

MINUTES OF THE WELSH HARP JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
Thursday 14 November 2013 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor , Councillor and Councillors Khatri (LB Barnet), Rayner (LB Barnet), Hopkins (LB Brent) and Kataria (LB Brent) and Hall (West Hendon Allotment Society), Roy Beddard (Welsh Harp Conservation Group), Geoffrey Johnson (Woolmead Residents' Association) and Derrick Chung (West Hendon Residents' Association / Friends of York Park)

Apologies for absence were received from: Councillors Hart (LB Barnet) and Johnson (LB Barnet) and Neale Hider (Environment Agency), Clive Cohen (London Wildlife Trust) and Judy Shepherd (West Hendon Community Forum)

1. Declarations of interests

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Deputations (if any)

None.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 July 2013 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

4. Matters arising

An update was sought regarding the response to the letter sent on behalf of the committee to the Mayor of London objecting to the proposed development of the West Hendon Estate. The Chair confirmed that a standard response was received and this would be circulated to the committee. Councillor Kataria recommended that members of the committee view the full report from the Mayors Office regarding the development.

The meeting was further advised that Councillor Johnson had written to the Mayor of London and Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles, objecting to the West Hendon Estate development. A brief summary of the responses was provided and the committee heard that both had advised that they would not intervene as approval had been granted by Barnet Council's Planning Committee.

5. Management Plan (Barnet)

The committee considered a report providing an update on the current position on the Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and outlining on-going site management. An

annual inspection had been carried out in August 2013 to monitor and identify infestations of Japanese Knotweed. Control measures for invasive species in the Welsh Harp would be carried out via injection directly into the plant canes to mitigate concerns regarding contamination to honey bees. The report also set out action taken regarding rough sleepers. A joint exercise between the police, PIT (Priority Intervention Team) team and Greenspaces had been carried out in August to check for illegal encampments and arrange for their removal. Though several illegal encampments were located, evidence showed that they had already been vacated.

The committee raised a number of issues in the subsequent discussion for the attention of Tracy Sawyer (Parks and Open Space Officer – Barnet Council). It was noted that there were ongoing issues regarding fly tipping resulting from rubbish being left behind at sites of illegal encampments and a member agreed to report this to Barnet’s Greenspaces team. Another site requiring clearing of rubbish and debris was the silt stream by the Bridge on Edgware Road, before and to the left of Halfords. As it was unclear which agency held responsibility for this area, it was agreed that officers identify this and report the matter to the appropriate agency. Members of the committee further advised that concerns had been raised by residents of Woolmead Avenue and Dehar Crescent regarding trees bordering the perimeter, which had not been coppiced for several years.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the report be noted;
- (ii) that officers identify the responsible agency to clear the rubbish in the silt stream by the Bridge on Edgware Road, before and to the left of Halfords.

6. **Management Plan (Brent)**

Leslie Williams (Strategy and Service Development Officer) presented a report to the committee updating members on the progress made with regard to the Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp Management Plan, drawing members’ attention to the action plan and progress column included at Appendix 1 to the report. It was emphasised that the Welsh Harp Open Space had successfully retained a Green Flag award following the annual inspection. The committee further heard that Executive approval had been granted for the award of Brent’s public realm contract to Veolia, meaning that from September 2014 all Grounds maintenance works would be carried out under contract rather than in-house. This would apply to the Welsh Harp Open Space including the car park, to Neasden Recreation Ground.

In accordance with the committee’s request, made at the previous meeting, Leslie Williams provided a brief overview of the prospect of re-introducing otters to the Brent Reservoir. It was explained that the increase of the otter population in England was attributed to reduction in toxic pesticides, improved water quality and consequential increases in fish stocks. It was considered that if the habitat of the Brent catchment could be improved, particularly by improving water quality, by removing physical obstacles to fish movement along the river, and by improving marginal habitat, then there was a possibility of re-colonisation of the River Brent within the next twenty years. However, it would be premature to use resources to construct an artificial holt for otters since the nearest viable populations were still

some distance from urban London. Rather the priority should be to improve the water quality and river habitat.

In the subsequent discussion, the committee sought further information regarding the impact of the public realm contract with Veolia and specifically queried whether any officers that dealt with the Welsh Harp area would be transferred to Veolia. Queries we also raised regarding rough sleepers in the Welsh Harp Area.

Leslie Williams advised that it was possible that some staff might be TUPED over to Veolia but that a further update could be provided at the next meeting of the committee. With regard to rough sleepers, there had been considerable problems in the last year, particularly in relation to Neasden Recreation Ground and other parks in the borough. The council had been working in partnership with the police and homelessness agencies to resolve the issue. It was emphasised that it was important to assist people to access appropriate support services to ensure the issue was effectively addressed.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the report be noted;
- (ii) that an update be provided on the public realm contract at the next meeting.

7. Environment Agency - Verbal Report (if any)

A member of the committee noted that there were proposals to install small rafts or floating islands in the disused part of the north reservoir in October or November. It was understood that the environment agency might have some involvement with this project and clarification was sought regarding whether there was some use of Section 106 monies for the project. It was agreed that this question would be passed to Neale Hider (Environment Agency).

8. Planning Issues (if any)

The meeting was advised that a planning application to revamp the Welsh Harp Sea Cadets building had been approved on 13 November 2013 by Brent's Planning Committee. It was noted that the development was limited to the existing footprint of the building and there had been a number of conditions stipulated to prevent disturbance during development. Members of the committee expressed their approval of the scheme.

9. Date of next meeting

The committee noted that the next meeting was scheduled for 20 March 2014.

10. Any other urgent business

Members attention was drawn to the proposal made as part of the planning application relating to the West Hendon estate that a Warden be appointed to monitor the impact of the development on the SSSI. The committee agreed that clarification regarding this post was required, including details of funding and terms of reference. The committee discussed possible options for obtaining relevant

information from the Warden once appointed and maintaining oversight of the impact of the development on the SSSI. It was subsequently agreed that a report should be sought from Barratt Metropolitan/ the Warden and provided to the committee at least a month in advance of each meeting.

RESOLVED:

that the Chair write on behalf of the committee to the Barnet Planning Department to request details of the SSSI Warden, copying in Barnet's Green Spaces Manager.

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm

A HOPKINS
Chair