

EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE
Monday, 3 July 2017

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held at
Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 3 July 2017 at 11.30
am

Present

Members:

Deputy Philip Woodhouse (Chairman)
Peter Bennett
Alderman Sir Roger Gifford
Caroline Haines
Gregory Lawrence
Alderman Gregory Jones QC
Graeme Smith (Deputy Chairman)
Verderer Peter Adams
Verderer Michael Chapman DL
Verderer Richard Morris
Verderer Dr. Joanna Thomas
Jeremy Simons

Officers:

Natasha Dogra	-	Town Clerk's Department
Colin Buttery	-	Director, Open Spaces
Andy Barnard	-	Superintendent, The Commons
Esther Sumner	-	Open Spaces Business Manager
Paul Thomson	-	Superintendent, Epping Forest
Jacqueline Eggleston	-	Open Spaces Department
Jo Hurst	-	Open Spaces Department
Alison Elam	-	Chamberlain's Department
Alison Hurley	-	City Surveyors Department
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Edward Wood	-	Comptroller and City Solicitor's
Nigel Lefton	-	Remembrancer's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Sylvia Moys and Barbara Newman.

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

Verderer Michael Chapman declared an interest in matters relating to Theydon Bois as he is currently the President of the Theydon Bois Rural Preservation Society.

3. MINUTES

Resolved – that the minutes be agreed as an accurate record, subject to the customary attendance of two Verderers on the Epping Forest Joint Consultative Committee.

4. **OPEN SPACES BUSINESS PLAN ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17**

The Committee noted that 2016/17 was a year of development within the department. The programme approach gathered pace and delivered a number of successes including the new learning team, sales of surplus fleet which were invested in energy efficiency and disposals of surplus lodges. Sites have done well to continue to deliver excellent services (as reflected by our high customer satisfaction) while delivering these changes against a reduced budget allocation.

The Chairman agreed a Member request that reflecting the changed Committee membership a briefing should be provided by the Superintendent to all Committee members regarding proposals for Wanstead Park which has been on the Heritage at Risk Register since 2009.

Resolved – that the business plan be received.

5. **OPEN SPACES EVENTS POLICY**

Members noted that as part of the ongoing preparations for the passage of Open Spaces Bill through Parliament, we are required to develop a formal events policy. The report provided an update on the proposals to develop proposals and consult our communities. It is proposed the consultation takes place from autumn 2017 to early 2018 with the local Consultative Groups. This would allow the events policy to then be considered by each Committee prior to the spring.

The Director of the Remembrancer's Affairs provided Members with a brief background to the Open Spaces Bill and its passage through Parliament. The Chairman requested that a briefing paper should be provided by the Remembrancer to all new Committee members regarding the background to the Bill.

Resolved – that the report be received.

6. **CYCLICAL WORKS PROGRAMME BID - 2018/19**

The Committee noted the provisional list of cyclical projects being considered for properties under the management of Epping Forest and Commons Committee under the "cyclical works programme". The draft cyclical project list for 2018/19 totals approximately £1.46m and if approved will continue the on-going programme in the maintenance of the property and infrastructure assets.

In response to questions on the adequacy of the works assessment and the level of funding the Corporate Asset Sub-Committee is likely to award, Officers confirmed that the current 20 year plan will in future be influenced by jointly authored Asset Management Plans and that it is anticipated that the proposed programme will be approved.

Resolved – that the report be received.

7. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

Members noted a summary of the Epping Forest Division's activities across April to May 2017. Of particular note was the impact of the General Election on the passage of the Open Spaces Bill through the House of Commons; a further decline in figures for the number of fly tips; five successful prosecutions for fly tipping with fines totalling £6,464; the discovery of the wildflower Milkwort on previously grazed land at Big View; the rediscovery of Oak Processionary Moth caterpillars at Leyton Flats near Hollow Ponds; Harmful Algal Blooms at Perch Pond and the impact of Epping Forest's Special Area of Conservation designation in consideration of Local Plans for Redbridge; Broxbourne and by the four Local Planning Authority signatories to the Memorandum of Understanding on the impacts of growth.

In response to a query on the Panel Engineers Report on Large Raised Reservoirs, the panel Engineer was generally satisfied with the condition of the Reservoirs but wishes to see a decision on the Wanstead Parks LRRs regarding their provisional designation as High Risk and work proposals on the precautionary monitored leaks at Baldwins and Birch Hall Park Ponds.

Resolved – that the update be received.

8. EPPING TOWN GREEN - FURTHER REPORT ON THE IMPACT OF PROPOSED HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS ON FOREST LAND

The Committee noted Epping Town Green is a 2.4 acre triangular area of Forest Land located on the edge of Epping Town Centre, which is managed on behalf of the City of London Corporation by Epping Town Council. Over the past 35 years, the City of London Corporation and Epping Town Council have sought the closure of the Lindsey Street spur road which crosses Epping Town Green to both better manage damage to the spur road verges by Heavy Goods Vehicles and protect the setting of the Grade II Listed War Memorial.

