

ASHTEAD COMMON CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
Tuesday, 29 January 2013

Minutes of the meeting of the Ashtead Common Consultative Committee held at
Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Tuesday, 29 January 2013 at
11.30 am

Present

Members:

Alderman Gordon Haines (Chairman)
Barbara Newman (Deputy Chairman)
Joseph Byllam-Barnes
Douglas Mobsby
David Baker
Helen Cocker
Bob Eberhard
Wyn James
Anthony McLelland
Cllr John Northcott

Officers:

David Pealing	- Town Clerk's Department
Katie Odling	- Town Clerk's Department
Bob Warnock	- Open Spaces Department
Shaun Waddell	- Open Spaces Department
Andrew Thwaites	- Open Spaces Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Chris Townsend (Surrey County Council) and Pippa Woodall (British Horse Society).

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

There were no declarations.

3. MINUTES

The minutes from the meeting held on 2 July 2012 were agreed as a correct record.

4. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

This Item was taken in conjunction with Item 7.

5. AUDIT OF ENTRANCES AND RIDES

The Committee considered a report of the Superintendent of City Commons, which presented an Audit of Entrances and Rides undertaken by two of the Ashtead Common volunteers, with support and guidance from the Superintendent and Ranger Team.

The Committee expressed its thanks and appreciation for the work of the volunteer authors in producing the report.

In response to a Member's query, Members were told that since the Olympics, cycling on the Common had increased. It was explained that whilst an official count hadn't taken place, Rangers and staff on the Common suggested there were more cyclists, especially casual cyclists and family groups. When Rangers found cyclists off the authorised routes, it was often established that the cyclist had lost their way, and this was often attributed to a lack of clear signage.

Members noted from the report that future work would include improvements to both the condition of some of the footpaths and concessionary rides. . The work itself would be done by volunteers in the summer months, with the support of the Ranger staff.

Responding to a question from a Member, the Committee heard that the final colour scheme of the map was not yet finalised, and the next step would be to approach a graphic designer to create the map. This map could then be resized to fit the various signs found around the Common.

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6. CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE REVIEW

Consideration was given to a report of the Superintendent of the City Commons regarding the effects of the City's governance review on consultative committee arrangements.

Members heard that little noticeable operational change for the committee should come out of the proposals, and that the intention was that the proposed formal meeting would continue to be held in January, and the proposed annual community consultation meeting would take place at the Common in the summer.

Members emphasized the importance of having a meeting at the Common, to see issues on the ground.

Members also heard that a report would be submitted to the committee at a later date, discussing options for the involvement of interested public groups at the annual community consultation meetings.

RESOLVED : - That,

- formal consultative committee meetings be held once a year for each of the 3 charities – Ashted Common, the Coulsdon Commons and the West Wickham Commons.
- an annual community consultation meeting be introduced by the City Commons Division for each charity. (These meetings would be tailored to local need and outcomes recorded for presentation to the next formal meeting or the next Epping Forest and Commons Committee.)

- the terms of reference for the Ashtead Common Consultative Committee be reviewed and terms of reference for the Coulsdon Commons and West Wickham Commons Consultative Committees introduced.

7. **CITY COMMONS MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES FOR 2013/14**

The Committee considered a report of the Superintendent of City Commons, relating to the management priorities for the City Commons Division that will guide the annual work programme during the period 1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014 inclusive.

The Chairman led the Committee in commending the new format presented in the report.

The report was taken in conjunction with a verbal update from the Senior Ranger, during which the following points were noted:

- The staff at the Common were aware of the rise in tree disease noted recently around the country. It was emphasized that monitoring of the trees in the Common would be increased, but staff were also careful not to make any rash decisions.
- Young cattle were to be introduced to the Common in the coming year, although there will not be an increase in grazing.
- As the volunteers and staff work across the Common replacing the signage, et cetera, as outlined in Item 5, it will provide an opportunity to find and upgrade dead hedges and clear areas around veteran trees to improve light and space.
- Bracken and the associated fire risk would be managed in the year ahead with a mixture of cattle, rolling and cutting.
- Scrub areas are to be worked on to create a 50/50 ratio of grass to scrub, a ratio recommended in Natural England guidelines.
- The excavation works around the Roman Villa were entering the final year of the seven year project, with a report outlining the findings to follow.
- The system of hardstandings and paved routes were to be addressed in a prioritised manner, after the completion of the signage works.

Members were told of the important work done by the volunteers to bring this all to fruition. The Committee also heard that in the autumn, several of the volunteers underwent leadership training. This had proved to be a success, and these specially trained volunteers were now leading small groups of other volunteers in completing work under their own supervision.

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

A Member wished to express his gratitude for the work of the staff and volunteers at the Common over the previous year. The Chairman led the Committee in joining in this thanks.

In response to a Member's question, the Committee were briefly updated on the status of the Newton Wood area currently up for sale. The Committee were reminded that the Corporation were unfortunately not in a position to procure the land itself. The Superintendent's staff were maintaining communication with the agents for the land, and whilst working to prevent complacency, they were also bearing in mind the Site of Special Scientific Interest status the area enjoyed.

The Members also heard that any public subscription to purchase the land was best arranged by the locals and concerned parties themselves.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

There were no items of urgent business.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as being the 1 July 2013, and the Superintendent's staff undertook to update the Committee on the time for the meeting in due course.

The meeting ended at 12.55 pm

Chairman

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