

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1028121

**REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES AND
UNAUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023
FOR
THE CHISLEHURST & ST. PAUL'S CRAY
COMMONS CONSERVATORS**

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**THE CHISLEHURST & ST. PAUL'S CRAY
COMMONS CONSERVATORS**

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**THE CHISLEHURST & ST. PAUL'S CRAY
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**REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
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The Commons Conservators

The Chislehurst and St Paul's Cray Commons Conservators (whose working title is 'Chislehurst Commons') was established by the Metropolitan Commons (Chislehurst and St Paul's Cray) Supplemental Act 1888 to protect and maintain the Commons. The Conservators became a registered charity on the 10th November 1993, since when, and for ease of reference in the community, we refer to ourselves also as Trustees. We carry out our work supported by funds granted by the London Borough of Bromley (LBB), generous donations from local residents, money raised from events, small annual grants from government-sponsored bodies, occasional grants from other organisations and the help of volunteers.

Governing document and objectives

The 1888 Act sets down the responsibilities of the Board of Conservators. These responsibilities are translated into a working strategy by a 10-year Management Plan, the current one being applicable for the years 2014-2024.

Location

The Trustees operate from leasehold premises situated at:

The Old Fire Station
Hawkwood Lane
Chislehurst
BR7 5PW

Organisation

During the reporting period the charity was administered by a Board composed of:

John Hayhow (Chairman)
Robert West (Treasurer and Clerk)

Peter Hedges Resigned 13th September 2022
Ian Leonard
Alan Porter
Christine Wearn
Mary Wheeler
Sarah Harris
Patrick Phillips
Brian Knights
Joanna Friel – appointee of the Lord of the Manor

Staff

The Board employs two members of staff:

Mr Jonathan Harvie (Head Keeper)
Mr Toby Smith (Assistant Keeper)

Toby Smith joined the Commons in September 2022 at the beginning of this reporting year upon the retirement of Peter Edwards in the same month.

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1. Board Structure and decision-making

The Board, which is required to be quorate and to meet no fewer than 2 times per annum, during the reporting period held meetings on 6 occasions. The Board has a number of committees which are appointed by the Board and whose reports are received and reviewed by the Board:

Chairman's Committee:

It meets as required to deal with any matters arising between meetings of the Board, staff management, legal, financial and compliance matters.

Natural Environment Committee:

It is directly responsible for the implementation of the Commons 10-year Management Plan, recommending major projects to the Board, protection and enhancement of biodiversity with recording and monitoring of the flora and fauna, and formulation of policies for community use including advertising and filming on the Commons.

Verge Committee:

It has responsibility for the Protection and maintenance of the Commons' verges:

It protects the Commons from encroachment and illegal use by liaising with public utilities, the London Borough of Bromley on litter, fly-tipping, roads and paths and those whose land adjoins and have access across the Commons, monitoring and responding to Planning applications and checking the boundaries, the maintenance of footpaths and bridle paths to support ease of access for users, the maintenance of monuments on the Commons and the management of vehicles on the Commons.

External Relations and Administration Committee:

It provides the management of the relationship with our supporters, Public Relations and media, the initiation of and support for events, the organisation of fundraising activities and representation to relevant external organisations.

Information Technology Committee:

It formulates, delivers and maintains for the Trustees a unified IT policy with specific requirements to maintain the database of supporters, ensure compliance with the Data Protection legislation and maintain the website. It provides safe methods for digital donations, fundraising and event online ticket sales. It ensures a smooth interaction with the web hosting service and with the broadband service provider.

Regular reports are also received from the Head Keeper. Responsibility for day-to-day management resides with the Chairman, the Chair of the Verge committee, the Treasurer, and the Head Keeper.

2. Public Benefit Statement

The main purpose of the charity is to protect and maintain the Commons for public use. All the resources of the charity are used to satisfy these aims. The Commons are open to all members of the public without charge and, subject to the bye laws, provide much needed open space for recreation and leisure. The Commons are situated in a predominately suburban setting and are therefore an important amenity for local residents. The Commons also connects together two other large areas of green space, Scadbury Park and Petts Wood to create an interconnected green space of over 250 hectares.

If the charity did not exist, the Commons would quickly become unusable in that they would be subject to uncleared fly-tipping and litter, illegal parking and would overgrow rapidly. There is also strong evidence that encroachment from some adjoining properties would take place with the permanent loss of land. For 4 consecutive years the Commons have been awarded a Green Flag award.

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The Trustees carry out between them all the administrative, regulatory, financial and public relations tasks. External paid auditors are appointed and recourse to paid external legal assistance and administration occurs when necessary. The Trustees believe the organisation could not be leaner nor more cost effective and are satisfied that the work of the charity meets the requirements of current legislation relating to public benefit.

3. Trustees

Trustees are appointed to the Board for a period of three years and may be re-appointed for subsequent periods of 3 years. Trustees are formally appointed by the London Borough of Bromley.

All Trustees give of their time voluntarily and receive no emoluments.

We continue to seek additional Trustees who are keen supporters of the Commons and its protection and who can offer relevant skills, enthusiasm and their time.

