

EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE
Monday, 8 July 2013

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held at
Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 8 July 2013 at 11.30
am

Present

Members:

Alderman Gordon Haines (Chairman)
Deputy Stanley Ginsburg (Deputy Chairman)
Verderer Peter Adams
George Abrahams
Deputy John Barker
Verderer Michael Chapman
Catherine McGuinness
Verderer Richard Morris
Sylvia Moys
Barbara Newman
Virginia Rounding
Alderman Robert Hall (Ex-Officio Member)
Ian Seaton
Verderer Dr. Joanna Thomas

Officers:

Natasha Dogra	- Town Clerk's Department
Esther Sumner	- Town Clerk's Department
Sue Ireland	- Director, Open Spaces
Andy Barnard	- Superintendent, Burnham Beeches & Stoke Common
Paul Thomson	- Superintendent, Epping Forest
Bob Warnock	- Superintendent, City Commons
Alison Elam	- Group Accountant, Chamberlain's Department
Roger Adams	- Senior Principal Surveyor, City Surveyor's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Sheriff Jeffrey Evans.

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

Deputy Catherine McGuinness and Verderer Richard Morris declared a standing interest as Trustees for the Epping Forest Centenary Trust.

3. **MINUTES**

Matters Arising:

Members requested that the minutes be amended to record that Verderer Michael Chapman was excluded for non-public items relating to Burnham Beeches & Stoke Commons and City Commons during the previous meeting.

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as an accurate, subject to the addition of the above note.

4. **REVENUE OUTTURN 2012/13 - EPPING FOREST AND COMMONS**

The Committee received the report of the Chamberlain and Director of Open Spaces regarding the revenue outturn for the year 2012/13. Members were informed that in total, there was a better than budget position of £319,000 for the services overseen by the Committee compared with the final agreed budget for the year. Officers informed Members that since the report had been published there had been some changes to figures due to changes raised by auditors. The reported figure of £56,000 overspend was now £39,000.

Officers informed Members that the worse than budget position of £124,000 (Local Risk) had been aggregated with budget variations on services overseen by other committees, which produced an overall worse than budget position of £39,000 (Local Risk) across all Open Spaces. This overspend would be carried forward to be met from the agreed 2013/14 budgets for Epping Forest.

The City Surveyor's underspend had been aggregated with budget variations on services overseen by other committees and a request made to carry forward the 'net' underspending for corporate priorities. In response to a query from Members, officers said the City Surveyor's department had three years in which they could spend the net underspending. Officers agreed to circulate a note to Members detailing which projects the budget would be spent on. A Member emphasised that it was important to continue to spend the additional works programme, the need for refurbishment on site had not diminished and the level of work must not reduce.

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5. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

The Superintendent of Epping Forest provided a brief verbal update, and agreed to circulate further information via email to the Committee, with reference being made to the following:

Staff changes

There had been no staff changes during the May/June period.

Ladies Day – 21 June 2013

Epping Forest hosted a successful Ladies Day with 67 guests visiting HLF-funded improvements at Connaught Water; the Warren House Gardens or the new Cross Roads Cattle Grid.

Lord Mayor's Tree Party – 25 June 2013

Over 200 guests attended the fund raising event at Mansion House compered by Clive Anderson and hosted by Caroline Haines. The Friends of Epping Forest presented a cheque for £5,000 towards the Lord Mayor's Appeal.

Cattle Grids Installation Programme

Work has been underway since 3 June on the installation of the four Tier 1 Cattle Grids. Cross Roads reopened 1 day over schedule on 25 June. Forest Side is currently under construction and is expected to complete on 19 July, to be followed by Rangers Road on an accelerated 14 day build between 22 July and 5 August, completing in August with Wake Road.

Chinese Lanterns

Following the devastating fire at the Smethwick Recycling Centre started by a Chinese Lantern, Epping Forest's 2011 campaign to ban these indiscriminate incendiaries has been again featured in the local press.

Knighton Wood Lake Cannabis Cultivation

Conservation and Forest Keeper staff have uncovered the cultivation of cannabis plants on the secluded Knighton Wood Lake Island.

Staples Road Flood Alleviation Scheme (FAS)

Work has been completed to a high standard by the Environment Agency's contractor Bryony to restore the FAS retaining wall which had slumped in last summer's wet weather.

