

- Present:** Councillor Neil Murray (*in the Chair*)
- Councillors:** Councillors Chris Burke, Thomas Dyer, Karen Lee and Helena Mair
- External membership:** Mr Chris Box, Ms Alison Griffiths, Mrs E Langdon-Manning, Mr Gary Lisseman, Mr C J Smith, Mrs M Smith, Mrs C Steel, Mr G Woolfenden and Mr G Wright
- Apologies for Absence:** Mrs S Davies and Mr V Hughes

1. **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest received.

2. **Confirmation of Minutes - 4 January 2016**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 4 January 2016 be confirmed.

3. **Matters Arising**

Minute No 22

Management Plan Update

Miriam Smith, representing Lincolnshire Fieldpaths' Association confirmed that a replacement stile had been fitted on the South Common as requested, however, the fence to the side of the stile was down and required repairing.

RESOLVED that work to repair the broken fencing be actioned by Steve Bird, Assistant Director Communities and Street Scene.

4. **Membership**

The following new members were welcomed to Commons Advisory Panel:

- Mrs Alison Griffiths: Carholme Community Forum
- Mr Gary Lisseman: Long Leys Residents Association

5. **Proposed Amendment to the Constitution**

Ali Hewson, Democratic Services Officer, requested consideration by members of an amendment to the Terms of Reference in respect of the quorum for the Commons Advisory Panel to read as follows:

*'Meetings shall be quorate if the Chair (or Vice Chair) and a third of non-council members are present'.*

She highlighted that the current quorum for Commons Advisory Panel required six external members to be present at a meeting which was a substantial proportion of the ten external members in total.

Members considered the request to amend the Terms of Reference for Commons Advisory Panel.

RESOLVED that the following amendment to the Terms of Reference for the Commons Advisory Panel to read as follows be referred to Executive for approval:

*'Meetings shall be quorate if the Chair (or Vice Chair) and three of non-council members are present'*.

## **6. Fallow Period - Initial View**

Steve Bird, Assistant Director, Communities and Street Scene:

- a. presented a report to seek the views of members as to whether to hold a fallow period on the Common in 2017
- b. confirmed that under the terms of the Lincoln City Council Act 1985 the Council may require horses to be removed from Common land for a specified period in order to facilitate protection of the sward
- c. highlighted that whilst an annual fallow period was maintained until 2008, Commons Advisory Panel had asked the Council not to do so in 2009, with the matter to be reconsidered annually; this request had been repeated subsequently since
- d. reported that a fallow period was not held during 2016 as it had not been necessary
- e. requested views of Commons Advisory Panel on the introduction of a fallow period in 2017 based on the condition of the sward, horse numbers and the possible benefits
- f. advised that whatever the recommendation at this time, the matter would be reviewed in January 2017 by way of a verbal report, giving the opportunity for any changes in condition over the winter period to be taken into account
- g. reported that the Council had previously stated its consideration of consulting with independent specialists on whether to hold a fallow period, however, it did not intend to do so in 2016/17.

Members requested that the horses be allowed to remain on the Commons in 2017, with no fallow period being identified.

George Woolfenden representing West End Residents Association and the Open Spaces Society raised concerns in relation to reports that the Council were to stop mowing football pitches on the Commons, some of which were heavily used by the public and students for recreational purposes.

Steve Bird, Assistant Director, Communities and Street Scene highlighted that football pitches across the city were being used less and that as a result the Council was considering a reduction in cutting. He agreed to revisit the proposed reduction in grass cutting of football pitches with the intent of leaving at least an area equivalent to one pitch.

RESOLVED that:

1. Members of Commons Advisory Panel's ask the Council to give consideration to the horses remaining on the Commons in 2017 without the need to hold a fallow period, with a mini review to be under taken in January 2017 to cover any potential issues arising in the meantime.
2. The grass cutting proposals for football pitches on West Common be revisited by officers to see if at least an area of one pitch could be retained.

## **7. Carholme Community Gala (Verbal Report)**

Councillor Neil Murray, Chair of Commons Advisory Panel reported that Carholme Community Gala had gone extremely well this year and requested feedback from members of Commons Advisory Panel on any suggestions to improve future events.

George Woolfenden, representing West End Resident's Association and the Open Spaces Society raised concerns about the initial uncertainty voiced by Carholme Golf Club on allowing the gala to encroach on golf course land this year. The Jam Factory activities event for children in the school holidays had also been relocated towards the front of the Grandstand.

Graham Wright, representing Carholme Golf Club advised that there had been initial concerns regarding public health and safety at the event due to the close vicinity of the event to the 18<sup>th</sup> fairway. At a discussion held with council officers it transpired that the event organisers would be responsible for matters of public health and safety connected with the gala on the day of the event. He highlighted that young people had been witnessed in the past playing football on the edge of the fairway. The Carholme Golf Club was not against the gala taking place and once it was made clear the golf club was not responsible for health and safety at the event it had withdrawn its objections.

George Woolfenden highlighted that anyone was entitled to roam on common land even on the golf course.

RESOLVED that a meeting be convened between Councillor Neil Murray, Chair of Commons Advisory Panel, Steve Bird, Assistant Director, Communities and Street Scene and representatives from Carholme Golf Club to discuss arrangements for the gala in future years.

