

## Minutes of the Meeting of the NONSUCH PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE held at the Mansion House, Nonsuch Park on 16 October 2023

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### PRESENT -

Councillor Julian Freeman (Chair) (Epsom & Ewell Borough Council); Councillors Tony Froud (Epsom & Ewell Borough Council), Peter Geiringer (London Borough of Sutton), Christine Howells (Epsom & Ewell Borough Council), Louise Phelan (London Borough of Sutton) and Christopher Woolmer (London Borough of Sutton)

In Attendance: Michael Teasdale (Representative) (Friends of Nonsuch) and Jon Whitehead (Representative) (Nonsuch Voles)

Officers present: Jackie King (Clerk to the Committee), Brendan Bradley (Head of Finance) (Epsom & Ewell Borough Council), Vanessa Newton (Senior Accountant) (Epsom & Ewell Borough Council), Mark Shephard (Head of Property and Regeneration) (Epsom & Ewell Borough Council), Samantha Whitehead (Streetcare Manager) (Epsom & Ewell Borough Council), Sarah Clift (Senior Countryside Officer) (Epsom & Ewell Borough Council), Emma Hill (Principal Programme Manager) (Epsom & Ewell Borough Council), Lucy Buckland (Arts, Culture and Heritage Programme Officer) (Epsom & Ewell Borough Council), Ian Wolstencroft (Contract Officer London Borough of Sutton) and Dan Clackson (Democratic Services Officer) (Epsom & Ewell Borough Council)

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### 11 QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Committee received a question from a member of the public, to which a written response was provided (published as a supplement to the agenda).

The member of the public asked a supplementary question, arising from the response given, to which a verbal response was provided.

The Committee considered the following matters, with respect to the use of bicycles and scooters in the Park:

- a) **Cycling Paths/Tracks.** The Streetcare Manager explained that cyclists in the Park should not cycle off-track, and should keep to the hard-standing paths and tracks provided.
- b) **Byelaws.** A Member suggested that the Nonsuch Park byelaws could be addressed with regard the rules surrounding cycling and scootering in the Park. The Chair explained that the Committee had previously agreed at its 19 June meeting to remain with its current byelaws on the basis that the

adoption of new bylaws would result in the loss of bylaws addressing dog control within the Park.

- c) **Speed Limit.** A Member commented that many cyclists cycle very fast in the Park, which can cause a danger to other Park users such as other cyclists and pedestrians, including children. The Streetcare Manager explained that cyclists should adhere to the 10mph speed limit in place in the Park.
- d) **Signage.** The Committee considered that the signage with respect to safe and considerate cycling in the Park in the Park could be made more noticeable for Park users and increased in volume. The Chair suggested that the current rules in place were adequate, and it was possible that the signage only was in need of an update. It was agreed that a report on signage would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee. The Senior Countryside Officer explained that in addition to rules being put in place, there is a requirement for Officers in the Park in order to enforce the rules. The Contract Officer stated that there is a dedicated Park policing team that are sent to the Park when incidents are reported.
- e) **Communication and Awareness.** The Chair suggested that the Mansion café be approached with a request to put up information within the premises to help raise awareness of cycling safety in the Park and to encourage people to report instances of unsafe cycling. The Streetcare Manager agreed to work with the Communications team to help promote safe and courteous cycling in the Park.

The Chair thanked the member of the public for their questions.

## 12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in respect of any item of business to be considered at the meeting were made by Members.

## 13 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee confirmed as a true record the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 19 June 2023 and authorised the Chair to sign them.

## 14 HABITAT MANAGEMENT PLAN AND VOLUNTEERING PRESENTATION

The Senior Countryside Officer and Chair of the Nonsuch Voles provided the Committee with a presentation on Habitat Management and Volunteering within the Park.

The Committee considered the following matters:

- a) **Habitat Management.** The Senior Countryside Officer stressed the importance of maintaining the environment for the sake of biodiversity and wildlife health. She elaborated on the role and significance of the various

types of habitats within the Park, including ponds (in which Greater Crested Newts have been documented), grasslands (which can also be a source of revenue through the harvesting of hay), scrub, woodland, and so on. She stated that all the habitats require regular maintenance and systematic management, going on to explain that although some of this can be achieved through the hard work of Council staff and the Nonsuch Voles, external contractors will also need to be employed to complete the work identified in the management plan.

