



To: Executive Councillor for City Centre and Public Places (and Deputy Leader):  
Councillor Carina O'Reilly

Report by: Head of Streets & Open Spaces

Relevant scrutiny committee: Community Services Scrutiny Committee 16/10/2014

Wards affected: Abbey and Romsey

## **Outcomes of the consultation on a new management plan for Coldham's Common**

### **Non Key Decision**

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#### **1. Executive summary**

1.1 A consultation on creating a management plan for Coldham's Common was completed between August & September 2014. 34 responses were received and comments made on a range of issues and options. Responses were primarily from individuals but there were also representations from local community based groups.

1.2 This consultation builds on a previous independent consultation undertaken in Spring 2014, which attracted 704 responses. The initial consultation was used to gauge the views of all stakeholders and users of the Common and shape the current issues and options consultation.

1.3 This report provides a brief summary of the views received and includes a numerical breakdown of responses and a copy all responses for councillors to consider.

1.4 The Council is following principles contained within the Common Purpose <sup>1</sup>model to create the management plan and to ensure that there is community contribution to the formulation of policies and practices.

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<sup>1</sup> Common Purpose A guide to Community Engagement for those contemplating management on Common Land. Revised edition 2012.DEFRA  
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## **2. Recommendations**

The Executive Councillor is recommended:

- a) To note the outcomes of the recent consultation reports; and
- b) Instruct officers to draft a Management Plan for Coldham's Common in discussion with key stakeholder groups.

## **3. Background**

3.1 Coldham's Common is a large open space on the eastern side of Cambridge and is one of the city's historic commons. The site is owned by Cambridge City Council and fulfils a number of functions, with space and resource allocated to nature conservation, sport and play facilities, and general recreation, particularly for local people. There is also occasional use of part of the site as a car park and campsite in connection with the city's annual Folk Festival at Cherry Hinton.

3.2 The Council wishes to manage the site effectively to meet the needs of both present and future users whilst conserving and enhancing the natural and ecological value of the site.

3.3 To inform management options the City Council has previously commissioned a botanical survey and report from the local Wildlife Trust, seeking their views on the best way to manage the site for conservation.

3.4 An independent consultation in Spring 2014 was also commissioned to gauge the views of all stakeholders and users of the Common. The consultation collected quantitative data and had 704 responses. The issues raised in the initial consultation were used to form issues and options posed in the current consultation.

3.5 At the July 2014 Community Services Scrutiny Committee, councillors unanimously approved to undertake an Issues and Options Consultation on the future management of Coldham's Common (14/45/CS).

3.6 The consultation has been held throughout August & September 2014, and it was extensively advertised directly to known stakeholders, hosted on the Council consultation web pages and promoted through social media, with posters also being displayed and maintained at all the site entrances.

3.7 A total of 34 responses were received, primarily from individuals but also representatives from groups. A summary of the response can be found at Appendix A. Appendix B provides a numerical breakdown of numbers of respondents who supported or objected to the proposals in the consultation.

3.8 Not all respondents answered every question, whilst some provided comments rather than objecting or supporting. These additional comments can be viewed in Appendix A.

3.9 The consultation has shown there is broad support for the need to produce and work to a management plan for the Common. Broadly most respondents felt that the City Council was best placed to lead this work, but with support from stakeholders such as the Friends of Coldham's Common and the Wildlife Trust.

3.10 There was no consensus achieved on the proposed vision for the Common, with many offering amendments, some suggested that this should include a larger area than the Commons boundary, to include the wider green corridor along Coldham's Brook, the allotments and the Leper Chapel through to Stourbridge Common. Officers propose that the Vision could be agreed through a workshop event with key stakeholders.

3.11 Some respondents suggested that the management plan should prioritise works based on an agreed annual action plan that concentrated on the general maintenance, including grazing numbers and timings, litter, grass cutting and general day to day operations.

3.12 There was support for limited monitoring of works, activities and progress, particularly in respect of the flora and fauna on the site. Although some were concerned that resources could be best used elsewhere.

