

EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE
Monday, 5 November 2012

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held at Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 5 November 2012 at 11.00 am

Present

Members:

Alderman Gordon Haines (Chairman)
Barbara Newman (Deputy Chairman)
Deputy John Barker
Alderman John Garbutt
Deputy Stanley Ginsburg
Gregory Lawrence
Deputy Catherine McGuinness
Virginia Rounding
Alderman Robert Hall (Ex-Officio Member)
Verderer Peter Adams
Verderer Richard Morris
Verderer Dr. Joanna Thomas

Officers:

Edward Foale	- Committee & Member Services Officer
Esther Sumner	- Policy Officer, Town Clerk's Department
Jacky Compton	- Committee & Member Services Officer
John Park	- Press Officer, Public Relations Office
Alison Elam	- Group Accountant, Chamberlain's Department
Richard Chamberlain	- Senior Project Liaison Officer, City Surveyor's Department
Paul Monaghan	- Assistant Director Engineering
Sue Ireland	- Director of Open Spaces
Paul Thomson	- Superintendent, Epping Forest
Andy Barnard	- Superintendent, Burnham Beeches & Stoke Common
Bob Warnock	- Superintendent, City Commons
Geoff Sinclair	- Head of Operations, Epping Forest

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from George Abrahams, Deputy Stella Currie, Dr Peter Hardwick and Verderer Michael Chapman.

2. DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF ANY PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA

Deputy Catherine McGuinness declared a personal interest in Item 12, as she was a Trustee for the Epping Forest Centenary Trust.

Deputy Stanley Ginsburg declared a personal interest in Item 13, as he was involved in objections to the Epping Forest District Council Local Plan.

3. **MINUTES**

The public minutes and summary of the meeting held on 10 September 2012 were approved as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING

Review of the Governance Arrangements Implemented in 2011 (item 3) – The Chairman advised the Committee that a report would be going to the Policy & Resources Committee on 8 November 2012 and that he had asked for a copy of the report to be circulated immediately after that meeting to all Members of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee for consideration at the next meeting.

Epping Forest Trustee's Annual Report and Financial Statements (Item 5) – The Chamberlain advised that the Charity Commission had been approached and were still in the process of speaking to the Auditors with regards to the reserves policy.

4. **REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS - 2012/13 AND 2013/14**

The Committee considered a joint report of the Chamberlain and the Director of Open Spaces updating the Committee on its latest approved revenue budget for 2012/13 and sought approval for a provisional revenue budget for 2013/14, for subsequent submission to the Finance Committee. The budgets were prepared within the resources allocated to the Director.

RESOLVED: That Members

- i) review the provisional 2013/14 revenue budget to ensure that it reflects the Committee's objectives and, if so, approve the budget for submission to the Finance Committee;
- ii) review and approve the draft Capital Budget;
- iii) authorise the Chamberlain, in consultation with the Director of Open Spaces, to revise these budgets to allow for any further implications arising from Corporate Projects, departmental reorganisations and other reviews, changes to the Additional Works Programme, and implications arising from Carbon Trading Allowances.

5. **GREEN FLAG AND LONDON IN BLOOM AWARDS**

Members considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces informing the Committee of the City Corporation's overall success in the Green Flag Awards this year, providing feedback on the judging process and comparing performance with the national results.

The Town Clerk advised that Recommendation 1 from the report was not relevant to the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the staff and volunteers at all the Open Spaces be congratulated on their hard work throughout the year to ensure their sites won Green Flag and Green Heritage Awards.

City Commons

6. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

The Superintendent of City Commons provided a verbal update on the following:

- Winter Works – The Veteran Tree management programme recommenced at Ashted Common on 5 November 2012. This was divided into two elements, climbing work and groundwork. Grassland restoration work on Farthing Downs, New Hill and Kenley Common had been completed successfully using a tree shear and whole tree chipper. Woodland management works on Coulsdon Common and Kenley Common had been completed. Deterioration in the weather meant that not all the material from Kenley Common was removed and chipped. A follow up programme to deal with the arising was currently being prepared. Scrub management works were on-going across Ashted Common, Farthing Downs, Coulsdon Common, Kenley Common and Riddlesdown.
- Livestock – Arrangements to move the pregnant cows into the barn for calving and over wintering were being made. The breeding programme for the Jacob sheep was missing a year as the team had sufficient numbers for grazing in 2013.
- Volunteers – The hours completed by volunteers were now on target following a dip during the Olympics. A very successful Big Challenge volunteering event was undertaken on Ashted Common involving 43 young people and their supervisors. The task involved cutting birch encroaching onto the firebreaks and sorting the cut material for subsequent dead hedging. A second volunteer leadership course had been completed and emergency first aid training was being provided for the volunteer leaders on 15 November 2012.
- Learning and Development Awards – The City Commons Division were delighted that the Project Assistant received the “Putting Learning into Practice” award recently.

