

ASHTEAD COMMON CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
Monday, 2 July 2012

Minutes of the meeting of the Ashtead Common Consultative Committee held at Ashtead Estate Office, Woodfield Road, Ashtead, Surrey, KT21 2DU on Monday, 2 July 2012 at 6.30 pm

Present

Members:

Alderman Gordon Haines (Chairman)
Barbara Newman (Deputy Chairman)
Joseph Byllam-Barnes
Douglas Mobsby
David Baker (Ashtead Residents' Association)
Helen Cocker (Lower Mole Countryside Management Project)
Bob Eberhard (CTC Local Rights of Way)
Wyn James (Ashtead Common Volunteers)
Paul Krause (Surrey Wildlife Trust)
Cllr John Northcott (Mole Valley District Council Ward Councillor for Ashtead Common)
Cllr Chris Townsend (Surrey County Council)
Pippa Woodall (British Horse Society)

Officers:

Edward Foale	- Committee & Member Services Officer, Town Clerk's Department
Bob Warnock	- Superintendent, City Commons
Shaun Waddell	- Senior Ranger, City Commons
Andrew Thwaites	- Head Ranger, City Commons

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Anthony McLelland.

2. **DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF ANY PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA**

There were no declarations.

3. **MINUTES**

The minutes from the meeting held on 30 January 2012 were approved, subject to the following amendment:

Item 4 – Key Projects

It was confirmed that volunteers were *not classified as City Commons employees, but the City nevertheless had the same duty of care towards them.*

MATTERS ARISING

Item 6 – City Commons Annual Work Programme

A Member advised that the drop-kerb opposite the level crossing was not an issue for mobility scooter users, but continued to be an issue for cyclists.

4. **ANNUAL REVIEW OF VOLUNTEER WORKING ON THE OPEN SPACES**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces, which reviewed volunteer working on the City's open spaces over the previous year. Volunteer activity across all of the City's open spaces in 2011/12 amounted to over 46,000 hours worked, an increase of 1,132 hours on the previous year.

The Superintendent advised that Ashted Common had the largest number of volunteer hours of all the City Commons. In response to a Member's concern that there were now too many volunteers, the Superintendent advised that the Volunteer Leaders who were currently undergoing training would begin to allocate tasks and disseminate relevant information to volunteers, which would reduce the amount of staff time required to manage them. The Superintendent also advised that volunteers were undertaking a wider variety of tasks than previously and were currently involved in reptile and tree surveys.

The Committee recognised the benefit of having a large number of volunteers and commended the work undertaken by them.

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5. **RESPONSIBLE DOG OWNERSHIP - GOVERNMENT CONSULTATIONS & INITIATIVES**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces relative to Dog Control Orders. The City had acquired Secondary Authority Status on 31 May 2012, which allowed the City to make and enforce Dog Control Orders in its Open Spaces outside the Square Mile. The report advised the Committee of proposals to consult on the introduction of one or more Dog Control Orders at Burnham Beeches before determining the way forward for other Open Spaces.

In response to a Member's query, the Superintendent clarified that Croydon currently had Dog Control Orders. It was not currently anticipated that Mole would seek to obtain the Orders as it was not considered necessary or proportionate to counter dog-related incidents in the area. The Superintendent drew comparisons between the measures used to enforce the Orders and the Fixed Penalty Notices used to enforce traffic laws.

In response to a Members' question, the Superintendent advised that a report outlining the proposed introduction of Dog Control Orders at Burnham Beeches was expected to be submitted to each Open Spaces Grand Committee by the end of the year.

In response to a Member's query, the Chairman advised that the Open Spaces, City Gardens & West Ham Park Committee had been broadly in favour of proposals to microchip dogs, although the issue had proven contentious. The Superintendent advised that many industry bodies, including the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the Kennel Club, were proponents of microchipping dogs.

A Member expressed concern that professional dog walkers could be unfairly restricted in the number of dogs they could walk.

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MEETING ADJOURNMENT

At 18.57, Members agreed to adjourn the meeting temporarily.

At 19.06, the meeting resumed.

The Superintendent advised that earlier in the evening there had been an incident involving the delivery of cattle to the Common. The Head Ranger and Senior Ranger had been involved in controlling the incident, along with local volunteers contacted at short notice. The situation had since been resolved.

6. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

There were no questions.

7. BUSINESS PLAN KEY PROJECTS UPDATE

The Committee considered a report relative to Key Projects for the ensuing year.

In response to a Member's query, the Senior Ranger advised that, over the life of the Project, 320 trees would be analysed in the Veteran Tree Management Project, 80 of which would be analysed in 2012/13.

In response to a Member's query, the Superintendent advised that a report on visitor numbers in Ashtead Common would be submitted to the Committee in due course.

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8. SENIOR RANGER'S UPDATE

The Committee received a verbal update from the Senior Ranger, during which the following points were noted:

- The post mortem on a cow that died in 2011 had been inconclusive, but it was likely the cow died of poisoning from vegetation. As a precaution, cattle would not be placed in the grazing area in which the cow had been found dead.
- As part of the Heritage Weekend arrangements, the Ashtead Common volunteers would run an information point adjacent to the Roman Villa excavations. To engage with visitors the volunteers provide teas and homemade cakes. Any donations received would be sent to a local charity chosen by volunteers.
- In response to a Member's query, the Senior Ranger advised that a national vegetation clarification survey was being undertaken. The management regime at Phoenix Field was reducing the build-up of

bracken mulch, which would consequently reduce the fire risk in the area.

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9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

The Superintendent advised that Newton Wood, a 72-acre stretch of land adjoined to Ashted Common, was currently on offer for £450,000. The Wood was characteristically very different from Ashted Common, but would complement the City's existing land. However, the City was not currently able to make any capital purchases for budgetary reasons. The land was a Site of Special Scientific Interest and located within the Green Belt.

A Member expressed concern that a future government could relax planning laws to allow the owner to sell the wood for urban development.

In response to a Member's query, the Superintendent advised that section 106 funding could not be used to purchase the land.

The Superintendent advised that there was currently no public access to Newton Wood. If someone bought the land, it could be beneficial to negotiate public access.

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10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Town Clerk undertook to arrange the next Committee meeting and notify Members accordingly.

The meeting ended at 7.51 pm

Chairman

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