4. COVID-19 and variants

The overall duration of the COVID restrictions has disrupted some specific aspects of the Commons work, most notably tree safety work. Attempts to overcome this disruption have been hindered by new issues affecting tree safety and the unavailability of the Head Keeper.

5. Fundraising Statement

The charity receives donations of funds from residents and businesses in the local community by way of regular donations and one-off voluntary donations, some of which are related to exceptional operational expenditure and through support of events that are managed by the Trustees and its volunteers. It also engages in raising funds through retailers via their charity support programmes and bids for funds from other non-local bodies for specific projects. When funds are raised for a specific project, we ensure that our donors are kept up to date with the progress of the project via social media and our monthly newsletters. This occurred when funds for a new truck were raised in first quarter 2022 with expected delivery March 2022. Many delays occurred with final delivery in July 2023.

All fundraising has to receive the approval of the Board and be compliant with data protection. All fundraising activity is monitored by the Board through the provision by the Treasurer of spreadsheet monthly reviews of income and expenditure.

Major fundraising takes place on an 'as required' basis and only after approval by the Board of the method of approach to potential donors. This will recognise the need to be clear about who we are, what we do, how any funds donated will be used and the methods by which donors can make a gift and amend a regular commitment. No undue pressure is applied and any decision to cease giving is respected and acted upon promptly. Only standing order arrangements are used for regular donations, allowing the payer to cancel at will.

We aim not to cause offence or nuisance and respect the choice of method of contact.

No professional fundraisers or commercial participators are used.

6. Financial Report

Summary:

Our total incoming resources for the accounting year 2023 were £116,119 (2022: £115,642). After expenditure of £100,859 (2022: £95,527) a surplus of £15,260 for the year was recorded. (2022: £20,115). Capital Resources accordingly increased to £213,090 (2022: £197,830).

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Income:

Income is derived mainly from Local Authority Grants, specific donations, regular donations, one-off grants, donations given at events, any income from events and Gift Aid.

The Income figure for Donations of £104,216 includes

- A Grant from the London Borough of Bromley of £36,310.
- Specific donations of £2,000 from the Chislehurst Rotary for dealing with the consequences of sooty bark disease and £10,000 from The Chislehurst Society towards the cost of the new Truck which was delivered in July 2023.
- One-off donation of £6,740 (2022 £3,853). This includes Retailers Charity schemes of £119.63, Shepherds Neame Brewery £1,000, refund of Fly tipping costs from LBB £250, a donation from Wellers solicitors of £400 towards our publishing costs, £300 from Norlands Estate Residents Association, a £500 legacy, donations collected at our annual reception of £1,755, a new supporters donation of £1,000 and other amounts from Talks, Walks, and Filming permissions.
- Regular donation income received from periodic committed payments of £38,261. The equivalent figure for 2022 was £40,366, 2021 £36,416. Sadly, some donors have died.
- Gift Aid of £9,801 on relevant donations.

Trading activities from sales of cards, publications, teas and holly, increased to £470 (2022- £328).

Although the 'Magic in Nature' event organised by our supporters was held in September 2023, just outside the year end, we received sponsorship monies from local businesses totalling £4,198 towards this event without any offsetting expenditure which will arise in 2024. Our expectations are for a profit in due course of approximately £5,100 on this event.

We also benefitted from Insurance proceeds for our old truck of £3,870 and increased interest on our cash balances of £3,064. (2022 £442). This latter benefit is likely to continue into 2024.

Expenditure:

Total operating costs were £100,859 (2022: £95,527 2021: £114,308. 2020: £97,445).

For 2023 the big expense in General Maintenance was on trees of £17,141 relating to ash dieback costs. No monies were expended on oak processionary moth treatment.

Our Health and Safety costs increased as we equipped our new assistant keeper and sent him on first aid and chain saw courses.

Sundries includes Land Registry Fees of £14.00, £150 of gift tokens for our employees, a £100 donation to Open Spaces Society for advice, a £190 fee to Maitland Medical in respect of a medical assessment for our Head Keeper, subscriptions of £300 and £301 of admin and hosting expense.

Tree costs for the last 11 years were as follows; 2023: £17,141 2022: £6,750 2021: £5,254 2020: £2,250 2019: £8,586 2018: £19,008 2017: £1,514. 2016: £920 2015: £3,158 2014: £5,197 2013: £520.

The tree costs for 2023 are 254% above the figure for 2022 which reflects the increasing impact of ash dieback. Affected trees in most cases are large and have to be felled requiring external contractors. This is discussed in more detail in Section 8 of this report

We are benefitting from the fixing of a discount on our insurance costs with Zurich Insurance and have benefitted from fixing our utility costs until November 2023. From November these latter costs have increased in line with market prices.

During the year we purchased our new truck, the total cost of which was £31,991. This is not shown in the Statement of Financial Activities as it is a Fixed Asset purchase and is shown in the Balance Sheet. It has though impacted upon our cash balances.

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We are extremely grateful to all those who have responded to our fundraising requirements whether by giving a single contribution or by pledging a regular sum. Without this help the charity would not survive.