Epping Forest

7. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

The Superintendent of Epping Forest provided a verbal update on the following:

- Leavers – The Acting Business Manager contract had been completed; a Litter Picker had retired and three Arborist Apprentices had completed their placements.
- Starters – The following posts had recently been appointed: Head of Operations, Forest Keeper (Central), Storeperson and two Information and Learning Assistants. A new Community Liaison Officer had started in October together with three new Arborist Apprentices.

- Staff Milestone – A Forest Keeper had completed 25 years' service.
- Ash Die-Back Disease – The Forest had featured in publicity associated with the disease and received a great deal of community concern on potential outbreaks.
- Aviation Strategy – Epping Forest and Burnham Beeches had contributed to Economic Development Chief Officers' Group response to Department for Transport consultation on Aviation Strategy.
- Epping Forest Management Plan – Tenders for web-based consultation were expected in December 2012, with testing in January 2013. A 12-week public consultation was expected to follow Committee consideration in February 2013.
- Knighton Woods – English Heritage had advised that Knighton Woods would not be added to the Register of Parks and Gardens and the Pulhamite Rockery would not be individually listed. A Conservation Management Plan was scheduled for 2013/14.
- Trees beyond the Wood Conference – The Conservation Manager had presented a paper and poster at the three-day conference as part of a 20-year celebration of the inaugural conference on ancient trees.
- Gypsy Moth – First discovered in northeast London in 1995, the Gypsy Moth was now established across much of London. Pheromone trapping had been undertaken in partnership with the Forestry Commission and shown a rise in numbers, though still at low densities.
- Farm Business Tenancies – The Deadline for tenders at Netherhouse and Woodredon was 31 October 2012, with new arrangements starting from 1 January 2013.
- Hollow Ponds Wharf – Work had commenced at Leyton Flats on 1 October 2012. The seven-week project was likely to be extended due to the discovery of over 100mt of building materials in the Pond.
- Wayleave at Honey Lane – The wayleave discussed at the previous meeting had been closed. Shrubs would be planted at the location during December.
- 'Gossip from the Forest' – A new book by Sarah Maitland featured a chapter devoted to Epping Forest which paid tribute to the City of London's role in saving the Forest, but described Epping Forest as the 'memory of an ancient woodland'.
- Baldwins and Deer Sanctuary Ponds – The Project Sub-Committee would shortly hear a proposal from the City Surveyor for works ranging between £400,000 to £1.5M to repair both ponds which had the potential to be Large Raised Reservoirs under new legislation.
- Chingford Golf Course Washdown Facility – The new washdown effluent facility had been completed using a reedbed system to remediate vehicle and equipment washing.
- Rough Sleeper Clearance – 50 clearances had been completed in 2012 in the south of the Forest.
- Partnering with Metropolitan Police Wanstead Safer Neighbourhood Team – Keepers had been working with the Police on scrub clearance ahead of a Police Cadet clearance project in November.
- Bush Wood and Wanstead Flats Dispersal Order – Crime figures on Forest Land were down, but Leytonstone figures remained high. A

decision would be made shortly on the extension of the order beyond 20th November.

- Metropolitan Police - Muster, Briefing and Deployment Centre – The police left the site before 20 September 2012, as per the terms of the Legislative Reform Order and Planning Permission. Restoration had been hampered by recent wet weather.
- Wanstead Flats – London Borough of Newham Fireworks – The fireworks had been postponed from the scheduled date because of recent wet weather. The Mayor could request to hold the fireworks on 10 November instead.
- Lower Forest Cycle Ride – As part of a national programme of events organised by Evans Cycles, Lower Forest saw 345 mountain bikers exploring Epping Forest. The event had attracted one letter of criticism.
- Fly tipping – 651 flytips to October 2012 compared with 788 for October 2011, which was down 17%. However, there was a trend for a higher proportion of lorry-load sized fly tips this year.
- Paddock Fencing Deer Casualties – Forest Keepers had added three incidents of Bucks being caught in poor quality paddock fencing in the last month. Keepers were forced to destroy four distressed animals, the fifth Buck having died of strangulation before the Keepers arrived.
- Countryside Live 2012 – Lee Valley Regional Park – A team of Visitor Services staff and volunteers had delivered 40 learning sessions to 550 pupils over two days in late September.
- The View Visitor Figures – 17,000 visits in the first three months, which was double the levels the Hunting Lodge had received in 2011.
- New Concession at Harrow Road Pavilion, Wanstead Flats – The new tenant had begun operations in September 2012.
- Gain Insight event – Loughton and Chingford Playgroup Network – Series of events have led to bookings of the temporary events area and community room.
- Lakehouse Lake Project (LLP) – Keepers worked alongside LLP volunteers to improve access to Jubilee Pond.
- Visitor Survey – A thank you event was held for volunteers in October 2012 for their help in amassing 935 questionnaire surveys. Results would be available in spring 2013.
- Volunteer Hours – 1,095 hours had been contributed by volunteers over September and October 2012.
- Friends of Epping Forest Centenary Walk – Epping Forest had supported the 2012 walk event, which was started by Stephen Timms MP and addressed on completion by Eleanor Laing MP.
- Landscaping Works – Drainage had been improved at Connaught Water and High Beach, with further work planned at High Beach.
- Gifford Wood Appeal – Works were underway on the planting plan; fundraising scheme and a local resident's consultation meeting, which would take place on 11 November 2012. Staff Volunteers would be supporting a promotional float in the Lord Mayor's Show on 10 November 2012.

