

<p>CABINET 2 October 2007</p> <p>AGENDA ITEM 6</p>
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Subject	DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN 2 (2007-2017) GALLEYWOOD COMMON.
Report by	CABINET MEMBER FOR PARKS AND HERITAGE SERVICES.

<p>Enquiries contact: Glenn Parkington, Tel. (01245) 60610. Email: glenn.parkington@chelmsford.gov.uk</p>
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<p>Purpose To approve the proposed 10-year management plan for Galleywood Common, including results of public consultation.</p>
<p>Options</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Approve the proposed management plan 2) Not approve the proposed management plan, and maintain The Common to minimum standards. 3) Amend the proposed management plan

Corporate Implications	
Legal:	NERC Act 2006 Duty to conserve biodiversity in exercising Councils functions in management of The Common
Financial:	The proposed plan will have an additional cost implication, and is unlikely to attract any substantial grant aid.
Personnel:	None
Risk Management:	None
Equalities and Diversity: (For new or revised policies or procedures has an equalities impact assessment been carried out? Y/N)	Yes
Health and Safety:	None
IT:	None
Other:	None
Consultees	Galleywood Common Liaison Group. The General Public.

Policies and Strategies

The report takes into account the following policies and strategies of the Council:

Community Plan:-

- Maintaining a safe community
- Improving our local environment
- Providing the best opportunities for learning and personal development
- Enhancing healthy living

Corporate Plan:-

- Accessibility to all
- Improving our local environment
- Maintaining a safe community
- Enhancing healthy living
- Promoting opportunities for learning and personal development
- Cleaner safer greener communities

Chelmsford Biodiversity Action Plan:-

- Objective two: Restore, maintain and enhance the wildlife value of existing heathland and acid grassland in the borough through appropriate management.

Corporate Priorities

The report relates to the following corporate priority/priorities

Social Inclusion

Excellent Customer Services

Regeneration

Value for Money

Environment

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1. Background

1.1 Galleywood Common is owned by Chelmsford Borough Council. A previous 10 year management plan has now ended (September 2006) and a new plan has been produced for the next 10 years. The plan has been developed in close consultation with the Galleywood Common Liaison Group, followed by public consultation in July 2007. Membership of the Liaison Group comprises:

Galleywood Parish Council
Ramblers Association
St.Michaels Church
Essex Wildlife Trust
British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
Commoners
Gt.Baddow and Galleywood Environmental Group
Essex Bridleways Association
Natural England
Volunteer Wardens (two number)
Galleywood Ward Members (two number)
Goat Hall Ward Members (two number)
Galleywood Common Association

1.2 The proposed plan was made available for public consultation via the Borough Council and Galleywood Parish web sites. Hard copies were made available at Borough and Parish Council offices, and Galleywood and Chelmsford libraries. In addition, officers manned an exhibition on The Common on Saturday 7th July 2007, which some 120 members of the public visited. This event was publicised by posters at the above venues, various locations around Galleywood village and 2500 leaflets distributed to homes in Galleywood by the Parish Council. Questionnaires were made available at all venues and via the internet.

1.3 Following the consultation the Liaison Group were informed of the feedback received. This is shown at Appendix 2.

2. The new statutory duty to conserve biodiversity

2.1 Section 40 of the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006 stipulates that "Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity". This is a *new* statutory duty (which came into force on 1 October 2006) and is, of course, directly applicable to the Council in its management of Galleywood Common. The Government's rationale behind the creation of this duty is to raise the profile of biodiversity, and to implement a culture shift - whereby public authorities make biodiversity a natural and integral part of their decision making.

2.2 In real terms, the duty means that the Council must, in its management of Galleywood Common (i.e. both day to day management and forward planning) always keep in mind the desirability of preserving, restoring, or enhancing –

- the populations of living organisms e.g. plants, flowers, and the various species of animals, birds, and reptiles that frequent the Common, and
- the habitats (i.e. natural homes) of such living organisms e.g. heathland, ponds, grassland, and woodland.