Net Cash Position

As we do not take more than 30 days' credit and our debtors arise from accrual accounting then Cash at Bank of £175,008 is a good measure of our financial solvency. It has reduced from the 2022 figure owing to the payment for the truck against which the operating surplus of £15,260 has been applied. After dealing with the net positive effect of debtors and creditors of £4,986, then uncommitted cash balances would increase to £179,994.

We manage our cash reserves to provide us with 9 months' cover for operating expenses to allow us time to replace the loss of our grant and find other sources of funds. This may seem an exaggerated concern as we continue to receive, albeit declining in real terms, financial support from The London Borough of Bromley, but we live in uncertain times. We also wish to hold a contingent reserve for possible legal expenses and other capital items should we not be able to find additional sources of funding.

Our cash, as at the year end, is held in operating accounts with Barclays Bank, a 120-day notice account with Hampshire Trust Bank, Cambridge and Counties Bank and Redwood Bank.

All investments are in the form of cash deposits which are protected by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme.

With the generous donations and support of so many local residents, grants from community focussed organisations, much improved revenue from events, our self-imposed discipline of raising discrete funds to match capital expenditure and the continuing support of the London Borough of Bromley, the Trustees are confident that they can continue to operate satisfactorily.

Bankers

Barclays Bank PLC
7 High Street
Chislehurst
BR7 5AB

7. Risk Management

The Board annually reviews the Key Risks to which the Charity is subject. In addition we aim to meet 'best practice' requirements of the Charities Commission by having in place policies with a nominated responsible trustee for Financial Investment, Volunteers, Conflicts of Interest, the Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults and Social Media. Added to these are those specific to our situation such as 'Tree Inspection policy', 'Events Policy', 'Filming Policy', 'Advertising by 3rd parties on the Commons' and 'Unauthorised Encampment on the Commons'.

Practical examples of policies in action are;

Our volunteer procedures where staff and volunteers are informed of the risk assessments which have been conducted for the various tasks they undertake. They are not allowed to use any equipment for which they have not been properly trained or covered by insurance.

For events that take place on the Commons we require risk assessments and Public liability insurance cover.

Insurance cover for risks associated with our operational activities is provided by Zurich Municipal Insurance. This provides employer's liability and public liability insurance and Trustees' indemnity insurance. The principal risk

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factors outside the Board's control are accidents to members of the public arising from falling trees or branches, and slips and trips due to exposed tree roots. We endeavour to mitigate these risks by means of our Tree inspection policy, with appropriate action taken, and clearance of vegetation around paths.

Financial risks. The Board is reliant upon the continuation of financial support from the London Borough of Bromley (LBB) of a 5-year grant of £36,310 per annum. This Grant was due for renewal in April of 2021 and, whilst it has continued to be paid but at an amount last set in 2010, there is no formal agreement to this effect. The Board has met and continues to meet with the responsible parties at the LBB to obtain certainty of the grant's continued provision but so far to no effect. The Board has a policy of having at least nine months' expenditure in reserve to meet its obligations in the event of a substantial loss of income.

The Board receives a monthly spreadsheet including income and expenditure, bank balances and proposed expenditure. The annual accounts are examined by external accountants. All funds are controlled by the Treasurer and the Chairman.

Climate Risk. We recognise the impact of climate change upon the Commons, as warmer temperatures and a lack of moisture caused by below average rainfall in the first half of a year means that trees are constantly under stress. This allows diseases and pests to become more established. We aim to address this within our 10-Year Management Plan with progress and relevance being reviewed annually, including that of our Tree Inspection Programme. Our knowledge is enhanced and broadened through representation on various London Borough of Bromley and other environmental green space and ecological organisations. The lack of water in the summer due to low rainfall, impacts upon the water levels in our ponds which are reliant upon run off from the surrounding roads and the wildlife they support. The solutions available to address this are very limited.

Succession Planning Risk. With only 2 employees, we are vulnerable to staff unavailability through sickness and resignations. Our new Assistant Keeper had only joined us in September when, in December 2022, our Head Keeper suffered a serious medical condition which effectively meant he was off sick for the rest of the reporting year. It had a major impact on the operation of the Commons. An effective operation was only maintained by the excellent work of the Assistant Keeper, the Trustees and our volunteers. We are also vulnerable to the retirement of Trustees. In common with other organisations which rely on individuals to give up their time, the concept of volunteering appears to be unfashionable.

8. Tree Safety Management Policy Year Ending 31 August 2023

The tree safety management policy was formalised in 2013 and has been reviewed annually since then to reflect best use of resources and changes in legal and good practice requirements. It is clear that a regular inspection routine is vital, particularly where the major public roads cross the Commons. This is however very resource dependant, particularly in respect of volunteer time to carry out and record the inspections and manage the tree works resulting from the inspections. The ongoing availability of this level of volunteer support is not certain.

The tree inspection work during this reporting period required a total of 14 work sessions and were completed from October to November 2022. Each work session consisted of 2 people for a morning. In excess of 1,000 trees were inspected.

