanne Murphy - Town Clerk's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Karina Dostalova, Peter Corley, Therese Gray (represented by Louise Lewis), Lucy Roots, Councillor Julia Ogiehor and Alison Watson.

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

There were no declarations.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED, the public minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 October 2020.

4. HAMPSTEAD HEATH, HIGHGATE WOOD AND QUEEN'S PARK COMMITTEE MINUTES

4.1 25 November 2020

The public minutes of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee meeting held on 25 November 2020 were received.

4.2 7 January 2021

The public minutes of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee meeting held on 7 January 2021 were received.

4.3 24 February 2021

The public minutes of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee meeting held on 24 February 2021 were received.

5. **DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT - HIGHGATE WOOD CHARITY (NO. 232986)**

Members received a report of the Director of Open Spaces presenting the draft End of Year Annual Report for the Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Kilburn Charity (No. 232986).

During 2020/21 activities, events and income generation at Highgate Wood have been impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The Wood has remained open and has provided invaluable access to open space for the local community during the three National Lockdowns.

The achievement of the 2020/21 Key Priorities has been impacted by the ongoing pandemic and were set out along with proposed draft priorities for inclusion in the 'Plans for Future Periods 2021/22' for Members feedback, with a focus on ground restoration works. The draft Annual Work Programme Projects 2021/22 and draft Highgate Wood Divisional Plan 2021/24 are also presented for Members feedback.

The Highgate Wood, Conservation & Trees Manager provided Members with a full update on Highgate Wood matters since the last meeting. It was noted that there was notable compaction and erosion impacting the Woods, and staff were carrying out restoration work to allow areas to regenerate as part of the COVID-19 Recovery Programme, which would be the primary focus of work over the next 1-2 years. Heath Hands volunteers were also helping with work in woodland areas to block off desire lines which have been formed during the pandemic.

It was noted that efficiencies continued to be made following the budget reduction, and the staff compliment had been reduced from 6 to 5.

With regards to events, Members were advised that a Roman Kiln event would take place in July to promote the Kiln and Highgate Woods. Other upcoming events included the Great Big Pottery Throwdown which had a number of local celebrities involved.

Members were advised of a proposal to support 6 young people with a heritage focussed training programme and a request had been made to the City Corporation for funding for £20k.

In response to a query concerning the service accommodation of the sixth staff member, Officers confirmed this property had been converted into an office almost 10 years ago and will be the proposed home for the Kiln.

Members voiced concerns regarding the Conservation Area which had suffered during the pandemic and required drastic action. It was noted this would make a big difference to the area as it was heavily used by forest schools.

A Member (also the Trustee of the Friends of Highgate Roman Kiln Charity) implored Members to publicise the existence of it and assist drive to raise funding.

With regards to Oak Processionary Moths (OPM), a Member had been advised that Alexandra Park were leaving nests as long as they were not a danger to the public and queried if the initial feeling was over estimated as blue tits were assisting to eat the caterpillars. Officers were aware of a parasitic fly, which is established in Highgate Wood, and hoped this would help control the OPM population.

It was noted that an email had been received from the Forestry Commission asking if students could review this parasite at Highgate Wood. Members were keen that the new Conservation Area be used as an opportunity for students to do studies of the ground, flora, fungi and insect life as it recovers over time.

In response to a comment regarding the Friends of Highgate Wood Roman Kiln (FOHRK) proposal request for £20k funding, Officers noted that they had supported the Roman Kiln project since it started a decade ago, supported the original application and continued to support the new FOHRK charity. However, there were difficulties committing to £20k at this time due to budgetary constraints plus further Target Operating Model implications at the City Corporation. The Superintendent confirmed the need to stabilise the budget and prioritise COVID recovery plans.

Regards to café tendering, it was confirmed the process would restart in May and Officers anticipated having a new lease by October/November 2021.

Concerning Forest School licensing, it was noted that there were currently two commercial Forest Schools licensed, but this were under review. Officers agreed it was not possible to have more schools due to the impacts on soil compaction and understory regeneration.

With regards to local planning considerations, a Member enquired if Officers were aware of the Queens Wood scheme to open up a Thames water pipe and whether the London Borough of Haringey had taken account of Highgate Wood. Officers were concerned by the proposal and concerned and agreed to speak with Friends of Queens Wood members.

A Member noted that the Highgate Neighbourhood Forum had reconstituted its Green Spaces Group and were working on wildlife corridors. Officers confirmed wildlife corridors was an objective of the Management Plan, but the Team had struggled to realise some of the original aspirations. It was confirmed that TFL had been contacted with an expression of interest to take over the area and Officers awaited a response to discuss a possible land acquisition. A Member suggested involving local MP Catherine West.

RESOLVED – That Members:-

- Provide feedback on the 'Plans for Future Periods 2021/22' and the draft Annual Trustees Report for 2020/21 (appendix 1);
- Provide feedback on the draft Annual Work Programme Projects for 2021/22, as set out in appendix 2;

- Provide feedback on the draft Highgate Wood Divisional Plan 2021/24, as set out in appendix 3.

6. **OPEN SPACES DEPARTMENT BUSINESS PLAN FOR 2021/22**

Members received a report of the Director of Open Spaces presenting the high-level Business Plan for the Open Spaces Department for 2021/22. This Plan identifies seven major workstreams for the whole Department together with the actions within various Corporate strategies that the Department is helping to deliver, sets out the current Departmental risks, provides financial information and identifies our performance measures. This report also identifies next year's key areas of work for Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park.

RECEIVED.

7. **CYCLICAL WORKS PROGRAMME (CWP) 2021/22 UPDATED BID REPORT**

Members received a report of the City Surveyor setting out the details of projects which will now be undertaken in 2021/22 and details of the projects that will be delivered within that year which form part of the previous year's programmes.

The Chair confirmed this work was part of a wider overview of the City's Open Spaces and was being shared to draw out relevant Highgate Wood bids as part of the ongoing CWP review of wear and tear. Officers confirmed the focus for Highgate Wood included security and the electric gates, keeping the timber building constructions in good condition and drainage issues at the pavilion café toilets.

RECEIVED.

8. **QUESTIONS**

A Member voiced huge concern over the impact of Forest Schools. If applications were not licenced at Highgate Wood this could impact on nearby Queen's Wood and possibly Hampstead Heath. The Chair stated that a licensing system had been put in place to provide more protection and Officers agreed to share the policy with other areas. It was acknowledged that the local areas were overwhelmed by Forest Schools, which had a significant impact on grounds, and that the Heath, Highgate Wood and Kenwood Estate had reached capacity for this commercial activity.

9. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT**

The Chair advised Members that this would be Karina Dostalova's last meeting as Deputy Chairman and gave thanks for her hard work and support during her time as Chairman and Deputy Chairman. These thanks were echoed by Members.

10. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting on 6 October 2021 was noted.

The meeting ended at 4.54 pm

Chairman

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