City of London Girls' Football Festival

Wanstead Flats hosted its first ever Girls' Football Festival attended by 90 11-14 year olds from Secondary Schools across East London. Raines Foundation A from Bethnal Green were the final winners followed by Trinity Catholic from Woodford Green in second and third places.

Jubilee Pond, Wanstead Flats

The first phase of work is nearing completion with the installation of mole drains designed to increased surface drainage to the Pond. Ground Control will commence access path works during July

Wanstead Flats Skylarks

Volunteers with the Wren Conservation Group reported 7 breeding pairs of Skylarks on the Wanstead Flats Site of Special Scientific Interest. This figure is down on 2012 figures and most probably reflects poor breeding success in the wet summer of 2012.

London Borough of Waltham Forest Dog Control Orders

LBWF are conducting a public consultation between 1 July and 12 August on reviewed Dog Control Orders which will include their extension to Epping Forest land.

Green Apple Award – 24 June

The View received a prestigious Green Apple Award for environmental best practice at this year's Built Environment and Architectural Heritage Awards made at the National Self Build and Renovation Centre.

Channel 4 Documentary – Dogging Tales

Epping Forest has been featured in follow-on publicity from the documentary first broadcast on 4th April in the Daily Star and local Guardian Group newspapers.

Football Association

The Committee Chairman and Chairman of the Wanstead Flats Playing Fields Committee had a positive meeting with the Football Association's National Facilities Manager.

Panel Engineer's Visit – 24 May 2013

Atkins Global's Panel Engineer completed his first 2013 biannual inspection of 5 Large Raised Reservoir (LRRs) Dams and 3 further precautionary monitored LRRs. Additional engineering works have been recommend at Birch Hall Park Lake (Deer Sanctuary).

Wanstead Park Rhododendron Study

Consultants completed a further year of monitoring at Wanstead Park and Knighton Wood. A possible relict 18th Century planting has been identified at Wanstead Park.

British Ecological Society's 100th Anniversary Festival of Ecology

Epping Forest supported this event with 2 guided walks celebrating the anniversary.

The View Temporary Exhibition 'A Gift for all time'

A well-received exhibition, curated by Visitor Services staff, was staged during April to June celebrating Queen Victoria's visit to Epping Forest.

Chingford Gateway Historical Re-enactment - 4 May

The Forest's first partnership with the Society for Creative Anachronism attracted 400 visitors to a May Day Tudor Re-enactment.

The Royal College of Physicians Corporate Event – 11 June

Epping Forest hosted a successful corporate event across Wanstead Park; Chingford Gateway and Connaught Water.

Family Learning Events 29/31 May

750 participants attended Forest Learning Events on an Owl and Birds of Prey wildlife theme.

Tagging Fallow Deer Fawns

9 Fallow deer fawns were tagged over 2 days by Forest Keepers and members of the Deer Initiative.

Fly Tipping

There were 164 fly tips during May and June. The cumulative total for Fly tips to June was 385 down 16% from 464 last year. A bull terrier carcass in Hill Wood was amongst the tips.

Wanstead Park Fun Dog Day – 9 June

Forest Keepers staged a successful Fun Dog Day at Wanstead Park. **Outreach Work**

The Forest is working with the Kids Company to provide opportunities for young people from Canning Town to participate in the John Muir Award.

Rough Sleeper Clearances

Some 33 rough sleeper camps have been cleared in the first 6 months of 2013, 2 in the North Area; 2 in the Central Area and 29 in the South of the Forest. 50 camps were cleared across 2012.

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6. VISITOR SERVICES PROGRAMME

The Superintendent of Epping Forest presented a report summarising the achievements of the Visitor Services teams during 2012/13 and outlining the broad objectives and operational priorities for the coming financial year.

Members were informed that four Visitor Services buildings received 85,943 visits from 1st April 2012 – 31st March 2013. The View had 31,122 visits, the QEHL had 25,777 visits (not including booked educational groups that totalled a further 3,675) the Visitor Centre at High Beach received 17,310 visits and the Temple received 11,734 visits.

In response to a query from the Committee, Officers informed Members that social media posts were monitored using a hootsuite™ social media management software. Members agreed that Epping Forest tweets were useful and informative.

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7. BRANCHING OUT PROGRESS REPORT

The Branching Out Project Manager presented the Branching Out progress report and informed Members that projects were broadly on track, with all key elements having commenced and the spend profile matching the programme.