An intended outcome of these inspections is for necessary tree work to be identified. Where we are unable to do such work ourselves, we appoint approved tree surgeons. During this reporting period the cost of such tree work was £17,141. This was 254% higher than for the previous year and is largely due to increased expenditure on ash dieback.

In last year's report we cautioned against future complacency in relation to the cost of tree safety work. This proved to be well founded. This year the work of tree safety has been complicated by an outbreak of a new to the Commons disease, sooty bark disease. This has killed a large number of sycamore trees.

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It was first identified on the Commons at the beginning of June 2022. Like ash dieback, this is a fungal outbreak which in this case rapidly kills sycamore trees. The initial outbreak of sooty bark disease occurred close to a major junction of 2 'A' roads. The cost of dealing with this one outbreak alone is likely to be approximately £15,000 with at least one similar work package planned for 2024. Like ash dieback, all trees identified with sooty bark disease and located in high-risk areas need to be felled in a timely manner. The disease has spread to all parts of Chislehurst Commons and St Paul's Cray Common. The cost of dealing with sooty bark disease over the next 2 or 3 years could well match, if not exceed, that of ash dieback.

Following on from last year, oak processionary moth has not been a problem this year with no cases having been reported on the Commons.

9. Management of natural environments, biodiversity and amenity

We continue to manage the Commons according to our Vision Statement being 'To balance their natural environmental, biodiversity and amenity values for the benefit and enjoyment of the general public and local community, meeting their expectations for the provision of areas for quiet recreation in a natural environment' and our Charitable Objectives.

The Natural Environment Committee (NEC) has the responsibility for such environmental management and maintaining public access and safety. It also provides public recreation and leisure through arranging guided walks, attendance at public events arranged by other organisations like the May Queen Ceremony, Summer and Xmas Fairs and Chislehurst Creates and by arranging activities like Leaf Rubbing and The Bug Hunt for children.

We have excellent relationships with the London Borough of Bromley (LBB) and idverde, their parks and green spaces contractor. We are represented on the Bromley Friends Forum and Bromley Biodiversity Partnership and have contributed to the Borough Biodiversity Plan and Open Space Strategy. We were again successful in being awarded Green Flag Award status during the year, with a very favourable report from the judge.

The year under review was in year 5 of the 2018-2028 Woodland Management Plan agreed with English Forests. This provides an overarching document guiding our approach to the natural woodland environment and our core roles and responsibilities. We consider we are performing to the plan and this has been confirmed by the Green Flag Award and responses from English Forests to our 5-Year Review Report.

The NEC continues to develop and update policies and management plans, including the overarching 10-Year Management Plan and other ancillary ones such as a 5-year Woodland Management Policy. Our Mowing Policy and Schedule has continued to be developed, supported by grassland surveys, to balance competing demands of maintaining acid grassland biodiversity and public amenity, taking into account human, equipment and cost restraints.

Our two major ponds, Prickend Pond and Rush Pond, are prominent features of Chislehurst, with positive amenity value for residents and visitors. They are notable for their wide variety of ducks, geese and other aquatic birds and for other pond life. At Prickend Pond, the new grant-funded access path from the High Street, public seating area and bird-feeding beach are proving very popular. Ancillary planting and bank and island management by Volunteers continue to enhance the Pond. Regular water quality and biological surveys have helped inform the management of both Prickend and the nearby Rush Pond.

As in past years, the management of and improvements to the Commons have relied on the work of the Head and Assistant Keeper and on the essential additional inputs of our Volunteers, to whom we continue to be very grateful. To make the best use of Volunteers, and for safety reasons, the regular work sessions on Wednesday mornings are broken up into smaller groups according to their different skills and strengths. For example, working on small tree-felling and chipping, or on scrub-clearance, dead hedging, ditching or surveying. Different groups can then also be governed by more specific related Risk Assessments and H&S procedures. Our ability to deal with any further increases in volunteers continues to be constrained by the lack of group leaders.

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In addition to conducting tours and the visit of the GFA judge, we have also had reciprocal exchange visits with Friends of other local greenspaces and hosted visits by representatives from the London Borough of Bromley, such as the Portfolio Holder for the Environment and the Senior Planner, and also visitors from Council greenspace contractors, idverde.

10. Litter, Fly-Tipping, Vehicle trespass, Roads

The use of the Commons continues at a greater level than pre COVID-19 times.

For the reporting period September 2022 to August 2023 12,172kgs of rubbish was collected requiring 45 trips to the council refuse tip (2021/2022 18,1670 kgs with 73 trips.).

This might suggest that there has been much less litter than previous years. However, whilst our old truck was out of action for 6 weeks our litter was taken to the tip by the LBB contractor idverde. We offer our thanks to idverde; and to all those who regularly go out on the Commons to pick up litter .

Last year it was reported that, owing to unacceptable Household rubbish and dog faeces being deposited in our bins, we were to replace our bins in 2023.

We have now replaced 23 open concrete bins with more modern enclosed bins. This has been a great success and has much improved the process for emptying the bins as well as reducing problems of displaced litter.

Eleven of the new bins were paid for and supplied by London Borough of Bromley's Jubilee Parks Fund for which we are very grateful.

