

ASHTEAD COMMON CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
Monday, 23 January 2017

Minutes of the meeting of the Ashtead Common Consultative Committee held at
Committee Rooms 3 & 4 - 2nd Floor, West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 23 January
2017 at 11.30 am

Present

Members:

Philip Woodhouse (Chairman)
Graeme Smith (Deputy Chairman)
Barbara Newman
Sylvia Moys
Jeremy Simons
David Baker (Ashtead Residents' Association)
Joseph Byllam-Barnes
Bob Eberhard (CTC Local Rights of Way)
Cllr David Hawksworth (Mole Valley District Council)
Paul Krause (Surrey Wildlife Trust)
James Irvine (Ashtead Common Volunteers)

Officers:

Fern Aldous	-	Town Clerk's Department
Andy Barnard	-	Superintendent, The Commons
Haydn Robson	-	Support Services Manager, The Commons
Andrew Thwaites	-	Head Ranger, The Commons
Shaun Waddell	-	Senior Ranger, The Commons

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Douglas Mosby, Connor Morrow (Lower Mole Countryside Management Project), Gary Nash (Surrey County Council Youth Worker), Councillor Chris Townsend (Surrey County Council) and Pippa Woodall (British Horse Society).

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

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2016 be approved as an accurate record.

Matters Arising

In response to a query from a Member in regards to the pollution in Rye Brook it was confirmed that the electricity company were paying for weekly removal of the oily substance. Members felt that this was unsatisfactory, given the adverse effect it was having on wildlife. It was felt the work to identify the cable was not

a priority of the Environment Agency, and the Chairman undertook to correspond with them on the issue.

4. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

The Committee received a verbal update from the Superintendent of the Commons updating them on management and operation activity at the Common since the last meeting. The following points were noted:

Notable Events

The Director of Open Spaces, Sue Ireland, was due to retire and her replacement, Colin Buttery would start on the 1st March 2017. There had been a 40% turnover of employees in the department since the Superintendent assumed management of the Division 3 years ago.

Savings

The division had been expected to make £162,000 worth of savings, of which £121,000 had so far been achieved. The difference of £41,000 has been deducted from the 2017/18 budget. The savings would be made both from cuts and increases to charges. It was hoped that the amount of donations could be increased to contribute to filling the shortfall. A year on year saving of 2% would be expected from 2018 onwards.

Property Review

A review of property assets had been conducted across the Commons, as part of its regular review of space and incoming generating opportunities. There had been a low level of interest in the office advertised at Farthing Downs, however Officers were optimistic for an occupant in the Spring.

Open Spaces Bill

The Open Spaces Bill was on its third reading in the House of Commons. There had been one accepted addition from the Kennel Club, who had petitioned that the use of Community Protection Orders should be the subject to Freedom of Information requests. The City is considering its position.

Rota Review

A review of the rota arrangements across the Commons had taken place and changes had been made to standardise arrangements where appropriate. From this, staff at Ashtead would be given more autonomy over operational matters. This will increase efficiency and improve patrols.

Fleet and Plant Sale

A sale of redundant fleet and plant across the Commons had raised £31,000 (out of a total of £125,000 across the Open Spaces Department). The money would be invested in energy saving initiatives.

Local Achievements

The Superintendent outlined the achievements of teams from across the Commons Division including the successful £1million, 3 year project that had been undertaken at Kenley Airfield. The Superintendent undertook to arrange a visit to the project should Members wish to visit.

In response to a query from a Member in relation to the increase in charges from Wayleaves it was confirmed that there had been no local opposition.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

5. **FUTURE MEETING ARRANGEMENTS**

The Superintendent made recommendations in regards to future meeting arrangements for the Committee. Members debated the proposal to hold the meetings locally to Ashtead Common, and at the evening as opposed to midday. There was a discussion about whether this would increase local attendance, and it was agreed that the Town Clerk should undertake a survey of Members to determine the best options.

RESOLVED - the Town Clerk to undertake a survey of Members to determine the best option for future meeting times.

6. **ASHTEAD COMMON RESOURCES (STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS)**

The Committee received a verbal update and presentation from the Head Ranger of Ashtead Common regarding staff and volunteer resourcing. Maternity leave and a military call out had contributed to staff capacity being at 50% of its full compliment. Despite a large increase in volunteer hours it was noted that this did not replace staff availability, as supervision of volunteers was required.

The Head Ranger updated the Committee on a major project undertaken by volunteers at the Common, the construction of a bridge, which had taken 500 hours to complete. The Committee wished for their thanks to the volunteers to be noted, with particular thanks to be given to David Challenger who had completed 25 years of voluntary work and Penny Eve who had provided invaluable help during the year and had gained a number of qualifications. It was reported that training had been provided to allow Penny (and other volunteers) to supervise sessions.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

7. **REVIEW OF THE ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17 AND PRESENTATION OF THE 2017-18 PROGRAMME**

The Committee received a verbal update and presentation from the Senior Ranger updating them on work carried out from the 2016/17 work programme. The following points were noted:

- As a result of a community request, a project to construct a path from the Wells Estate across the Common had been undertaken and successfully completed in a short timescale. The cost of the path was minimised as materials from the Common had been reused. Despite initial scepticism to the project the Committee had supported the proposal when making a visit to the site.

- It is hoped that the creation of a new pond by clay extraction will solve a localised flooding issue on CR1.
- The change to the veteran tree schedule to make it district based had proved to be highly effective and efficient.
- The scrub management programme was underway and could look severe when first undertaken. The cleared area needed approximately two years to establish. A Member asked that more conspicuous informational signs be placed around scrub management land to inform the public of the benefit of the work and officers undertook to implement the proposal.

In response to a query from a Member, the Committee discussed the increase in foot traffic to the Lady Howard Railway Crossing as a result of the new path. The crossing was now considered the second most dangerous in the Wessex rail region (the first is also in Ashtead). . It was reported that Network Rail had improved the crossing to make it more accessible after intervention from the Ashtead Residents' Association.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

8. **MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES**

The Committee received a presentation from the Head Ranger outlining the management priorities for 2017/18.

Oak Processionary Moth

Four Oak Processionary Moth nests had been found by professional surveyors on the Eastern Boundary of the Common. All nests had been removed and ongoing monitoring for the infestation would continue. It was confirmed that the Forestry Commission poster informing the public about the moths was on display and information was available on the website.

Management Planning

The management plan expired in 2021 and work was being undertaken to look at what should be included in the next plan.

Water Supply

The planned water supply would now be installed to support the natural grazing on the Common, and not as a fire prevention method as had been originally planned. Contractors had been hired and it was anticipated the work would start in two months. The supply could be extended in future if necessary.

Natural Grazing

The division had entered into partnership with the Surrey Wildlife Trust to support the wild grazing programme. The trust will conduct thorough risk management and match animals to the site based on temperament. An invisible fence system, which involves a radio signal cable being laid along boundaries, would be installed to manage the animals, and it was anticipated eight cows would be in place by the end of 2017. A trial at Burnham Beeches had proved highly successful.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

9. **QUESTIONS**

A Member drew the Committees attention to the lack of warning letters to local residents concerning the flooding of Rye Brook. The Chairman undertook to raise the issue with the Environment Agency.

10. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

There was no urgent business.

11. **DATE AND SUBJECT OF SUMMER WALK**

The Town Clerk undertook to email Members regarding options for the Summer walk.

The meeting ended at 12.55 pm

Chairman

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