The focus during the next six months was on: Jubilee Pond landscaping; the design of Gateways and a standard approach to Forest furniture; installation of cattle grids, associated fencing and other elements of the Forest Transport Strategy; and, cattle winter housing; recruiting three apprentice arborists for the fifth and final year of the scheme. The Volunteer Improvement Plan was also being progressed, as was work on the evaluation and legacy for Branching Out projects.

In response to a query from Members, Officers assured the Committee that proposed Gateway designs would be considered by the Epping Forest Management Plan Steering Group and the implementation of the design would be closely monitored. Members were also reassured that the contractor would be paid in instalments over a set period of time.

Officers also informed Members that maintenance of the scrub on Dannatt's Hill was being progressively undertaken to improve views, but not as part of this project.

RESOLVED: That Members approve:-

- the budget variances, which balance and therefore do not affect the overall budget total; and
- a new contract to Cod Steaks Limited to the value of £250,000 encompassing the design, manufacture and supply of Gateways and Forest furniture (signage, bins, benches, etc.), waiving the requirement to seek further tenders for this work in accordance with Regulation 15 of the City's Procurement Regulations 2012, subject to approval granted from the Finance Committee due to take place on 23rd July 2013.

8. **SWAINES GREEN MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Superintendent presented the Swaines Green, Management Plan and informed the Committee that Swaines Green was purchased by the City of London with significant financial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2005. The management of the land had largely been carried out by volunteers, particularly those supervised by Epping Forest Countrycare and The Friends of Swaines Green group. The Friends group had also developed various access and habitat management proposals, two of which, a boardwalk and new pond, had been implemented.

Future access and conservation work requires coordination and agreement on the priorities in order to enhance the value of the site for wildlife and access and to prevent avoidable habitat losses. The draft management plan had received full support from the key partners at the Friends of Swaines Green and Epping Forest District and Epping Town Councils.

A Member commented that the Plan addressed vegetation management but not visitor access and that the planned work programme needed prioritisation. In response to a query from Members, officers agreed to investigate why the Green was not listed as Epping Forest Land – this point already under active consideration under the Land Registration project. Officers also assured the Committee that an Outreach Worker from the nearby St John's School had been included in the local consultation.

RESOLVED – That Members approved the draft Management Plan to allow its implementation in partnership with the Friends of Swaines Green, Epping Forest Conservation Volunteers (EFCV), Epping Forest District Council Countrycare service and other stakeholders.

9. **LAND MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS FOR NEWLY ACQUIRED LAND AT UPSHIRE (GIFFORD WOOD)**

The Superintendent presented Members with a report describing the proposed land use for the three fields totalling 29.7 acres (12.019 hectares) purchased by the Conservators at Uphire in 2012.

Members were informed that the proposed activity included the creation of 8 acres (3.237 hectares) of new native woodland, Gifford Wood, and a new hay meadow. Significant community involvement is proposed for implementing this project, including school, staff and community planting events. An application to the Forestry Commission's English Woodland Grant Scheme would be made to help fund the works. Unresolved risks for the project include the impact of the need for additional environmental assessments.

Members of the Committee were concerned that the trees would be coppiced and not allowed to grow to full mature height. Officers responded that the views and vistas would be retained in some areas with option to coppice if needed. The area at the top of the hill was being left for natural colonisation and would slowly become high forest. Members also queried the underground services (sewers) and apparent poor drainage. Officers advised that full underground service checks were complete and incorporated into plans, but some further investigations may be required with respect to drainage in some areas.

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10. **DEER MANAGEMENT ON THE BUFFER LANDS AND EPPING FOREST**

The Superintendent presented the deer management proposals for the Buffer Land estate, and sought approval for the annual cull of deer in line with the Deer Management Plan (DMP) adopted by the Committee on 10 September 2012.

Officers informed Members that the 2013 day time deer count recorded 299 Fallow and 43 Reeves Muntjac. The 2012/13 deer cull amounted to 94 Fallow and 16 Reeves Muntjac. The proposed cull figures for the 2013/14 season are 123 Fallow Deer and as many Reeves Muntjac Deer as possible. The cull figures had been set using data from the deer count, vegetation monitoring and recommendations from the Deer Management Plan, presented as part of English Woodland Grant Scheme application presented to the Committee in September 2012. The agreed plan recommended a gradual population reduction over 5 years to 150 Fallow Deer.

