

OUTWOODS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
20TH JULY 2022

PRESENT: Councillors Campsall, Fryer (Chair), Morgan, K Harris, Parsons, Smidowicz, and RE (Vice-Chair), GM and CN

Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces
Head Ranger
Democratic Services Manager

APOLOGIES: Councillors Bailey, Tillotson and PB

1. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

No disclosures were made.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING & MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting held on 13th April 2022 were agreed.

3. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

In accordance with the Trust Deeds, the Mayor of Charnwood had been invited and declined to be appointed as the chair of the Outwoods Management Committee.

AGREED that Councillor Fryer be appointed as the Chair of the Outwoods Management Committee for the period of 2022-23.

AGREED that RE be appointed as the Vice-chair of the Outwoods Management Committee for the period of 2022-23.

4. OFFICER UPDATE REPORT

A report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces was submitted (item 5 on the agenda). The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces highlighted salient points in the report as follows:

- The visitor centre cafe had proved very popular and exceeded expectations all round including the café proprietor. The low water pressure identified in the building would involve replacing the water supply pipe between the highway and the building. The work to be funded from the Building Repairs and Maintenance budget and the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces had signed off an order for the necessary works.
- The Charcoal burning event held on 18th/19th June 2022 was a great success with approximately 750 people attending. The burn yielded 100 bags of charcoal for sale. The café operator had agreed to sell the charcoal on behalf of the Committee.
- The Sculpture trail which the Committee visited prior to the commencement of the meeting had received many positive comments, excellent coverage on the local news and had attracted new visitors from further afield. Artspace would

produce an evaluation report, and this would be presented to a future committee meeting. Initial thoughts were that it will run again.

- Ciaran Fern from Idverde had been appointed as the Council's new Senior Green Spaces Officer. All committee members welcomed this appointment.
- Work was in progress for the manufacture and installation of a plaque to mark the contribution Alan Moss had made towards the woods.
- There was no information available about the number of tree losses from the new planting scheme, but it was noted that the contractors were obligated to replace trees felled.
- Anticipated that an update on the Outwoods calendar 2023 be given at the Committee meeting in January.

There was a detailed discussion on car parking and alternatives to paying other than by cash. The parking meter provider was investigating card and pay by phone methods. It was anticipated that once alternative methods of paying had successfully been installed then the possibility of increasing car parking fees and season tickets be considered by the Committee. It was agreed that a parking strategy report be submitted to the October meeting which would not only look at car parking fees but promoting other nearby free car parking sites to encourage more visitors. The Committee were generally supportive but cautioned about capacity and the fine balance of increasing parking fees without discouraging visitors.

AGREED

1. That a parking strategy report be submitted to the October committee meeting.
2. That an evaluation report on the sculpture trail be presented to a future committee meeting.
3. That an update on the progress with the Outwood's calendar 2023 be submitted to the January meeting.
4. That the report be noted.

5. FINANCE UPDATE

A report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces was submitted that covered the revenue budget (item 6 on the agenda).

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces highlighted the following matters:

- The café proprietor had as part of the lease agreement received a 50% rebate to allow for start-up costs. It was noted that this was due to expire November 2022 which would see an increase in rental income.
- One of the two trampers (all terrain buggies) had broken down and come to the end of its useful life. A 50% grant contribution from the Forestry Commission had been sought to purchase a replacement buggy.
- Car parking income continued to be monitored with the income figures for April to June above the budgeted income.

In considering this item there was a discussion about businesses such as dog walkers, rock climbing establishments and personal trainers using the woods in pursuit of their own business objectives. The Committee asked that a watching brief be made on such business activities.

AGREED that the report be noted.

[At this point in the meeting Councillor Campsall left the meeting]

6. FELLING AS PART OF THE OUTWOODS MANAGEMENT PLAN

A report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces was submitted that provided a status update regarding the Outwoods Management Plan and tree felling, (item 7 on the agenda).

The Committee commented on the comprehensive nature of the current Management Plan, and their attention was drawn to appendix 2 setting out the current byelaws. The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces was optimistic of drawing up all encompassing and consistent byelaws for all open spaces in the Borough. It was noted that the Committee would in due course be requested to give their approval of any new byelaws before submission to the Secretary of State.

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces stated that the Management Plan was due for review after April 2023 and it was suggested that as part of the consultation process on changes to the plan that Trustees be re-issued with the deed documents.

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces reported that the recent felling programme had attracted a small amount of criticism from visitors and local residents. A complaint letter had been received from a resident in Woodhouse Eaves and this was read out to the Committee. In addition, it was highlighted that a local councillor had arranged an online petition. The Committee were advised that the felling programme was compliant with Nature England and Forestry England guidance and when undertaken responsibly was good for the health of woods and forests.

AGREED that

1. the Chair and Vice Chair respond to the letter of complaint about felling of trees thanking the resident for raising their concerns and highlight that the matter had been considered by the Committee who were of the opinion that the felling was in accordance with the Outwoods Management Plan.
2. the deed documents be re-circulated to Trustees as part of the consultation process for the review of the Management Plan due after April 2023.
3. the report be noted.

7. PETITION

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces provided an update regarding the submission of a petition concerning the recent felling programme. It was noted that a local councillor had arranged an online petition which at the date of the meeting had been signed by 105 people. It was noted that the petition would need to be presented to the committee as the decision-making body.

AGREED that the update be noted.

8. RANGERS REPORT

An update regarding activities and operational management at the Outwoods was submitted (item 9 on the agenda). Matters within this report had been considered as part of other items on the agenda.

AGREED

1. That the report be circulated to all councillors after the meeting.
2. that the contents of the report be noted.

9. A.O.B

Trustees discussed the following:

- Opening hours of the café - the Committee felt that the cafe closing at 4 p.m. was a missed opportunity and asked the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces to investigate whether the café proprietor would consider extending their opening hours particularly in the summer months. Anecdotally it was considered that the reason may be due to recruitment difficulties with staff.
- Harry Bowler Trustee - a vacancy existed on the Committee and a potential new trustee had attended the meeting to observe. He agreed that he wished to join the Committee and therefore it was

AGREED that DG be appointed as a Harry Bowler Trustee with immediate effect.

The dates of future meetings were confirmed and that the café be the preferred venue.

ADDENDUM - DECISIONS WHEREBY A VOTE WAS TAKEN

At the meeting of the Committee held on 6th September 2017 it was agreed that when the Committee voted by a show of hands on decisions made by the Committee that this information was documented as an addendum to the minutes (minute 2.2 refers).

NONE