

EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE
Monday, 16 January 2017

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held at
Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 16 January 2017 at
11.30 am

Present

Members:

Philip Woodhouse (Chairman)
Graeme Smith (Deputy Chairman)
Alderman Sir Paul Judge
Deputy Stanley Ginsburg
Sylvia Moys
Jeremy Simons
Verderer Peter Adams
Verderer Jo Thomas
Verderer Michael Chapman DL
Verderer Richard Morris

Officers:

Natasha Dogra	- Town Clerk's Office
Sue Ireland	- Director, Open Spaces
Colin Buttery	- Incoming Director, Open Spaces
Andy Barnard	- Superintendent, The Commons
Paul Thomson	- Superintendent, Epping Forest
Martin Newnham	- Department of Open Spaces
Jacqueline Eggleston	- Department of Open Spaces
Jo Hurst	- Department of Open Spaces
Edward Wood	- Comptrollers & City Solicitor's Department
Carl Locsin	- Communications Team

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Barbara Newman, Catherine McGuinness and Virginia Rounding

2. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

There were none

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE COMMITTEE

Committee Members were made aware of minor changes to the names of the consultative groups and committees.

Para 4(a) was reworded to provide clarity that the Buffer Land estates were not subject to the Epping Forest Acts 1878 & 1880.

Resolved - that Members agreed with amendments the terms of reference for the ensuing year.

4. **RESOLUTION OF THE POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

Members considered a report of the Town Clerk and Comptroller and City Solicitor regarding the appointment of Sub-Committee Chairmen.

RESOLVED – that when a Chairman does not wish to exercise his/her right to be the Chairman of a Sub-Committee and wishes a specific Member to be appointed, Committees adopt a convention whereby the Chairman submits his nomination for Chairman and/or Deputy Chairman to the service committee for approval.

5. **SCHEDULE OF VISITS 2017**

Resolved – that the Committee noted the schedule of visits for 2017.

6. **MINUTES**

Resolved – that Members approved the minutes of the previous meeting.

7. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

The Committee received the report of the Superintendent of the Commons which updated Members on activities in and around Burnham Beeches and the Commons.

Resolved – that the update be received.

8. **REVIEW REPORT: DOG CONTROL ORDERS AT BURNHAM BEECHES**

Members noted that at the September 2014 meeting of this committee Members approved the introduction of Dog Control Orders (DCOs) at Burnham Beeches commencing 1 December 2014. As part of that approval the Superintendent was required to produce an update report in July 2016 and a 'full review' in January 2017. The purpose of each report being to investigate the impact and effectiveness of DCOs on the site. This report meets that final requirement and summarises the main findings of the data collected during the two year period commencing the introduction of DCOs i.e. 1st December 2014 until 1st December 2016.

The Superintendent brought an error to the attention of Members concerning Appendix 2a, Chart E. That error has subsequently been amended.

Resolved – that the report be received.

9. **FUTURE OPTIONS FOR THE DOG CONTROL ORDERS AT BURNHAM BEECHES**

Members were advised of the future options for the five existing Dog Control Orders ("DCOs") at Burnham Beeches. Members were informed that DCOs have greatly reduced the level of nuisance and serious incidents associated with irresponsible dog ownership. It is not therefore proposed that any of those DCOs should be revoked. All DCOs are in the process of being phased out and replaced by Public Space Protection Orders ("PSPOs"). Any remaining DCOs

will automatically be treated as PSPOs from 20 October 2017 – there is no requirement to take any specific action at that stage. However, PSPOs may not have effect for more than three years, unless extended.

In response to a query it was noted that as the DCOs at Burnham Beeches came into force on 1 December 2014, they must be extended by 30 November 2017, if they are to continue in force. The Committee agreed that the Superintendent should consult on a proposed extension of those Orders, and refer any representations back to your Committee for decision.

Resolved – that Members authorised the Superintendent to consult on extending the effect of the existing DCOs at Burnham Beeches beyond 30 November 2017 as PSPOs.

10. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

Members received an update from the Superintendent of Epping Forest. Of particular note was the consideration of the City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Bill by the House of Commons Opposed Bill Committee; the installation of 29 threshold gateway and hub welcome signs across the Forest; the successful award of funding, totalling £120,213, for energy efficiency projects at Epping Forest; work on an Information Sharing Agreement with the Metropolitan Police Service; a comprehensive response to the Epping Forest District Council Local Plan and the successful award of Arts Council Museum Accreditation to The View collection.