The Committee noted that an alternative survey of deer was carried out by the University of East Anglia which recommended lowering deer numbers over a shorter time period would require additional resources and may be counter-productive.

Discussions ensued with regard to the potential for commercial deer stalking on the Buffer land estate. Given the degree of public access to the estates stalking was not considered to be viable on the Buffer Land. Officers would be

investigating the possibility of a financial return through the tendering of future stalking contracts.

RESOLVED: That Members approved the cull figure of up to 123 Fallow deer and an unlimited cull of reeves Muntjac, for the 2013/14 season in line with the Deer Management Plan.

11. **EPHING FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Superintendent of Epping Forest presented proposals for the public consultation process on delivering the Epping Forest Management Plan. Members were informed that a new Management Plan was required to guide the future management of Epping Forest, following the expiry of the previous plan. The inherent value of engaging with interested parties, during the very early stages of the development of the new plan, had been recognised in previous reports.

Members noted that a comprehensive consultation was proposed for stakeholders, community groups and members of the public and stakeholders throughout August, September and October 2013. The consultation would capture the ideas, thoughts and feelings, on management issues faced by the Conservators, giving a greater understanding of the priorities for managing the Forest over the next 10 year period from the perspective of our stakeholders and visitors.

Officers sought approval to delegate powers from the Epping Forest and Commons Committee to the smaller Epping Forest Management Plan Steering Group Committee, to progress the approval of the draft EFMP Phase 1 Consultation allowing implementation of the public consultation in the most expedient manner so as not to miss the vital 'summer' engagement window.

The Chairman of the Committee informed Members that the Epping Forest Management Steering Group had met to discuss the draft consultation and Officers had received some useful feedback.

RESOLVED: That Members delegate power to the Epping Forest Management Plan Steering Group to approve the development of draft text and implement the EFMP Phase 1 Consultation and approved the Marketing Plan and Consultation Programme.

12. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

The Superintendent of Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common provided a verbal update with reference being made to the following:

Volunteers

954 hours of volunteer input delivered by 217 volunteers during the period. Works included:

- Reptile survey at Stoke Common – finished and all sheets lifted at end of May - Friends of Stoke Common
- Habitat pile construction at Stoke Common - Friends of Stoke Common

- Footpath work repairing 100m of footpath at Burnham Beeches
- Tuesday Conservation volunteer group – butterfly transects, dust pad and pitfall trap data collection and recording. Plus visitor survey counts at Stoke Common
- Invisible fence line clearance for Stewarts drive
- Bracken Bashing – Egypt wood and elsewhere at Burnham Beeches

Projects/habitat works

- Invisible fence line at Egypt Wood – route cleared, cable installed, liaison with highway authority completed, cables cut in and installed in across highway, virtual grids painted on highway, signs and gateways installed in readiness for the release of cattle into the area in the first week of July
- Fencing repairs ready for cows returning at Stoke Common – cows back in late May
- Squirrel control – on-going programme to reduce damage to veteran and other trees
- Tree safety works- on-going tree safety programme

Miscellaneous

- Two new members of staff interviewed and recruited to fill vacant posts in the Habitats and Trees team i.e. a Senior Ranger and Assistant Ranger
- Visit to Stoke Common by the All Party Parliamentary Horticultural & Gardening Group
- BBC TV - Countryfile – Filmed at Burnham Beeches. Programme aired in June and showed, invisible fencing, Burnham Beeches Volunteers at work and also featured the wood ants
- Friends of Stoke Common kite building and flying event
- School event. 'Woodland wonder' days at half term – well attended on each date.
- Dog Survey contract tender completed and contract signed, a partnership project with South Bucks District Council
- Hydrological tender process completed and contract signed a further partnership project with South Bucks District Council
- Sustainability Audit System - discussions commenced with 5 other Departments who may wish to adopt this Open Spaces initiative.

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13. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

The Superintendent of City Commons provided a verbal update with reference being made to the following:

Volunteers

1348 hours of volunteer input delivered during the period. Works included:

- Dead hedging on Ashtead Common.
- Installing and maintaining bar-ways and gates.

- Fence line clearance Coulsdon Common.
- Path clearance Kenley Common.
- Bracken control.
- Ragwort control.
- Tree Health monitoring.
- Setting up temporary grazing areas and moving livestock.

