

EPPING FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN STEERING GROUP

Tuesday, 3 March 2015

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest Management Plan Steering Group held at Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Tuesday, 3 March 2015 at 10.30 am

Present

Members:

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| Alderman Gordon Haines (Chairman) | Verderer Dr. Joanna Thomas |
| George Abrahams (Deputy Chairman) | Sylvia Moys |
| Deputy Catherine McGuinness | |
| Verderer Peter Adams | |
| Verderer Michael Chapman DL | |

Officers:

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| Natasha Dogra | Town Clerk's Department |
| Paul Thomson | Superintendent, Epping Forest |
| Jeremy Dagley | Open Spaces Department |
| Caroline Brown | Open Spaces Department |
| Laura Lawson | Open Spaces Department |

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for the meeting held on 3rd March. George Abrahams sent his apologies for the meeting held on 9th March.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as an accurate record.

4. EPPING FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN (PHASE 1 CONSULTATION)

Members of the Committee noted that a new Management Plan was required to guide the future management of Epping Forest, following the expiry of the previous plan in 2010. A comprehensive consultation would take place in the summer of 2015 to capture the thoughts, feelings and ideas of community groups, members of the public and stakeholders on the management issues faced by the Conservators.

Officers presents the remaining 64 sections to the Committee for discussion and the following points were raised by Members:

5. Members noted that the document would be useful when communicating the complex management of Epping Forest.
6. Each section would include signposts to other pages where that particular section was mentioned, for example cycling was mentioned throughout the plan and therefore the cycling section would include signposts to the other pages.
7. To access the consultation, individuals would need to create an 'identity' using their email address. This would deter people from submitting multiple responses. Users would also need to state whether they were part of an organisation when registering.
8. Members requested that Officers set up the online segment of the consultation prior to the May Committee meeting and circulate the link to Committee Members to ensure that Members had a chance to use it before agreeing the final product.
9. Members highlighted the need to advertise the consultation in local newspapers, exhibition centres, and social media, and asked Officers to investigate the use of local buses to advertise a 'Have Your Say' banner.
10. Members noted that an introduction was yet to be included in the document. It was noted that the introduction would be imperative to the consultation and it must set out the work done by Epping Forest and the current financial situation.
11. Members agreed that 'cycling' should be listed under the section 'regulation and management'.
12. Members noted that the consultation covered a wide range of issues, some of which members of the public may be more emotive about than others.
13. Members noted that each individual section queries finance and resources, however the volume of comments received would highlight the more complex and contentious topics.
14. Officers confirmed that forest commerciality in areas such as events was being investigated currently.
15. Officers agreed that different stages of the consultation complete with tracked changes could be made available to display the progress with draft versions of the document.
16. Members agreed that it would be beneficial to challenge areas where unrealistic expectations were cited to ensure that the position was positive but realistic.
17. It was noted that further emphasis must be placed on partnership working both currently undertaken and planned to take place.
18. Officers agreed to remove any references to staff training throughout the document as this did not require public opinion.
19. Members agreed that the overall message should be that the forest is a safe public space which should be enjoyed.
20. Members agreed that information regarding the different strands must be reviewed to be more concise and informative, specifically under the heading 'sustainability'.
21. Discussions ensued regarding signage in the forest. Members agreed that this was an important issue which would benefit from public opinion as they were the end users.

22. Members agreed that further information regarding operating subsidies should be included in the consultation.
23. Members asked Officers to review the statistics cited under the 'cycling' section of the consultation plan. Members noted that whilst damage to the forest had been mentioned, further information should be included in the plan. Members also asked Officers to include a statement regarding the recent decline in horse riding in the forest.
24. Officers informed Members that the forest operated a 'catch and release' policy in reference to angling.
25. It was agreed that the topics of 'dog walking' and 'dogs' should be two separate sections with signposts to one another if appropriate.
26. Members discussed whether a handbook was available with information relating to the forest. The Superintendent confirmed that this was currently being drafted and would be sale in Epping Forest soon.
27. Members agreed that the management plan should include a section regarding the role of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee consisting of its terms of reference and membership.
28. Members agreed that individuals should be asked whether they would like to volunteer as part of the consultation. Officers agreed to implement this at the beginning of the document.
29. It was agreed that the Chairman, Deputy Chairman, Verderers, Superintendent and Conservation Manager would meet to discuss sections 2.3, 2.8 and 2.10 outside of this meeting.
30. It was agreed that the Verderers would submit their comments regarding sections 2.11, 2.12 and 2.13 via email to Officers.

RESOLVED: That the meeting would adjourn at 2:35pm and would reconvene on 9th March 2015 at 1:30pm.

Members of the Steering Group reconvened on 9th March 2015 and discussed the following points:

6. Members reviewed the questions regarding protected species. It was agreed that the questions lacked focus at the moment and should be rewritten by Officers.
7. It was agreed that the section regarding 'car parks' should be moved from section 4.5 to section 3.10 to fall under the strand titles 'Protection of the Unspoilt Forest'
8. Officers agreed to include a question regarding payment methods including IT use.
9. Members agreed that the section titled 'Water Management' should be cross-referenced with Wanstead Park.
10. Officers were requested to include more information regarding education, costs and scale of litter in the forest. Members agreed that this was a good opportunity to inform the public about this growing issue.
11. Members agreed that the cost of dealing with and removing fly tipping must be included in section 4.5.
12. Officers agreed to move section 'Administering and managing licences' to a for information part of the document.

13. It was agreed that section 4.8 should be retitled 'Dogs' and moved to strand 1. The section would be reviewed by Officers who would remove the sub headings and first paragraph.

Members were informed that the consultation would be live from 22nd June to 14th September, subject to approval from the Epping Forest and Commons Committee in May. Officers would ensure that a segment of the consultation was complete prior to the May meeting to ensure that Members were able to use part of the plan before making a decision on it.

RESOLVED – That:-

7. The 64 remaining sections of the Epping Forest draft Management Plan Consultation Phase 1 document be received;
8. Appropriate amendments to the current structure and text, and, subject to these changes being made, recommend the Epping Forest and Commons Committee approve the Epping Forest draft Management Plan Consultation Phase 1 document be made;
9. The Chairman, Deputy Chairman, Verderers, Superintendent and Conservation Manager would meet to discuss sections 2.3, 2.8 and 2.10 outside of this meeting be granted delegated authority;
10. The Verderers would submit their comments regarding sections 2.11, 2.12 and 2.13 via email to Officers; and
11. A link to an online segment of the consultation be circulated to Epping Forest and Commons Committee Members prior to the May Committee meeting to ensure that Members had a chance to use it before agreeing the final product.

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

There were no questions.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

• EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

MOTION - 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 Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act.

8. NON PUBLIC QUESTIONS IN RELATION TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

There were no questions.

9. ANY OTHER NON PUBLIC BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

Chairman

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