Fly-tipping continues to take place, and we are ever grateful to the LBB for their assistance in removing those fly-tips which are beyond our capabilities, particularly hazardous dangerous waste that has been fly-tipped. Owing to the diligence of a resident, who recorded details of a fly-tipper which lead to a successful conviction, we received £250 from the LBB towards our clearance costs.

As with last year, there have been very few incidents of illegal parking of vehicles by residents, or of vehicles being driven across the Common, in contravention of the bye laws.

Road improvement schemes proposed by the LBB that may affect the Commons have been limited to improvements to the Loop Road mini roundabout. Discussions with the LBB on this scheme started back in 2019 and were revived during the year culminating in agreed work being undertaken during August. We await proposals from the LBB for any improvements to pedestrian safety at the War Memorial junction.

11. Utilities/ Requests for Access/Boundaries

A number of utilities such as telecoms, electricity and water are routed across the Commons. These utilities need to be accessed for a variety of reasons, such as inspection, installation of new cables or pipes to connect to the existing network, repairs, the addition of new telecom boxes, or emergency work. We require such work to be licenced by us to ensure that it is only done under controlled conditions, that the work does not damage or adversely affect the Commons, and proper re-instatement will take place. We are also aware that the freeholder of the Commons should require easements to be granted.

The progress that we had hoped for in 2023 on completing new Deeds of Easement with UKPN and Openreach has not been achieved.

An unexpected hole perhaps associated with an old well appeared on the track in June between The Ramblers Rest PH and Mill Place Cottages. This was fenced off and repaired by external contractors which was paid for by The Chislehurst Society with a small contribution made by Mill Place residents notwithstanding their use had contributed to the collapse. The surface condition of the track leading to the Ramblers Rest and Cricket Ground Road are a matter of continuing discussion between interested parties

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12. Commons Community Events

Our regular programme of well-attended walks on the Commons has continued this year with visits to the various habitats to see how we are managing and enhancing them, and the areas where the volunteers have been working. These walks have been a valuable means of engaging with the community, but have also brought us supporters and some volunteers with particular skills and interests, which has enabled us to extend our survey work.

There are regular community events through the year in Chislehurst where we have taken an active part in promoting interest in the Commons. We had a stall at the Christmas Market where we had cards, mounted photos, decorations made from pinecones and holly on show and for sale. We had a stall and display at an event to promote the Cricket Club, and also at The Crowning of the May Queen. At the Rotary Summer Fair our large display stimulated a lot of discussion, and we also offered a children's activity. The Big Picnic was held for the third year running on the Common, this time as part of the Coronation celebrations, and we were there with a display and a family nature trail.

We are keen to build relationships with local schools and took some staff from a local school on a guided tour of the Commons. We also engage with schools on local projects such as the relevance and importance of the Chislehurst War Memorial, Prince Imperial Monument and the various fungi that are attacking our trees.

A talk to Crofton Townswomen's Guild by one of the Trustees and two volunteers was well-received.

Our assistant Keeper retired in September 2022 after 14 years, and we hosted a farewell party for him on the Commons to which all users of the Commons who knew him were invited. He was a well-known figure, and it was well attended, particularly by dogwalkers, some of whom brought their dogs.

A tradition has grown up amongst the regular dogwalkers of decorating a tree in the woods at Christmas in memory of their pets.

We entered a tree depicting aspects of the Commons in the annual Christmas Tree Festival in Chislehurst Methodist Church, and it was later displayed in the local Sainsburys.

Chislehurst War Memorial is situated on the Common, and a local Nursery, Coolings, provides flowers for the base throughout the year. The annual Remembrance Day service takes place on the Commons.

We are members of Visit Chislehurst and attendance at their monthly meetings gives us links with local businesses. Our cards are on sale in local shops.

Newsletter and website

Our annual newsletter is published each spring. This is distributed in a printed and electronic format to all Friends of the Commons as a way to keep in touch with our supporters and, from feedback, is much appreciated. We were pleased to receive sponsorship again from our solicitors, Wellers, for the newsletter printing costs. Following an increase in postal rates we are reviewing the best approach to delivering our printed newsletter.

An online Newsletter, with news and photos is sent out once a month to our mailing list of over 1,000. The material is provided by Trustees, Keepers and volunteers who provide photos and specialist information. All these publications can be accessed via our website, along with the story boards and activities.

We have 4 Notice Boards situated across the Commons with maps and information which are regularly updated with items of interest for visitors and upcoming events. In addition, leaflets with a map are available in the

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community ex-phone box on Royal Parade.

Information about the Commons is also available via links to Facebook and Twitter from our website.

Our social media presence is managed by a volunteer, with material provided by Trustees and volunteers via a nominated Trustee.

Our website includes a donation facility that allows people to make donations online. We have been also using a card payment facility.

13. Friends of the Commons

The Trustees are fortunate to be supported by a growing group of people, currently numbering about 350, who contribute financially and/or with their time in maintaining the Commons. Within this number, there is a very active and growing band of volunteers who work in one of our regular volunteer conservation groups and who provide vital help for our various events.