Projects/habitat works

- Tree safety works- on-going tree safety programme.
- Haymaking has started across the Coulsdon Commons.
- A French drain has been constructed on Kenley Common to intercept surface water from the perimeter track.
- Timber cut during the winter has been collected off Kenley Common and Riddlesdown and sold to a timber merchant.

Miscellaneous

- Travellers broke onto Spring Park on Tuesday 2nd July and left later that evening. The site was quickly cleared of rubbish and the gate replaced and reinforced.
- Four local school children have undertaken work experience placements with the Ranger teams.
- Each of the Commons has been judged for Green Flag and three of the Commons for Green Heritage results expected towards the end of July.
- Additional late patrols have been implemented to reflect the increased fire risk.

Licences

- Hill Crest 10k run – Riddlesdown
- Greville Bike Ride – Ashtead Common
- Riddlesdown Fun Day – Riddlesdown
- The proposed Kenley Empire Air Show has been postponed for 1 year. The Superintendent and Head Ranger met with the organisers on the 18th July to discuss the application in more detail and conducted a site visit.
- Kenley Fun Day has been licenced for the 28th July 2013.

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

In response to a query from a Member, officers informed that Committee that officers and rangers in Burnham Beeches did not currently wear uniforms personalised to the site due to costs involved. However, other options such as giving officers badges were being considered.

A Member asked about the use of other City of London officers to assist with responding to planning issues, both for Local Plans and the London Plan, it was suggested further resources were needed. The Director agreed to provide

additional information on current resources used and likely additional costs to the Member.

15. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

The Chairman of the Committee moved item 27 “Burnham Beeches Consultative Group Minutes” into the public part of the meeting.

Discussions ensued regarding the minutes. Members were asked whether Officers could respond to the London Borough of Waltham Forest’s draft Enforcement Strategy consultation as per the response sent to Epping Forest District Council in September 2012.

RESOLVED: Members agreed that Officers would response on behalf of the Committee to the consultation to the London Borough of Waltham Forest regarding their draft Enforcement Strategy in line with the previous consultation response to Epping Forest District Council approved by your Committee in September 2012.

16. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED - It was agreed that under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business.

Item No.

Paragraph(s)

17 – 26

3

28 - 31

17. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That the non-public minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as an accurate record.

18. **SUPERINTENDENTS NON PUBLIC UPDATE**

The Superintendent of Epping Forest provided Members with a non-public update on matters relating to the forest.

19. **CHINGFORD GOLF COURSE**

The Superintendent of Epping Forest presented the non-public item to Members of the Committee.

20. **HIGHAMS PARK LAKE UPDATE ON DAM REINFORCEMENT WORKS**

The Superintendent of Epping Forest presented the non-public item to Members of the Committee.

21. **ANNUAL AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS REVIEW**

The Superintendent of Epping Forest presented the non-public item to Members of the Committee.

22. **EPPING FOREST WAYLEAVE**
The Superintendent of Epping Forest presented the non-public item to Members of the Committee.
23. **WAYLEAVE OBSTRUCTION PILOT**
The Superintendent of Epping Forest presented the non-public item to Members of the Committee.
24. **WOODREDON EQUESTRIAN RENT REVIEW**
The Superintendent of Epping Forest presented the non-public item to Members of the Committee.
25. **WARREN HOUSE MANAGEMENT PLAN**
The Superintendent of Epping Forest presented the non-public item to Members of the Committee.
26. **GRANT OF RIGHT OF WAY**
The Superintendent of Epping Forest presented the non-public item to Members of the Committee.
- Verderer Michael Chapman was invited to retire from the meeting, and was excluded for the remainder of the business considered by the Committee.*
27. **DOG CONTROL ORDERS**
This item was discussed under item 16 of the agenda.
28. **BEECHES CAFÉ - LEASE RENEWAL**
The Superintendent presented the non-public item to Members of the Committee.
29. **RENEWAL OF CONTRACT**
The Superintendent presented the non-public item to Members of the Committee.
30. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**
There were no non-public questions on matters relating to the work of the Committee.
31. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED**

Matters considered urgent by the Chairman were presented by Officers.

The meeting ended at 1.25 pm

Chairman

Contact Officer: Natasha Dogra
Natasha.Dogra@cityoflondon.gov.uk