

<b>Committee(s):</b> Epping Forest and Commons Committee	<b>Dated:</b> 18/05/2023
<b>Subject:</b> The Commons- Assistant Directors Update Feb-Mar 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 February 2023 and March 2023. Key data is presented in a dashboard format with further detail given in the main report.

### 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 February 2023 (period 1123) 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 February 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 £10899.97 is relatively unchanged from the January 2023 reported figure £10,088.98. Debts pending for more than 365 days were reduced over the period by £1678.26 however following the invoicing of a revised 'market rate' commercial wayleave 0-30 days have increased to £2854.25. 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. Ultimately only the amounts we spent in 22/23 will be accounted for in that FY the rest will be available for future years & 'drawn down' as req.
  - c. Reduced staff costs for the year, due to longstanding vacancies, have been allocated to update vehicles to be ULEZ compliant at WW and income at BB was used to acquire two tractors. A Capital Project budget of £101,923 has been approved by Chamberlains and RASC to cover this procurement which has been delayed due to protracted procurement times.

## The Commons Key Data – Appendix 2

5. **Car Parking Income (Gross) (Fig 1):** Gross car parking income is shown in figure 1. The figures still need to be reconciled for fees paid however overall BB takings to end of Feb were 10% below target ( £13000) while the two car parks at West Wickham and Coulsdon Common achieved 57% of their target.
6. **Energy Consumption (Fig 2):** Energy consumption during Jan and February are given in kWh for all the Commons along with average energy consumption and production figures. The average consumption figures have changed since the last Assistant Directors report to include the gas consumption figures. 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 0.67 times that drawn from both the gas and electric 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 2675 hours (382 seven-hour days) of work during the period the equivalent of £ 26,750 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:** Accident data is under review and will be updated in the next AD report

### **Additional Important Updates**

#### BBC Wild Isles Series

11. A highlight during the reporting period has been to see Burnham Beeches featured in the much-anticipated BBC documentary Wild Isles. In the Woodland episode, the infamous southern wood ants of the Beeches can be seen in a four-and-a-half-minute story which sees the ants hunting caterpillars and harvesting honeydew from aphids.

#### Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) proposed extension

12. Farthing Downs featured in a Time Out article reporting on the proposed expansion of the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and where Farthing Downs is proposed for inclusion which would give London its first AONB. Full report has been given to this Committee meeting separately.

#### Rewilding London: Mayor of London report

13. The City Corporation's landholding within the Surrey Hills National Nature Reserve have been identified as one of eleven priority zones in the Mayor of London's 'Rewilding London' report that came out in March. Officers are following this citation up with colleagues at the Mayor of London's Office to explore the opportunities this may present.

#### Biological Recording

14. Following quite an extensive fly survey of Ashted Common 431 species have been identified, 26 of which are of conservation concern including some classified as vulnerable, UK Priority and a few new records for the country. This makes Ashted Common a site important on at least a national level
15. A further survey of the saproxylic invertebrates at Burnham Beeches was reported on during the period. 66 species were found to be rare, scarce, threatened or near threatened conservation status. The beetle *Cis rugulosus* was discovered new to Britain and appears to be a rare native species which may have gone undiscovered or been overlooked. The current survey indicates that Burnham Beeches is more important for saproxylic invertebrates than had previously been recognised.

## Air pollution monitoring

16. A training day was held with a lichen and bryophyte specialist who spent the day with the BB eco-volunteers and four members of staff. He showed how to do a standard monitoring technique looking at the impact of nitrogen on lichens which we hope to employ over the next couple of months and link the results to the air quality monitoring being carried out.

## Overseas Visitors

17. Burnham Beeches played host to arboriculture consultants, university lecturers and tree managers from The Polish Tree Institute who came to study our propping techniques, rootzone management practices and risk management to keep our ancient pollards alive as long as possible.

## Emergency Planning – Fire Risk

18. Stoke Common due to its Fire Service risk rating received an annual visit by the Fire Service in March 2023 to check access, emergency procedures, timings of grazing and whether anything has changed over the year. Fire service staff were also briefed on the ecological importance of the site.

## Dog Waste Bag Savings Scheme

19. West Wickham and Coulsdon Common stopped supplying free dog waste bags across the various Commons over the period. How best to progress this action at Ashted and Burnham is still being considered.

## HM King Charles III Coronation

20. Two volunteer based events are being held on the Monday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2023 to mark the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles.

- At Burnham Beeches there will be an opportunity to celebrate our volunteers and for visitors to discover the work that they do and how they can also get involved. There will be volunteers taking part on the day to explain their varying roles as well as displays, activities, a practical project and a volunteer led guided walk to explain some recent volunteer projects. and will be followed by afternoon tea for the volunteers.
- Members of the Ashted Common Volunteers will be leading a guided walk across Ashted Common on Monday to celebrate the incredible diversity of veteran oaks. The walk will cover some of the locally famous named trees on a 4km route starting at the Ashted Common Estate Office at 10am on Monday

## Appendices

Appendix 1 – The Commons Local Risk Financial Summary

Appendix 2 – The Commons Key Data

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