



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

Report by: Alistair Wilson - Streets and Open Space Development Manager

Relevant scrutiny committee: Community Services Scrutiny 17/03/2016

Wards affected: Abbey Petersfield Romsey

**Adoption of ten year Operational Management Plan for Coldham's Common
Non - Key Decision**

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 Coldham's Common is one of the largest open spaces in Cambridge; it is widely used by people for a variety of different activities and is important for its natural habitats and the biodiversity they support. Cambridge City Council oversees the management of the common for the people of Cambridge.
- 1.2 This is a ten year management plan that seeks to deliver a vision for Coldham's Common. Extensive public consultation has been undertaken to establish how local residents and visitors use and value the site. These views have been considered carefully when balancing the multifunctional uses and values of the common.
- 1.3 The plan collates information on important features of the common. Each feature review includes a brief description of why it is considered important, sets key objectives for the next ten years and proposes specific actions to achieve them. It also sets out a monitoring and review timetable for the actions.
- 1.4 A five year review of the plan is proposed to be consulted on in 2021.

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended:-

- a) To adopt the ten year Coldham's Common Operational Management Plan for implementation beginning April 2016;
- b) Instruct officers to promote the new plan amongst stakeholders and users and invite volunteer participation in appropriate activities; and
- c) Instruct Officers to review the management plan in 12 months' time and report back any exceptions to Scrutiny Committee on the effectiveness of the management regime.

3. Background

- 3.1 Following stakeholder engagement and public consultation the council has prepared an operational management plan for Coldham's Common.
- 3.2 Recent Council decisions involving management of the Common, predominantly focussed on areas of grazing and the resulting infrastructure, have prompted some site users to petition the Council for a review of management across the whole site (As specified in the City Council Public Places Portfolio Plan 2013-14 and the Streets & Open Spaces Operational Plan 2014/15). This plan has been developed following a public consultation conducted between November 2013 and February 2014, in which 704 responses were received, including 21 representatives of local groups and organisations. These responses have been considered when drafting the management options prescribed in this plan.
- 3.3 A site wide habitat survey and report was commissioned by The Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Northampton (BCN) Wildlife Trust in 2013. This report provides recommendations for management to maximise the biodiversity potential of the site. The survey findings and recommendations have been considered against other site uses and consultation responses when prescribing future management.
- 3.4 The management plan is for the next ten years and seeks to deliver a vision for Coldham's Common.

“Coldham's Common is recognised, protected and managed as a unique, wildlife rich common and open space in Cambridge. A natural and historic asset for both Romsey and Abbey wards, the site provides a multifunctional, natural green space for residents and visitors. Free from unnecessary fencing and with well-maintained paths, it provides a clean, attractive landscape, easily

accessible to all in the community, whether for sport, passive recreational pursuit or as a route to another destination. The grazed pasture, watercourses and wooded surrounds of the site provide a feeling of tranquillity and a strong rural landscape character, connecting with adjacent green spaces and wildlife corridors.”

The plan has been developed with input from site users through consultation, by other stakeholders and will be adopted by Cambridge City Council who will oversee implementation.

The plan collates information on important features of the common. Each feature review includes a brief description of why it is considered important, sets objectives for the next ten years and proposes specific actions to achieve them. It includes proposed management actions subdivided by geographical compartments, however it should be noted that these may be amended in the light of monitoring or new information. In addition to the ongoing monitoring and review timetable there will be a five year review which will be undertaken and consulted on in 2021.

4. Implications

(a) Financial Implications

The operational actions identified within the Management Plan will be implemented using existing budgets for open space management. The proposed projects will be subject to future project appraisals and bids for internal or external funding.

(b) Staffing Implications

Operations team and using volunteers working in partnership through agreements with the BCN Wildlife Trust.

(c) Equality and Poverty Implications

An equalities impact assessment has been completed and that the site is safe and accessible by all whilst retaining the natural green space character for which it is highly valued.

(d) Environmental Implications

- +L: The proposal has a low positive impact.

Improved management of the habitats on the common will enable species to better adapt and disperse in response to a changing climate. In addition, 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**
None identified

(f) **Consultation and communication**

An independent consultation was commissioned in line with the guidance for community engagement within 'A Common Purpose'.

The survey took place between November 2013 and February 2014.

The questionnaire allowed multiple choice answers with invitations for further comment and was available online through the Council website (though it was hosted elsewhere, to protect the anonymity of respondents).

A paper form was also made available at public venues in Abbey and Romsey wards and the Customer Service Centre.

The survey was advertised widely through press releases, posters in local shops and public places, durable signage was erected at all site entrances and a leaflet was distributed through the letterboxes of 5,000 homes in Romsey and Abbey, using a verified leaflet distribution contractor, 704 responses were received, including 21 from representatives of local groups and organisations. A full report has been produced that summarises the responses, this is available as background reading.

A second stage consultation, in line with national guidance on common land management was undertaken in 2014. This focused on selecting the most appropriate management options for the site.

This consultation was advertised through press releases, on site signage and sent directly to groups who responded to the first consultation.

An article on the consultation and management plan went to all City Residents in the summer edition of Cambridge Matters, inviting all City residents to have their say.

The consultation was available on line via the City Council website, hard copies were available upon request.

A stakeholder workshop was held in January 2015, including representative of the Friends Group, Wildlife Trust, Cambridge Cycling Campaign and East Romsey and Mill Rd Residents Association, this workshop enabled a vision statement to be prepared for future management on the common.

(g) **Community Safety**

None identified

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
- Cambridge City Council Issues and Options Consultation on Coldham's Common Draft Management Plan (2014 – 2020) July 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.
- Recommendations for Coldham's Common Management Plan, following 2014 Issues & Options Consultation

6. Appendices

Appendix A - Coldham's Common Operational Management Plan

7. Inspection of papers

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

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