We estimate that they and the Trustees contribute 8000 work hours to our activities. We believe that our Friends group is one of the largest organisations supporting open spaces in the country. We have also enjoyed excellent support from idverde and the LBB for our various funding bids and project development. Without the help of all these members of the local community the charity could not operate. We thank them all.

Our Annual Friends' Reception was a successful event with 110 attendees. All our visitors were very pleased to attend and look forward to a repeat performance in 2024.

14. Working with the Freeholder

Since 2017 the freehold of Chislehurst and St Paul's Cray Commons has been owned by the Chislehurst Society. We are pleased to report that both our organisations continue to work closely in ensuring the correct legal rights are granted by our respective organisations.

In addition, the Chislehurst Society, both as Freeholder and as the local Civic Society is very supportive of our work, having part-funded many of our projects over many years. In 2023 they donated towards the cost of our new Truck.

We have been working with the Freeholder on other matters, not least the unexpected hole near The Ramblers Rest PH, that have benefitted from a dual approach, and, whilst our responsibilities are different, we share the common objective of protecting the Commons for current and future generations.

15. The Future

The financial position of the charity continues to be in good order. We enjoy an 9 year lease of our premises at The Old Fire Station from London Borough of Bromley. Whilst it was intended that the Conservators, when established by Act of Parliament in 1888, would be fully funded by the Local Parishes (whose roles are now with the London Borough of Bromley), the reality is that, since 2000, we have been receiving only part of our funding from the London Borough of Bromley. This represents a most valuable and necessary grant from the Borough, which we anticipate will continue, owing, not least, to the financial leverage of 1 part LBB finance to 2 parts community finance. If the value of the volunteers and Trustees time is costed this rise to 1:4.5. The grant is supplemented by donations from residents, local businesses and community organisations such as the Chislehurst Society and Chislehurst Rotary Club.

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Fortunately, after a lean period of 5 years for our own events, we are hopeful that we have re-established an Arts and Craft Fair aimed at children. Although it was held in September of our 2023/24 financial year, we reaped benefit in 2022/23 from advance sponsorships monies. The final outcome of approx. £5,100 surplus is anticipated.

We aim for such sources of funds to cover our operational expenses, although, along with other charities, we are in the invidious position of being charged more for our goods and services but unable to pass that on to our customers, the public. Hence why we have exerted good cost control over those costs we can influence, i.e. those excluding trees. The impact of inflation this year has not been too harsh, although with fixed supplier contracts ending in 2023, the picture for 2024 will change. It places more emphasis on our ability to attract other sources of grant income and one-off donations to meet our operating cost.

In 2023 we enjoyed regular donor income of £38,261 (2022 £40,366). This was a reduction from 2022 but was more than compensated by one-off donations of £6,740. We also benefited from specific donations of £2,000 from Chislehurst Rotary and £10,000 from The Chislehurst Society. We hope we can build on this overall improvement in donations but remain acutely aware that our donors' own financial positions are under strain as they deal with cost increases and interest rate rises.

Undoubtedly our biggest and growing challenge is the cost of managing our ageing woodland, with many trees reaching the end of their natural lives and climate change increasing the incidence of diseases, that is proving expensive to address. The costs of dealing with ash dieback, sooty bark disease and, no doubt, some new infestation are increasing and remain uncertain. Our grant from LBB has been at the same level since 2010, and the ability of our donors to continue their generosity may be under stress. It is our hope that the LBB will continue to appreciate that, without the Conservators and its volunteers and supporters, the cost burden they would have to bear would be 3 times the level of grant currently provided.

Our next biggest challenge is the identification and recruitment of new Trustees. Our current Board members' 'Time resources' will continue to be challenged through dealing with issues arising from the increased pressure on the Commons from traffic and being asked to consider road changes and their impact on the Commons, surrounding development, fly-tipping, other transgressions of the Commons, ensuring that requests for track surface improvements are sympathetic to the Commons, the increased level of regulation and reporting that is required and managing exceptional events such as the appearance of big holes in the ground. These tasks are undertaken by too few Trustees. We will place greater emphasis in 2024 in addressing this matter.

We place great reliance upon our keepers and our volunteers and Trustees. Our Head keeper was taken ill in December 2022 and returned to full time working in July 2023. The disruption this caused was compounded by our old truck being involved in an accident in March and thus being out of service.

Our new Assistant Keeper as of September 2022 has acquitted himself very well and, with the support of the Trustees and volunteers, it is doubtful if anyone outside the organisation noticed that anything was amiss. It was a valuable lesson in managing the return to work of the head keeper and the strains and risks placed upon a small organisation when 50% of the work force is unavailable.

I also record my thanks to Peter Edwards, our Assistant keeper, who retired in September 2022 after 14 years' service. His concern for the Commons was evident in all his time with us both at work and at leisure. He willingly helped out with our events and in providing photographs for our publications and developed excellent relationships with residents and dog walkers who turned out in force to his excellent retirement party on the Commons.

