

Committee(s): Epping Forest and Commons Committee – For information	Dated: 14/09/2023
Subject: The Commons – Assistant Directors Update Jun-July 2023	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	2,5,11 & 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	N/A
Report of: Bob Roberts , Interim Executive Director Environment Department	For Information
Report author: Geoff Sinclair, Assistant Director The Commons	

Summary

The purpose of this report is to summarise activities across The Commons between June 2023 and July 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

Background

1. Appendix 1 contains a graphical representation of financial data to the end of June 2023 (period 03-24) These figures are The Commons Local Risk only and do 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 June 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 Ashtead Common. This is further summarised graphically in the chart ‘Budget and Actuals by Type’, across all the DOS combined for this financial year.
3. There are no significant discrepancies between the budget and actual figures to note this early in the financial year. Government grant income figures are still

being impacted by the late payment of grant income for the 2022 calendar year and payments for 2023 are yet to be received.

The Commons Key Data – Appendix 2

4. **Car Parking Income (Fig 1):** Overall car park income for the first five months of the year are 9% down on the same period last year. Riddlesdown car park is running at around 78% of what it earned in 2022 for the same period.
5. **Volunteering (Fig 4):** Volunteers undertook 2,618 hours (374 seven-hour days) of work during the period, the equivalent of £26,180 using the National Lottery Heritage Fund's match funding calculator. Their activity during this period included diverse activities such as setting-up and dismantling grazing areas at Ashtead Common, path/fence repairs, reptile/bat survey and support with Lord Mayors annual visit to Burnham Beeches and a number of ragwort pulling events attended by a corporate City of London group as well as local volunteers
6. **Energy use and Production (Fig 2):** PV energy production was down by 22.5% in July on the five average while June was almost exactly on the average production figure. Confirmation if any were needed on the poor weather of July.
7. **Accidents:** Accident data is given on figures 7 (Accidents by month) and 8 (Accidents by type). Overall number of accidents is low with 10 accidents recorded however this is above average for the Commons where we would expect around 4 for the same period. In addition to these the number of incidents involving tick bites is significantly higher this year with 19 record ticks as opposed to 10 for the whole of last year. One member of staff has contracted Lyme's disease from a tick bite this year.

Additional Important Updates

Lord Mayors Annual Pollarding Event and Dorney wood Visit.

8. On the 19th July 2023 the Lord Mayor, Alderman Nicholas Lyons kindly undertook the annual ceremonial pollarding of a tree at Burnham Beeches. Happily, no health and safety incidents needed to be recorded. Two volunteers, Kate Ayers and Richard Todd gave presentations about their involvement in the work of Burnham Beeches with a lunch given for the Lord Mayor kindly hosted by the Dorney Wood Trust.

Events and educational activities

9. At Ashtead Common a total of 179 people were engaged in educational events during June and July. Activities included bat and butterfly walks as well as talks and activities tailored for specific groups. An impromptu educational activity themed around habitats was delivered for 57 pupils from the local primary school when their intended destination was forced to shut. Two Year 10 pupils undertook a week of work experience at Ashtead Common, "working with the volunteers, checking the cows, deconstructing and reconstructing part of the bridge and

finally identifying the different types of butterflies. Overall, the week was great and we had lots of fun” reported one of the pupils.

10. Ashtead rangers and volunteers attended Ashtead Village Day with a stall. This is the biggest event in Ashtead’s calendar. The team also hosted the South-East Regional Woodland Trust staff for a team meeting and guided walk at Ashtead Common.
11. The Coulsdon and West Wickham Commons engaged with 164 people through a variety of events including guided walks looking at glow worms, butterflies and the history of Coulsdon and Kenley. A litter picking activity was arranged for 30 Beavers at Coulsdon Common and a talk delivered 60 people at the Coulsdon West Residents Association AGM.
12. The Burnham Beeches team engaged with 344 people at events including a weeklong (damp) summer engagement week of drop-in activities run by the ranger team. The community Rangers attended the Horlicks Summer Party as part of their work to promote the wider green space as an alternative to Burnham Beeches under a Section 106 agreement with Slough Borough Council. The annual summer Consultative Committee walk was held on the 12th July 2023 with the PSPO consultation response being one of the main areas for discussion and separately reported. During this period the Beeches hosted two major film productions.
13. The first whole team meeting in over three years was hosted by the West Wickham and Coulsdon Common team. Due to COVID it was the first time many staff had met in person for a long time, and it was also the first time new staff recruited during COVID had been able to meet the wider team.

Green Flag Awards

14. All The Commons green spaces were successful in maintaining their Green Flag accreditation in 2023. This was the 20th year in a row for Ashtead Common to retain its accreditation.

Survey and monitoring

15. Results from two years of analysis following the fly survey conducted in 2021-22 at Ashtead Common have arrived. They reveal that Ashtead is home to 54 families and over 600 species of fly, including 40 of conservation concern and one BAP species. Currently a study of saproxylic species is underway at Ashtead Common. This has already identified some vulnerable and ecologically significant species including *Pentaphyllus testaceus*, a beetle that is regarded as a vulnerable native, and the larva of the click-beetle *Lacon querceus* which is classed as a Grade 1 Indicator of Ecological Continuity
16. Two undergraduate students are currently undertaking fieldwork for their dissertations, one at Stoke Common looking into the impact of grazing on the

Common and one looking at the impact of trampling on paths at Burnham Beeches

17. OPM surveys have been completed at both Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common. BBSC are now located within the OPM core zone rather than control zone meaning that survey is now undertaken based on risk rather than trying to achieve 100% coverage/removal. Following surveys necessary nest removal was be completed in July

Consultation Response on Farthing Common Neighbourhood Plan

18. Officer comments were submitted to Farthing Common Parish on their neighbourhood plan prior to its consultation. These covered technical issues concerning the Special Area for Conservation and textual queries. A formal response on the plan is to be made

Appendices

Appendix 1 – The Commons Local Risk Financial Summary

Appendix 2 – The Commons Key Data

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