In response to a query regarding fly tipping it was noted that one case that had recently been considered by the local Magistrates Court had been acquitted on grounds of lack of evidence. Members of the Committee agreed that this was a disappointing outcome. Officers explained that the burden of evidence is always with the prosecuting authority and while in this case the ownership of the waste was not at issue Magistrates were not convinced with regard to the manner of its deposit on Forest Land.

Members sought reassurance that the 2016 ringworm outbreak in the grazier's Red Poll cattle had been eradicated. The Superintendent noted though ringworm spores can persist, there was currently no active infection in the Longhorn or Sussex herds.

11. EPPING FOREST BUFFER LAND - INTERIM DEER MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The Committee noted that a series of objective scientific measures indicate that the continued increase of the Fallow and Reeves Muntjac Deer populations in South West Essex, including the 1,800 acres of City Corporation Buffer Land, are having a damaging impact on the character and wildlife value of Ancient Semi-natural and Local Wildlife Site (LoWS) woodlands; the crop yields of tenant and neighbouring farms and public safety through the rising number of deer vehicle collisions.

The 1998 Deer Management Plan adopted by your Committee for the Buffer Land estates recommended deer culling as the principle method of deer control. Since 2003, the management by culling has been undertaken by private contract. The decision to award the contract to manage the annual deer cull for 2016/17 to a membership-based stalking club has raised animal welfare, ethical and public safety concerns, supported by a 5,510 name petition. Following the “no-fault” termination of the contract, this report outlines recommendations for the interim management of deer on the Buffer Lands by Forest Keepers.

In response to a query Members were informed that although the situation was disappointing an interim measure must be put into place. The change in management arrangements also provide an opportunity to both thoroughly review the current approach based on the 1998 Deer Management Plan, in the light of subsequent survey work, and involve the public through consultation on the most effective way forward for deer management both within the Forest and on the Buffer Land. The change to the current contract has financial and resource implications and, in addition to the loss of future fee-based income, it will require additional spending of £15,000 to operate the cull with in-house staff alongside the reallocation of up to 1,260 hours of operational capacity.

Resolved – that Members approved the interim management of the deer on the Buffer Lands by Forest Keepers who are trained and qualified in accordance with nationally recognised standards, and request that Officer undertake an independent review of current deer management practice. This would involve a full strategic review of deer management options for the City Corporation taking into account the main Epping Forest Buffer Land landscape objectives, to include retaining deer in the environment, protecting natural resources and enhancing landscape management objectives; Members agreed that public consultation should take place on the findings and proposals of any such independent review.

12. EPPING FOREST LICENCE AND PRODUCE CHARGES 2017/18

Members noted that licensing of activity on Forest Land and sales of produce has raised a total of £106,287 so far in the 2016/17 financial year. Produce sales have generated £10,659; horse riding licences raised £17,287; the licensing of regulatory activity realised £35,700 while fairs and circuses produced £42,640.

In line with the pricing formula contained within the Byelaws for the Regulation of Horse riding (2003) it is proposed that Horse Riding Licence Fees are raised by the Retail Price Index (RPI) using the 12 month figure set in October 2016 of 0.7%. Produce charges will remain unchanged as they currently reflect the market value which is projected to remain static over the future year.

In line with the Service Based Review targets for increased income between 2015/16 – 2017/18, a range of proposed increases from 1.2 % CPI; 5% and 10% are presented with a recommendation that charges for all other licences in 2017/18 be raised by a figure of 10%.

Resolved – that Member approved the charges for 2017/18.

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

There were no questions.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

The Committee placed on record their thanks to the outgoing Director of Open Spaces Sue Ireland for her 9 years of commitment to the City and to this Committee in particular. Members welcomed her successor Colin Buttery. Members thanked Sue for her dedication to the role and wished her well for the future.

15. 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.

16. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

Resolved – that the minutes be approved as an accurate record.

17. CHINGFORD GOLF COURSE CADDIE HOUSE - LETTING

The Committee received a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest.

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

There were no questions.

19. 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 12:40pm

Chairman

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