

<b>Committee(s):</b> Epping Forest and Commons Committee - For decision	<b>Dated:</b> 16/03/2023
<b>Subject:</b> The Commons- Assistant Director's Update Dec-Jan 2023	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	2,5,11 &12
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>If so, how much?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Juliemma McLoughlin, Executive Director Environment Department	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Geoff Sinclair, Assistant Director The Commons	

### Summary

The purpose of this report is to summarise activities across The Commons between December 2022 and January 2023. Reflecting the Chairman's guidance, the Assistant Directors report is presented in a shorter format but retaining the essential information for Members, with a dashboard style to summarise key data and statistics. Further refinement of the report will be made to better reflect progress on delivering the respective management and risk plans

### Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

### Main Report

#### The Commons Local Risk Financial Summary – Appendix 1

1. Appendix 1 contains graphical representation of financial data to the end of January 2023 (period 1023) These figures are The Commons Local Risk only and does not include non-local risk elements such as City Surveyors projects.
2. The first table in appendix 1 gives actual expenditure to the end of January 2023 against the whole year budget, subdivided by type and Division of Service (DOS), where BB is Burnham Beeches, SC is Stoke Common, WW is West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons and AC is Ashted Common. This is further

summarised graphically in chart 'Budget and Actuals by type, across all the DOS for this financial year

3. The overall debt figures of £10,088.98 are in the process of being reviewed for the forthcoming financial year end. £7,702.56 of the total debt are wayleaves with a mix of private residents and utilities companies involved. There are a couple of persistent nonpayers where further action is to be considered, however, through death and other considerations this wayleave debt will be reduced by around half through write-offs. The negative property debt reflects over payments, for example, where wayleave holders have died and there is a possible repayment required. The non-property debts are either charges made to staff or invoice for room rental.
4. The overall financial summary at Appendix 1 shows that:
  - a. Expenditure is in line with budget expectations for this period and income exceeds budget expectations.
  - b. The income figure, however, includes a Section 106 payment of £264,696.61 for expenditure to be spread over 5 years.
  - c. Reduced staff costs for the year, due to longstanding vacancies, have been allocated to update vehicles to be ULEZ compliant and to acquire two tractors. Increasingly protracted delivery times for these mean that, at least for the ULEZ compliant vehicles, there is a need to request carry forward funding into 2023/24 to cover this procurement, subject to agreement by Chamberlains and RASC

## The Commons Key Data – Appendix 2

5. **Car Parking Income (Fig 1):** Overall car parking income is 85% of the budget forecast for this time of year. Bad weather over Christmas plus the previously reported lower than expected use of Riddlesdown CP impacted income. Takings on nice weekends at Burnham Beeches are being maintained however weekday takings are lower than previously.
6. **Energy Consumption (Fig 2):** Energy consumption during 2022 is given in kWh for all the Commons along with the five-year average energy consumption. 2022 use has typically been below the five-year average with the period where it exceeded the average being when the wood heating system failed and a electric heaters had to be used during cold weather. The energy produced from photo voltaic (PV) cells installed on buildings at the Commons and from the wood heating system at the Burnham Beeches office is also shown with the energy produced on average 1.7 times that used from the national grid.
7. **Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (Fig 3):** Natural England (NE) condition assessment places ten of The Common's 14 SSSI Units in the highest, 'Favourable' category with remaining four unit in the next highest, 'Unfavourable Recovering' category. This data changes infrequently following assessment by NE

8. **Volunteering (Fig 4):** Volunteers undertook 2719 hours (389 seven-hour days) of work during the period the equivalent of £ 27,190 using the Heritage Fund's matched funding calculator.
9. **Antisocial Behaviour:** Flytipping (Fig 5) and Byelaw infringements (Fig 6) are at very low rates
10. **Accidents:** During the reporting period there was one reported accident, a car crash on icy roads involving a member of the public and no staff. So far this year there have been six accidents which is above the average of circa four per year. Chart 8 shows the accidents by type where, 'Vehicle' is vehicle related accidents, 'Task' is accidents linked to work being undertaken, 'Livestock' is where livestock is involved, 'Dog' are accidents involving dogs, 'Sport' is where an accident is linked to a sporting activity, 'Infrastructure' is accidents involving failures of site infrastructure, and 'Undefined' are where accidents are none of the above, eg someone falling while walking in the yard and hurting themselves.

### **Additional Important Updates**

#### Livestock

11. At the very beginning of December the pregnant cows on Farthing Downs were brought back to the barn at the Merlewood Estate Yard on the edge of Coulsdon Common. There will still be some Sussex cattle and Jacob sheep out grazing on the Commons during the winter.

#### SAMM/S106 Rangers

12. Two new Conservation & Community Engagement Rangers started work at Burnham Beeches in January. They are employed by The City of London Corporation, but funded by building developments within 5.6km of the Beeches in the Buckinghamshire area and from a single development at Slough at the old Horlicks factory which is being converted to housing, as mitigation for the potential harm that they may cause to the Special Area of Conservation. These Rangers will be out and about on the Beeches, working to provide sustainable outcomes for the National Nature Reserve and highlighting the many other recreational opportunities that exist in the surrounding countryside.

#### Flytip Prosecution

13. Working in partnership with enforcement officers from Croydon Council, City of London Rangers helped to build a case against fly tippers who dumped nearly 70 full bags of waste on Farthing Downs last October. In this particular incident, Ditches Lane was blocked to evening traffic and the rubbish spread onto the surrounding chalk grassland within the National Nature Reserve. Our thanks go out to several passers-by who helped to pile the bags, sweep broken glass and go through the rubbish. After finding evidence of an address amongst the waste, Croydon Council located the original owner and a fine was issued.



## Temporary Path Closures

14. For the past couple of years, the Ranger team at Burnham Beeches has carried out temporary winter path closures in areas that are most vulnerable to erosion - this was repeated at several areas again this year including, the ancient monuments at the Moat and Seven Ways Plain, where not only the habitat but also the archaeology are at risk.

## Bridge Repair

15. Following detailed surveying and numerous proposals to decide the best way to strengthen a key bridge on Ashted Common repairs were completed in December by the City of London's bridge engineers. The repair formed part of fire resilience plans and has meant that fire engines can now access over it to tackle any future fires.

## Planning Matters

16. Comments were submitted by Officers on the following application:  
*MO/2022/1965 'Request for an Environmental Impact (Screening) Opinion under Regulation 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 for the proposed installation of a battery energy storage system'*
17. The proposed development is sited immediately adjacent to Epsom and Ashted Commons SSSI, designated in 1955 for its diversity of habitat, rare invertebrates (particularly decaying wood specialists, flies and butterflies) and rich community of breeding birds. The facility will consume a considerable area of what is currently relatively low input grassland, an important foraging ground for some of the rare and endangered species living within the SSSI. Planning Officers confirmed the scheme did not require an EIA, a decision which we are looking at questioning.

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## Appendices

Appendix 1 – The Commons Local Risk Financial Summary

Appendix 2 – The Commons Key Data

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