2.3 Furthermore, public authorities (including this Council) are obliged under the Act to pay *particular* regard to the conservation of any living organisms and types of habitat which (at present) are set out in the Defra “list of Habitats and Species of Principal Importance for the Conservation of Biological Diversity in England.

3. The proposed management plan

3.1 The proposed plan seeks to retain the current condition of The Common, and to improve certain areas such as the margins around ponds for promotion of biodiversity. The Common would be maintained as at present with no significant changes to the landscape or major tree felling. Areas managed as part of the lowland heath restoration in “management plan one” will be kept clear of tree and scrub regeneration, bracken and gorse controlled, and the Mire and Ponds free of encroaching vegetation. Grass cutting regimes will remain unchanged.

3.2 New works are proposed as follows:

- A) Remove a semi-mature Oak in the Mire area, in order to help safeguard the future of the the rare Mire habitat and plant species (Management plan reference 6.6, page 17)
- B) Coppice (cut down to a stump and allow regeneration) young trees situated on the Napoleonic defence earth works in order to help safe guard this historic monument. (Management plan reference 8.0, page 20)
- C) Fell and remove the shrub Willow at the entrance of the road to St.Michaels Church. (Management plan reference 6.9.1, page 19)
- D) Remove a shallow depth of imported top soil in a small area adjacent to the Margaretting Road car park in order to encourage the re-establishment of lowland heath.(Management plan reference 6.8.4 & 6.8.6 pages 18 & 19)

4. Consultation

4.1 Since May 2005 a series of draft revisions have been produced in conjunction with the Galleywood Common Liaison Group. Following public consultation, a total of 31 questionnaires were returned. 67% of the respondents were very or fairly supportive, 23% were very or fairly unsupportive and 10% did not express a particular preference. The majority of respondents (77%) live in Galleywood, 17% elsewhere in Chelmsford, 3% elsewhere in Essex and 3% from beyond.

The public consultation results show that 67% of respondents are supportive or fairly supportive of these proposals.

5. Resources

5.1 In addition to the current grounds maintenance cost for The Common, (£48,337pa) the proposed management plan will require additional resources of £2990 per annum over the 10 year period to implement. These are the works listed at 3.2 above.

5.2 Officers will investigate potential sources of external funding. The primary source is likely to be from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) through their Entry Level and Higher Level schemes. However, there is a strong

requirement for restoration work (in the case of Galleywood Common; lowland heath restoration) and since the proposed plan includes only a modest amount of restoration, the funding potential is likely to be limited.

6. Conclusion

6.1 The proposed management plan seeks to fulfil the Council's obligations under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act to conserve the biodiversity of Galleywood Common, whilst taking account of the present recreational uses of the site and local community interests.

It builds on the previous 10 year management plan, and seeks to increase the biodiversity value of various key areas, such as the Mire. This work has additional costs of £2990 pa above the annual maintenance costs, and officers will investigate the potential for external funding.

6.2 In order to ensure the management of The Common is undertaken in the interests of both users and biodiversity the proposed management plan should be adopted and additional funding of £2990 pa made available for its implementation. This will need to be considered as part of the 2008/09 budget process for additional revenue funding.

6.3 In the event that such funding is not made available basic elements of the Management Plan can still be implemented. However failure to undertake the works outlined at 3.2 above (with the exception of item C) has further implications i.e. the habitats referred to, and the historic earthworks will deteriorate further. This means that, in biodiversity terms, the habitats indicated at A) and D) could be lost entirely over the 10 year term of the plan and the earthworks would be substantially more costly to reinstate. The Council's duty to conserve biodiversity (see 2.1 above) could also be compromised.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 Draft Galleywood Common Management Plan

Appendix 2 Public consultation results

Background Papers

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Section 74: List of habitats and species of principal importance for the conservation of biological diversity in England.