## **8. Standard Agenda Item: Commons Management Plan Update**

Steve Bird, Assistant Director, Communities and Street Scene:

- a. provided a written update to Commons Advisory Panel on the Commons Management Plan covering the period January 2016 to March 2016, as detailed at Appendix A to the report

- b. reported that in January 2013 the Council's Executive approved the Lincoln Commons Management Plan 2012-2017 which included separate action plans relating to each of the three Commons – South Common, West Common and Cow Paddle, together with an over-arching action plan
- c. confirmed that in August 2013 a revised action plan was agreed by the Executive; it was noted that opportunities to deliver on actions detailed within the plan were limited and in many cases subject to future funding or staff resources; since that time, a progress update had been provided prior to each Commons Advisory Panel meeting.

Caroline Steel, representing Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust referred to:

- A meeting held with Simon Lawson, Community Contracts Manager which had identified issues with the pond on the south side of Canwick Hill. She suggested that an indication of outstanding works on the Commons that could be committed to in the forthcoming period be provided within future Management Plan updates.
- The absence of mowing on the golf course. She queried whether there was any arrangement to enable volunteers to help out on Common land.
- The presence of a rare plant Water Purslane which was thriving on the Commons this year.

Steve Bird, Assistant Director, Communities and Street Scene responded as follows:

- He agreed to provide a reference to forward works in future programmes when possible and subject to financial resources being available.
- The council was attempting to establish a Voluntary Coordinator Post within the establishment subject to an internal staff reorganisation to coordinate volunteer work on the Commons and in other open spaces.

Colin Smith, representing Lincoln Group Ramblers Association asked whether volunteer teams carrying out work on the City Commons would be adequately covered by insurance.

Steve Bird advised that an agreed management process would be followed incorporating risk assessments and method statements. There were no special difficulties for issues in respect of insurance cover as this was something that the Council already managed where it already used volunteers. Similar schemes were already in operation in Hartsholme Park/Boultham Park.

George Woolfenden, representing West End Resident's Association and the Open Spaces Society welcomed the visual improvement to the former West Common race course since it had been cut and works to the West Common pond which were half complete.

Steve Bird reported that the remaining work to the West Common pond would be considered as part of the winter programme subject to financial resources being available.

RESOLVED that:

1. When possible a forward programme of work to common land subject to financial resources being available be presented to Commons Advisory Panel within future Commons Management Plan updates.
2. The content of the Commons Management Plan update be noted.

**9. Possibility of Unfencing One of the Enclosures on the West Common**

This agenda item was withdrawn.

**10. Ragwort on Council Land that's Near the West Common and the Impact it's Having on the Common**

Emma Langdon-Manning, representing Lincoln Commons Horse Association:

- a. presented a report bringing the Panel's attention to an area of land near the West Common in council ownership which was covered in ragwort which was believed to be impacting on the condition of the West Common
- b. enquired whether it was possible for the land to be sprayed due to having no grazing animals on it.

Caroline Steel, representing Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust confirmed that spraying to treat the problem was probably the best option if the land was not grazed.

Steve Bird, Assistant Director, Communities and Street Scene confirmed that this piece of land was managed by the Council's Property Services Team. Pulling of the ragwort had started prior to the area having been cut. He also noted that although they would consider spraying, this would only be following an impact assessment.

RESOLVED that subject to careful assessment quotes for treatment spraying of the area be obtained for referral back to the Property Services Section for appropriate action.

**11. Any Other Business**

South Common

Chris Box, representing South Park Residents Association reported on an unauthorised encampment on the South Common. A member of the public was causing a serious mess visible from South Park. There were no sanitation facilities available. A burning wood chimenea was being used. An additional encampment could be found near the old railway line.

External members referred to other encampments on the South and West Common.

RESOLVED that this information be fed back for action through the appropriate channels.

Byelaw Notice: Gate to South Common

Chris Box referred to the byelaws notice erected by the gate to the South Common which was totally illegible due to moss and overgrowth.

RESOLVED that byelaw signage be cleaned and made more visible, and where this was not possible new signs erected subject to budget availability.

Walk of Viking Way South Common – 9 October 2016

Miriam Smith, representing the Lincolnshire Fieldpaths Association presented a list of observations made during an annual walk of the Viking Way South Common with Colin Smith, representing Lincoln Ramblers Association:

- The new metal fencing and large kissing gates along Canwick Road were a great improvement.
- Old metal fencing near the top of Canwick Road needed attention.
- Seat number 1 from Canwick Road required cutting back to prevent nettles growing through the slats.
- Seat number 3 from Canwick Road had broken slats where someone had lit a mini fire. The sycamore tree and hawthorn tree on the Common required cutting back to protect the view of the City from this seat.
- Gaps in the hedge on the field side gave views to the Bomber Command Memorial which it was hoped could be maintained.
- There was a need for more small trees and saplings to be cut down so that views over the City were improved. There were parts of the Viking Way which felt enclosed and not the pleasant open walk first encountered several decades ago.
- The new fencing nearer to Cross o Cliff Hill was a great improvement. She assumed this was what was intended for the 8 or 9 fence posts lying in a wooded part further east.
- The last route down to the Common nearest Cross o Cliff was blocked after about 3 steps.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted and action taken as appropriate to address outstanding issues subject to available financial resources.