In response to a Member's query regarding deer casualties, the Superintendent advised that he had written to all landowners responsible for the fencing and would report on any progress in due course.

In response to a Member's query regarding Ash Die Back Disease, the Director of Open Spaces stated that within the next few days, the Forestry Commission would issue a statement and instructions towards a national strategy. A Member suggested that a briefing could be sent to all Court of Common Council Members to keep them informed of this disease.

In response to a Member's query, the Town Clerk advised that compliance with the Data Protection Act required that disclosure of personal data of employees into the public domain should be consistent with the business needs of the Department and the reasonable expectations of the staff concerned. The nature of an individual's role within the Department, such as whether they had a public facing role, and the sensitivity of personal information would inform a decision as to whether the personal information could be made public at the meeting, and whether the consent of the officer was required.

In response to a Member's query regarding fly tipping, the Superintendent advised that Forest Officers continued to work with the police. Fly tipping was continuing at very high levels and further enforcement work would be necessary.

RECEIVED

8. **EPPING FOREST MANAGEMENT STEERING GROUP MINUTES**

The Committee received the minutes from the meeting held on 27 September 2012.

RECEIVED.

9. **FORMAL RESPONSES TO TWO LOCAL PLANS**

The Committee considered a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest presenting completed formal responses to London Borough of Waltham Forest's (LBWF's) Development Management Policies and a Local Plan *Issues and Options* consultation by Epping Forest District Council (EFDC), which was at an earlier stage in its forward planning process.

RESOLVED: That Members,

- i) endorse both responses sent to the two local authorities;
- ii) approve further engagement by officers with both local authorities on the basis of these responses so that the Local Plan policies can be modified and developed;
- iii) the Superintendent will report to the Committee on any changes to Local Plan policies as a result of the discussions with the two authorities.

10. **OPTIONS APPRAISAL - JUBILEE POND, RELINING AND ENHANCEMENT**

Members considered a report of the City Surveyor advising that water loss at the Jubilee Pond had been reported and several investigations were

undertaken to identify the reason and extent of the leakage in the clay liner. It was identified that the installation of an impermeable liner was the best option to address the leakage. The City Surveyor had a budget of £200,000 in place under the 2010/11 additional works programme, which would be combined with an additional £170,000 of funding from the Metropolitan Police.

A Member enquired as to why the Pond had been leaking, and the City Surveyor stated that an investigation had been undertaken and it appeared that the Pond had been leaking since its original installation.

RESOLVED: That Members,

- i) Approve in principle the relining of Jubilee Pond and undertake enhancements to improve the area, namely capturing surface water to supplement the borehole water supply.
- ii) Allow the project to continue under the streamlined project procedure: Gateway 5 report, with the authority to start work delegated to the Town Clerk in accordance with Standing Order 41(b).

11. EPPING FOREST GRAZING MONITORING AUDIT

Members considered a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest, which provided the findings of the first assessment undertaken by the Independent Grazing Assessor, Dr Peter Dennis of Aberystwyth University, of the approach of the Epping Forest Grazing Strategy in terms of nature conservation benefits and on the effectiveness of the biodiversity monitoring currently being undertaken.

The Chairman advised the Committee that the Verderers were due to forward their views on future reporting issues to the Superintendent.

RESOLVED: That,

- i) the Independent Assessor be invited to visit the monitoring sites across the Forest in 2013 and consider extensions to monitoring areas across habitats;
- ii) the Assessor's second report be provided to the Management Plan Steering Group for consideration prior to being submitted to Committee in November 2013.

