



Wimbledon and Putney Commons

Resolutions agreed at the Board Meeting held on Monday 4 December 2023 at 4.30pm

Part A2 Confidential

Item S12.23.03

RESOLUTIONS:

Given:

- (a) the underlying basis for the proposed increase in the maximum level of WPCC's levy and in particular WPCC's current financial situation, the need for increased annual funding to support the ongoing operating costs of the Commons, the importance of one-off sources of external funding to support one-off initiatives and investments, all of which are set out in the consultation document;
- (b) the Conservators' duty to protect the charity's assets, particularly the SSSI designated habitats, under charity law;
- (c) the Conservators' duties to protect and preserve the Commons under the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act 1871;
- (d) the strong level of support indicated in the consultation both from levy-payers and key stakeholders including Stephen Hammond MP, Sarah Olney MP, the Wimbledon Society and the Putney Society; and (e) in relation to the opposition of LB Merton, LB Wandsworth and Fleur Anderson MP to the proposed increase, that all benefits, reductions and exemptions to which levy-payers are entitled for council tax purposes also apply to WPCC's levy;

The Board RESOLVED

1. To respond to the feedback from levy-payers as set out in paragraph 6.1.1 as amended in this report;
2. To respond to the feedback from key stakeholders as set out in paragraph 6.1.2 as amended in this report;
3. That given the high level of support among levy-paying households and having considered the four options in terms of taking the matter forward as set out in paragraph 6.2 as amended in this report, that WPCC pursues a levy increase in line with the proposal in the Consultation Document.

The Board further RESOLVED to continue to explore other measures to increase funds and reduce costs. Whilst grateful for the views and suggestions made in this regard, WPCC is of the view that none of the alternative suggestions put forward are likely to address the current shortage of funds.

It is important to note that the levy is set by WPCC each year based on the needs of the charity. Historically, WPCC has not always charged the maximum permitted levy. If the levy is increased, but funding from other sources increases in future, WPCC could reduce the levy accordingly in subsequent years.

At present, the maximum permissible levy is set out in regulations. These regulations can only be amended by the Secretary of State. As the proposed levy increase exceeds the current statutory permitted maximum, WPCC will now provide the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs with the results of this consultation for its consideration.

WPCC will continue to provide updates to levy-payers and the wider community through the WPCC website and social media channels.

Present

Conservators: Mrs Diane Neil Mills, Chairman
Mrs Sue Bucknall
Mr David Hince
Mr Peter Hirsch
Mr Michael Johnston
Mr Peter Shortt
Mr Nigel Ware

Officers: Mr Colin Cooper, Chief Executive
Mrs Angela Evans-Hill, EA to Chief Executive and Communications Officer
Mr Philip Warner, Management Accountant

Apologies: Mr Oliver Bennett, Conservator
Ms Paula Graystone, Deputy Clerk and Ranger
Mr Peter Haldane, Conservation and Engagement Officer (For Part A1)
Mrs Maggie May, Fundraising Manager