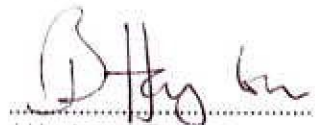
Chislehurst is only ten miles from the centre of London, and we are conscious of our responsibilities in maintaining such an important open space so near to a large area of population. The Board remains confident that, so long as such generous support both financial and of skills and talents from individuals and organisations continues, we can meet the challenges presented to us and be confident of carrying on our work for the present and future benefit of the community of Chislehurst.

THE CHISLEHURST & ST. PAUL'S CRAY
COMMONS CONSERVATORS

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
For The Year Ended 31 August 2023

I offer my personal thanks to those whose efforts go largely unrecognised; my Board member colleagues, who give of their personal time and skills so freely, and our volunteers, who apply their expert knowledge and graft, for keeping our Commons in such good order.

Approved by order of the board of trustees on 23rd January 2024 and signed on its behalf by:


.....
J Hayhow - Trustee

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF
THE CHISLEHURST & ST. PAUL'S CRAY
COMMONS CONSERVATORS**

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of The Chislehurst & St. Paul's Cray Commons Conservators

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of The Chislehurst & St. Paul's Cray Commons Conservators (the Trust) for the year ended 31 August 2023.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under Section 145 of the Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under Section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by Section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.


GRAHAM ATKIN FCA

Crane & Partners
Chartered Accountants
Leonard House
5 - 7 Newman Road
Bromley
Kent
BR1 1RJ

Date: 23 January 2024

**THE CHISLEHURST & ST. PAUL'S CRAY
COMMONS CONSERVATORS**

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
For The Year Ended 31 August 2023

		2023 Unrestricted funds £	2022 Total funds £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM	Notes		
Donations and legacies		104,216	114,872
Other trading activities	2	4,869	328
Investment income	3	3,064	442
Other income		<u>3,970</u>	<u>-</u>
Total		<u>116,119</u>	<u>115,642</u>
 EXPENDITURE ON			
Raising funds		2,305	1,353
Charitable activities			
Costs of protecting and conserving the woodlands		<u>98,554</u>	<u>94,174</u>
Total		<u>100,859</u>	<u>95,527</u>
 NET INCOME		15,260	20,115
 RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS			
Total funds brought forward		197,830	177,715
 TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		<u>213,090</u>	<u>197,830</u>

The notes form part of these financial statements

**THE CHISLEHURST & ST. PAUL'S CRAY
COMMONS CONSERVATORS**

BALANCE SHEET
31 August 2023

	Notes	2023 Unrestricted funds £	2022 Total funds £
FIXED ASSETS			
Tangible assets	6	33,096	-
CURRENT ASSETS			
Debtors	7	9,175	3,416
Cash at bank and in hand		<u>175,008</u>	<u>202,429</u>
		184,183	205,845
CREDITORS			
Amounts falling due within one year	8	(4,189)	(8,015)
NET CURRENT ASSETS		<u>179,994</u>	<u>197,830</u>
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		<u>213,090</u>	<u>197,830</u>
NET ASSETS		<u>213,090</u>	<u>197,830</u>
FUNDS	9		
Unrestricted funds		<u>213,090</u>	<u>197,830</u>
TOTAL FUNDS		<u>213,090</u>	<u>197,830</u>

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees and authorised for issue on 23/11/2024 and were signed on its behalf by:


J Haynow - Trustee

The notes form part of these financial statements

**THE CHISLEHURST & ST. PAUL'S CRAY
COMMONS CONSERVATORS**

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
For The Year Ended 31 August 2023**

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of preparing the financial statements

The financial statements of the charity, which is a public benefit entity under FRS 102, have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019)', Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' and the Charities Act 2011. The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

Income

All income is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities once the charity has entitlement to the funds, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably.

Expenditure

Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

Tangible fixed assets

Depreciation is provided at the following annual rates in order to write off each asset over its estimated useful life.

Plant and machinery	- 33% on cost
Motor vehicles	- 20% on cost

Taxation

The charity is exempt from tax on its charitable activities.

Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the trustees.

Restricted funds can only be used for particular restricted purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes.

Further explanation of the nature and purpose of each fund is included in the notes to the financial statements.

**THE CHISLEHURST & ST. PAUL'S CRAY
COMMONS CONSERVATORS**

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
For The Year Ended 31 August 2023

2. OTHER TRADING ACTIVITIES

	2023	2022
	£	£
Fundraising events	4,399	-
Sale of books and cards	<u>470</u>	<u>328</u>
	<u>4,869</u>	<u>328</u>

3. INVESTMENT INCOME

	2023	2022
	£	£
Deposit account interest	<u>3,064</u>	<u>442</u>

4. TRUSTEES' REMUNERATION AND BENEFITS

There were no trustees' remuneration or other benefits for the year ended 31 August 2023 nor for the year ended 31 August 2022.

Trustees' expenses

During the year 3 trustees received reimbursements to the sum of £2,118.80 in relation to general maintenance, community events and postage and stationery costs.

5. STAFF COSTS

The average monthly number of employees during the year was as follows:

	2023	2022
	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
Keepers		

No employees received emoluments in excess of £60,000.