12. EPPING FOREST - BRANCHING OUT PROJECT (HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND) - PROGRESS UPDATE REPORT - NUMBER 8

Members considered a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest providing an updated budget and progress report on the City's £6.83 million Branching Out Project, which began in August 2009 with a grant of £4.76 million from Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

RESOLVED: That the budget variances, which do not affect the overall budget total (as detailed in Table 2 and the appendices to the report) be approved, with movements from contingency subject to approval from Heritage Lottery Fund.

13. CONSULTATION BY THE LONDON BOROUGH OF ENFIELD ON THE PROPOSED NORTH EAST ENFIELD AREA ACTION PLAN

Members considered a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest informing them of a public consultation by the London Borough of Enfield which included plans to resurrect proposals for a Northern Gateway Access Road as the Northern Gateway Access Package (NGAP) as part of a regeneration scheme through an Area Action Plan for North East Enfield.

RESOLVED: That,

- i) the Committee pursues option (iii), as detailed within the report, and maintains its objections to the proposals for a NGAP in order to protect Epping Forest from potential damage from increased traffic movements identified in the previous 2001 Public Inquiry.
- ii) cooperation be undertaken with other parties objecting to NGAP to reduce the costs of traffic modelling and pollution monitoring, with Epping Forest Local Risk contribution not exceeding £20,000 in direct costs.

14. ENFORCEMENT OF EPPING FOREST BYELAWS: 1 MARCH 2012 TO 31 AUGUST 2012

Members received a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest informing the Committee of the byelaw enforcement activity undertaken by Epping Forest Keepers using constabulary powers within Epping Forest between 1 March 2012 and 31 August 2012.

The Superintendent advised the Committee that there had been a continuing decrease in the levels of Byelaw enforcement during the period of 2005 – 2012, as a part of a conscious programme of informal education rather than formal prosecution or warning.

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15. EPPING FOREST HABITAT & TREE SAFETY WORK PROGRAMME 2011-12 OUT-TURN

Members received a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest summarising the work completed as part of the habitat and tree safety management Annual Work programme for Epping Forest between April 2011 to March 2012 inclusive. Keystone Trees work reached an important milestone, with 53% of the selected Beech and Oak pollards completed exactly half-way through the important Branching Out project.

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Burnham Beeches & Stoke Common

16. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

The Superintendent of Burnham Beeches & Stoke Common provided a verbal update on the following:

- Projects – Major restoration works had been carried out on Stoke Common, including the removal of three Hectares of woodland and the mulching of ground surface. Natural England's Grants officer visited the site for the first time since restoration works commenced five years ago and was extremely impressed with the progress that had been made.

Young pollard creation, including experimental works, had continued since the previous meeting.

- Staff Changes – The Senior ranger would be leaving in January 2013 to work for the Scottish National Trust. The Conservation Officer had now moved to a three-day week for a two-year period whilst working for the Ancient Tree Forum to deliver a European Grant-funded project. A new part-time Administration Assistant started work at the Beeches Office in October 2012. A four-month seasonal ranger had joined the team to assist with the winter work programme.
- Volunteers – 1300 volunteer hours had been accumulated in the previous two months. This included a corporate working day with Amazon.
- Events – Various events had been held recently on the Beeches, including a fungal foray, a witches broom making event, a half term Halloween trail event, a Halloween party at the Beeches Café and a Skewbald theatre presentation of the Grimm's Fairy tales, held on 29 and 30 October 2012. Caldicott School also held their charity walk on the Beeches and used the car parking facilities for visitors to their Firework Display.
- Coming Up – An agreement payments audit had been undertaken by the Rural Payments Agency. The Superintendent had collaborated with South Bucks District Council, English Nature and the Environment Agency, on South Bucks Development Management Plan.

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17. OUTCOME OF PHASE 1 OF THE INVISIBLE FENCING/VIRTUAL GRID TRIALS AT BURNHAM BEECHES

Members received a report of the Superintendent of Burnham Beeches & Stoke Common that provided the results of the September - October 2012 trial of 'Invisible Fencing' and 'Virtual Cattle Grids' at Burnham Beeches during the Higher Level Stewardship, approval of which had been granted by the Committee in May 2012. It also confirmed that further trials would be pursued in 2013 at a cost of approximately £15,000.

RECEIVED

18. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

There were no questions.

19. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

There were no urgent items.

20. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, as follows:

<u>Item No.</u>	<u>Paragraph</u>
21-22	3
23	1,2 & 3

21. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

The non-public minutes from the meeting held on 10 September 2012 were approved

22. **DECISION TAKEN UNDER URGENCY PROCEDURES**

Members received a report of the Town Clerk.

23. **LEASE RENEWALS - CARL'S TEA HUT, HIGH BEACH & HOLLOW POND BOATHOUSE, LEYTON FLATS**

Members considered a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest.

24. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

There were no questions.

25. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED**

There was no urgent business.

The meeting ended at 12.35

Chairman

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