- b) **Duty to the Environment.** The Senior Countryside Officer stated that as a Council body, the Committee has a duty under the Environment Act 2021 to consider the impact on biodiversity with all actions taken. She explained that both Sutton and Epsom & Ewell Councils had declared a climate emergency, and stressed there is also a recognition that there is global environmental crisis. She stated that she believed Epsom & Ewell and Sutton Councils should consider also declaring a Nature/Ecological emergency in conjunction with their Climate emergency declarations, as other UK Councils have done.
- c) **Species Surveying.** The Senior Countryside Officer confirmed that the last Park species surveys were completed in 2014, and that any additional surveying would require funding and a staffing resource. She explained that the full list of surveyed species was listed in the current Nonsuch Park Habitat Management Plan.
- d) **In Bloom Awards.** The Chair of the Nonsuch Voles announced to the Committee that Nonsuch Park had recently been awarded two prestigious accolades by 'South and South East In Bloom'. Nonsuch Park had been awarded the Silver 'Heritage Parks' award and the Gold 'Large Conservation Area' award. The Streetcare manager explained that the Park, as a free-to-enter site, had been placed against pay-to-enter facilities such as castles and private manor gardens. The Committee wished to extend their thanks to all those involved in the hard work required in order to win the awards.
- e) **Woodwork.** The Chair of the Nonsuch Voles presented to the Committee a woodcraft table that had been created by one of the volunteers using wood sourced from the Park. He explained that the Voles source wood through the coppicing process and from naturally fallen trees. He explained that the woodwork is sold, with the revenue going back into the maintenance and upkeep of the Park. The Committee expressed their interest in attending the next Nonsuch Voles woodcraft sale event.

## 15 HERITAGE UPDATE PRESENTATION

The Principal Programme Manager and the Arts, Culture and Heritage Officer provided the Committee with a presentation on the Nonsuch Park Virtual Heritage Tour and the investigations into the installation of Donation Posts in the Park.

The Committee considered the following matters:

- a) **Nonsuch Formal Virtual Tour.** The Arts, Culture and Heritage Officer announced to the Committee the recent launching of the Nonsuch Park Formal Gardens Virtual Tour on the Bloomberg Connects arts and culture app. She mentioned that there was no cost incurred in creating the tour on the app, and that it was free for anyone to access via the scanning of QR codes located throughout the garden. She explained that the virtual tour allows people to learn about the garden at their own pace as they explore and traverse. She said that QR usage can be monitored to track which codes get used the most and the least. She announced that adding an audio element to the tour was currently being investigated. The Senior Countryside Officer stated that, akin to the formal gardens virtual tour, a Nonsuch Park virtual wildlife tour was also being investigated.
- b) **Donation Posts.** The Arts, Culture and Heritage Officer announced to the Committee that the installation of donation posts in the Park was currently under investigation, with a view to bringing a report on the matter to a future meeting of the Committee. She explained that the posts will allow Park users and visitors to provide donations that will assist in the funding of projects within the Park, such as the management and maintenance of wildlife habitats, the Nonsuch Park museum, and so on.
- c) **Committee's Thanks.** The Committee wished to give their thanks to the Principal Programme Officer and the Arts, Culture and Heritage Officer for their work on the virtual tour and the donation posts.
- d) **Events in the Mansion.** In response to a question from a Member, the Streetcare Manager explained that the Mansion has a history of being used for events such as recitals, performances and indoor markets. She went on to explain that the tenant, Bovingdons, have authority over the use and availability of the Mansion interior and the open space in front of the Mansion. The Head of Property and Regeneration explained that Bovingdons were maximising use of the Mansion through hosting wedding events and hiring out the space for film productions, etc.

## 16 MID YEAR BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

The Committee received a report advising the Committee of the mid-year financial position for 2023/24 and the forecast outturn.

The Committee considered the following matters:

- a) **Leasing of Mansion Flats.** In response to a question from a Member, the Head of Property and Regeneration explained that 1 of the three Mansion House flats is used for temporary accommodation by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) Housing, with the other two being leased to Bovingdons. The Head of Finance explained that leasing the flat through EEBC Housing provides stable income, which would not be the case were the flat to be rented privately.

- b) **Filming in the Park.** In response to a question from a Member, the Streetcare Manager explained that the Park is often used for film productions. She explained that Bovingdons takes income for any filming taking place within the Mansion or the gardens in front of the Mansion, with the Committee receiving income for any use of the Park outside of the Mansion or the gardens, such as the car parks.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Note the mid-year financial position.**

**17 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Committee passed a resolution to exclude the public from the meeting for Part Two of the Agenda on the grounds that the business involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended) and that pursuant to paragraph 10 of Part 2 of the said Schedule 12A the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

**18 PROPERTY UPDATE**

The Committee received a report providing a confidential property update on current and forthcoming lease events.

The Committee's consideration of this item is recorded in a separate (not for publication) restricted Minute.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Note the forthcoming rent reviews for the Nursery Lodge and Mansion House (including Flat 2 & Pantry Café).**
- (2) Note the update in relation to London Road Lodge.**

*The meeting began at 10.00 am and ended at 12.09 pm*

COUNCILLOR JULIAN FREEMAN (CHAIR)

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