

REPORT TO ENVIRONMENT AND GENERAL PURPOSES
COMMITTEE
FRIENDS OF ST JOHN'S WOOD



Report Reference EN-21-08
Meeting Date 19th July 2021
Agenda Item 7
Prepared by Town Clerk

1.0 BACKGROUND AND UPDATE

At the March committee meeting the committee resolved to provide support in the establishment of a new Friends of St John's Wood community group.

The new group is now meeting regularly with a core committee. It has adopted a constitution and applied for charitable status as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation with the objects to conserve, protect and improve St John's Wood and the site of St Helena's Church.

The group has appointed Cathryn Walley as Chair, Cllr James McCulloch as Deputy Chair and has agreed that developing a masterplan for the site is key. As previously resolved the council is supporting this through officer time.

In July the group launched a community survey to obtain views of users and nearby residents to inform the development of a masterplan and the group is holding a drop-in session at The Welcome on 31st July.

The group had discussed the need to ensure that the masterplan is built on a solid understanding of the woodland to ensure any works it undertakes conserve and improve the space. It is desirable, therefore, to have a professional ecological appraisal undertaken. The appraisal will consist of a site walkover inspection by an experienced ecologist to identify opportunities to enhance the wood's value for wildlife conservation, such as additional planting, selective felling, and removal of invasive species. A species list will be provided and the appraisal will also identify potential ecological constraints to any such proposals, such as the presence of badger setts. The cost of a survey would be £655 and it is suggested that the committee considers funding this from its Open Spaces/Nature Projects budget.

Volunteers are undertaking a tree identification survey, both to support the development of the masterplan and as part of the council's tree mapping exercise. Meetings have been held on site to investigate the on site drainage pipes; speak with Cheshire East Council as one owner of the site, speak with the local PCSO concerning anti-social behaviour and to obtain informal guidance from the Cheshire Wildlife Trust's Community Wildlife Officer.

2.0 DECISION REQUIRED

The committee should note the update and consider authorising the commissioning of the ecological survey for St John's Wood.