3.13 Few respondents supported the ceasing of grazing in its entirety and there was no support for removal of existing fence lines to graze the current sports pitches. There was strong support for a review of the current stocking rates and timings to improve the grassland diversity of the existing grazed areas.

3.14 The reinstatement of grazing on the Barnwell Road section of the common (Local Nature Reserve) proved to split opinions with some sharing strong feelings about the need for this site to remain cattle free. However, most are in agreement that the biodiversity of this area is of importance and management options, be they grazing or hay cutting, should be explored in the management plan.

3.15 There was strong support for the need to manage the existing tree stock and scrub on the Common. The majority felt that new planting should only occur in existing woodland blocks, not along cycle routes or footpaths. Some felt this work should be guided by an arboricultural specialist to ensure long term viability of the tree stock. There was support for maintaining the current levels of scrub on the site.

3.16 There was some support for the provision of information on the history and wildlife of the Common, but concern about the amount of resource this could involve. The majority thought that signage should be restricted to the main entrances, along with dog and litter bins to avoid clutter and urbanisation of the site. Some would welcome notice boards at key entrances, particularly if this included information on events such as volunteer work parties on the Common. Most would also welcome a dedicated web page on the City Council website with information detailing activities and events.

3.17 There was support for the continuation of the current cutting regimes, although a small number felt the Barnwell Road (LNR) hay cut was too early in the season and the cutting of the thistles on the site should be more rigorous and better timed.

3.18 Maintenance of the existing surfaced routes across the site was supported, but the majority wanted to keep all other routes as informal, natural or mown paths.

3.19 There was general support for further investigation into the enhancement of the watercourses on the site. However, some were concerned about the possible disturbance to the Water Vole populations.

3.20 Summary of proposed steps in drafting the management plan:

- Officers gather relevant information, including liaison with stakeholders such as the sports clubs and Friends of Coldham's Common.
- Officers host a visioning workshop for the Common, inviting a representative from stakeholder groups to seek consensus on objectives for the management plan. Officers draft and circulate the management plan, to stakeholders and member to comment.
- Community Services Scrutiny Committee considers the plan and approves for adoption by the City Council.

3.21 The management plan will be a working document; officers will investigate the desire amongst stakeholders to form a management committee, with a representative from each of the groups to review progress and objectives.

## **4. Implications**

### **(a) Financial Implications**

There is currently no financial implication identified. A full financial impact will be better understood when options and actions are detailed in the final management plan.

**(b) Staffing Implications**

There is no staff implications currently identified. The final management plan will consider staff resource needed to develop or deliver a broad range of options and actions.

**(c) Equality and Poverty Implications**

An Equalities Impact Assessment will be completed on a range of options and actions identified in any proposed final management plan.

**(d) Environmental Implications**

+L: The proposal has a low positive impact. Improved management of the common will enable species to better adapt and disperse in response to a changing climate. Increased appreciation and use of the space by local people for quiet recreation will reduce the need to travel by car to more distant green spaces for exercise or to experience nature.

**(e) Procurement**

There are none identified at this stage of development.

**(f) Consultation and communication**

The representations made to the consultation will be made public and sent to key stakeholders such as the Wildlife Trust and Friends of Coldham's Common.

**(g) Community Safety**

The proposed management plan will explore possible solutions regarding safety. The initial consultation specifically explored people's perceptions of site safety.

**5. Background papers**

These background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

Managing Coldham's Common - a report for CCC by Phil Back Associates Ltd. March 2014

Coldham's Common Habitat Survey & Recommendations - a report for CCC by BCN Wildlife Trust. September 2013.

A Common Purpose - a guide to Community Engagement for those contemplating management on Common Land. Revised edition 2012 - DEFRA

## **6. Appendices**

Appendix A - Issues and Options Consultation on Coldham's Common Draft Management Plan - Representations Summary Report

Appendix B - Issues and Options Consultation on Coldham's Common Draft Management Plan - Representation breakdown

## **7. Inspection of papers**

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

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