**THE CHISLEHURST & ST. PAUL'S CRAY
COMMONS CONSERVATORS**

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
For The Year Ended 31 August 2023

6. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Plant and machinery £	Motor vehicles £	Totals £
COST			
At 1 September 2022	68,591	44,545	113,136
Additions	1,105	31,991	33,096
Disposals	<u>-</u>	<u>(20,200)</u>	<u>(20,200)</u>
At 31 August 2023	<u>69,696</u>	<u>56,336</u>	<u>126,032</u>
DEPRECIATION			
At 1 September 2022	68,591	44,545	113,136
Eliminated on disposal	<u>-</u>	<u>(20,200)</u>	<u>(20,200)</u>
At 31 August 2023	<u>68,591</u>	<u>24,345</u>	<u>92,936</u>
NET BOOK VALUE			
At 31 August 2023	<u>1,105</u>	<u>31,991</u>	<u>33,096</u>
At 31 August 2022	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>

7. DEBTORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2023 £	2022 £
Other debtors	5,844	-
Prepayments and accrued income	<u>3,331</u>	<u>3,416</u>
	<u>9,175</u>	<u>3,416</u>

8. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2023 £	2022 £
Taxation and social security	-	833
Other creditors	<u>4,189</u>	<u>7,182</u>
	<u>4,189</u>	<u>8,015</u>

**THE CHISLEHURST & ST. PAUL'S CRAY
COMMONS CONSERVATORS**

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
For The Year Ended 31 August 2023

9. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

	At 1.9.22 £	Net movement in funds £	At 31.8.23 £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	182,830	15,260	198,090
Contingency reserve	<u>15,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>15,000</u>
	<u>197,830</u>	<u>15,260</u>	<u>213,090</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>197,830</u>	<u>15,260</u>	<u>213,090</u>

Net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	116,119	(100,859)	15,260
	<u>116,119</u>	<u>(100,859)</u>	<u>15,260</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>116,119</u>	<u>(100,859)</u>	<u>15,260</u>

Comparatives for movement in funds

	At 1.9.21 £	Net movement in funds £	At 31.8.22 £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	162,715	20,115	182,830
Contingency reserve	<u>15,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>15,000</u>
	<u>177,715</u>	<u>20,115</u>	<u>197,830</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>177,715</u>	<u>20,115</u>	<u>197,830</u>

**THE CHISLEHURST & ST. PAUL'S CRAY
COMMONS CONSERVATORS**

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
For The Year Ended 31 August 2023

9. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS - continued

Comparative net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	115,642	(95,527)	20,115
	<u>115,642</u>	<u>(95,527)</u>	<u>20,115</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>115,642</u>	<u>(95,527)</u>	<u>20,115</u>

A current year 12 months and prior year 12 months combined position is as follows:

	At 1.9.21 £	Net movement in funds £	At 31.8.23 £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	162,715	35,375	198,090
Contingency reserve	<u>15,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>15,000</u>
	<u>177,715</u>	<u>35,375</u>	<u>213,090</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>177,715</u>	<u>35,375</u>	<u>213,090</u>

A current year 12 months and prior year 12 months combined net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	231,761	(196,386)	35,375
	<u>231,761</u>	<u>(196,386)</u>	<u>35,375</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>231,761</u>	<u>(196,386)</u>	<u>35,375</u>

**THE CHISLEHURST & ST. PAUL'S CRAY
COMMONS CONSERVATORS**

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
For The Year Ended 31 August 2023

10. RELATED PARTY DISCLOSURES

There were no related party transactions during the year.

**THE CHISLEHURST & ST. PAUL'S CRAY
COMMONS CONSERVATORS**

**DETAILED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
For The Year Ended 31 August 2023**

	2023 £	2022 £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS		
Donations and legacies		
Donations	57,906	78,562
Grants	<u>46,310</u>	<u>36,310</u>
	104,216	114,872
Other trading activities		
Fundraising events	4,399	-
Sale of books and cards	<u>470</u>	<u>328</u>
	4,869	328
Investment income		
Deposit account interest	3,064	442
Other income		
Other income	<u>3,970</u>	<u>-</u>
Total incoming resources	116,119	115,642
EXPENDITURE		
Raising donations and legacies		
Printing and stationery	1,735	678
Community event costs	<u>570</u>	<u>675</u>
	2,305	1,353
Charitable activities		
Salaries and Nat. Insurance	57,641	57,799
Premises costs	7,230	7,444
Insurance	4,627	4,974
Vehicle and plant maintenance	4,088	5,988
General maintenance	19,250	15,649
Telephone, computer and post.	882	813
Health & Safety	2,535	528
Sundries	<u>1,055</u>	<u>139</u>
	97,308	93,334
Support costs		

This page does not form part of the statutory financial statements

**THE CHISLEHURST & ST. PAUL'S CRAY
COMMONS CONSERVATORS**

DETAILED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
For The Year Ended 31 August 2023

	2023 £	2022 £
Support costs		
Governance costs		
Accountancy and legal fees	<u>1,246</u>	<u>840</u>
Total resources expended	<u>100,859</u>	<u>95,527</u>
Net income	<u>15,260</u>	<u>20,115</u>

This page does not form part of the statutory financial statements