In order to close the Lindsey Street spur road fronting the War Memorial, Essex County Council needs to undertake junction improvements at Lindsey Street (B181) / Palmers Hill (B1393) to facilitate, the eastward and westward journeys of large vehicles between the Nazeing/Epping Green area and Theydon Mount/Ongar. The junction improvement works at Palmers Hill require approximately 45m² of Epping Forest Land to be dedicated for highway purposes. The closure of the spur road and the creation of a public footway fronting the war memorial will return to the Forest a corresponding 45m² of land therefore satisfying the Committee's policy position on seeking compensatory land for Forest Land dedicated to support Highway Schemes.

Members had instructed the Superintendent to pursue only the closure of the Lindsey Street spur road. The further report was necessary to advise the Committee that following further discussions with Essex County Council, Senior Highway Officers have reiterated that the Highway Authority can only safely achieve the spur road closure with the completion of junction improvements at Lindsey Street/Palmers Hill. Epping Town Council, who has been consulted on

this matter, provided a letter of support for the scheme as currently proposed which was distributed to Members at the meeting.

Some Members were reluctant to withdraw their previous objection unless the footpath across the Green was removed from the plans. Officers indicated that the proposed pathway was necessary to both support a strong desire line across the Green between Stonards Hill and Lindsey Street which remained wet in winter and the Remembrance Day observances. In response to a Member's question the Chairman directed that Officers ensure that the long standing proposals at Bell Common for highway widening were treated entirely separately from the Epping Green scheme.

Resolved - that Members:

i. Approved the dedication to public highway of approximately 45m² of Forest Land at Epping Town Green, Epping in favour of Essex County Council for the widening of the junction of Lindsey Street (A) / Palmers Hill, SUBJECT TO:

(a) 45m² of Lindsey Street being stopped up and incorporated into Forest Land, and laid out to the reasonable satisfaction of the Superintendent

(b) The remaining 60m² of Lindsey Street being laid out as footpath to the reasonable satisfaction of the Superintendent, and all vehicular rights being prohibited:

ii. Noted that the overall exchange of land is neutral with the new dedication of 45m² of Forest Land at Lindsey Street being addressed by the surplus of 45m² at Lindsey Street being incorporated into Forest Land.

iii. Instructed the Superintendent to negotiate a care and maintenance agreement with Epping Town Council for Epping Town Green.

iv. Instructed the Comptroller and City Solicitor to undertake any necessary documentation.

9. REVIEW OF EPPING FOREST WEDDING AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIP EVENT HIRE AT THE QUEEN ELIZABETH HUNTING LODGE BETWEEN 2015-16

Members noted the success of the decision to provide facilities for marriages and civil partnerships at The Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge between 2015 and 2016. Reflecting public demand, the report makes proposals to increase the frequency and scale of weddings to generate further income ranging between £36,000 to £62,200 for reinvestment in to Epping Forest local risk budget. The report makes proposals to balance public access to the Hunting Lodge, while meeting increasing demand for ceremonies at weekends by offering more weekend opportunities and an extension of the value chain facilitating the staging of receptions on site by erecting a marquee within the under-utilised courtyard at The View. In order to meet potential demand for receptions it is proposed to obtain a full Premises Licence from the local authority.

Some Members raised concerns over the closure of the Hunting Lodge for longer periods of time over the summer months; whether there were adequate welfare facilities and byelaw compliant car parking available for guests and whether sufficient staff resources were available to accommodate the weekend

events. Officers emphasised that much of the event parking would be off-peak and confirmed that consideration would be given to licensing later parking hours to ensure that adequate car parking was available. The welfare facilities had been reviewed and been deemed sufficient, but could be supplemented by temporary facilities. Additional staff hours would be necessary to ensure that events could be properly supported. Some Members remained unhappy with the proposal and the Chairman took the decision to a vote. The decision was agreed with 7 Members voting for and 3 Members voting against the recommendation below. The Committee agreed that the Wedding and Civil Partnership Hire policy should be reviewed after a further year of operation at the end of 2018.

Resolved – that Members:

- Approved the proposal of an increase in fee associated with marriage and civil ceremonies at the Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge.
- Approved an increase to the number of ceremonies that can take place on a Friday or Saturday and an overall increase in number of ceremonies that are held on an annual basis.
- Approved the use of The View courtyard, exterior space and community room to host evening receptions and authorise the Superintendent to apply for the necessary Premises Licence.

10. **EPPING FOREST CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

Members noted the draft Terms of Reference for a Consultative Committee. Expressions of interest to be invited as soon as possible, with the first meeting of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee to be organised for Autumn 2017. The Epping Forest Consultative Committee is to meet at least three times per year initially. After the first three sessions the Consultative Committee will review these existing terms and may put forward proposals for amendments to this Committee for consideration. The Consultative Committee will comprise of 22 members and will include representation from Chairman, Deputy Chairman and four Verderers all drawn from the Epping Forest and Commons Committee.

Officers confirmed that the meetings would need to be held in public unless there was a reason for items to be considered in non-public. The Town Clerk clarified that although it would be a public meeting it would not be a meeting for members of the public to speak; any questions would need to be raised at the meeting by Consultative Committee members only, unless the Chairman gave discretionary permission otherwise. Members also agreed that the Chairman or his/her representative would chair the meetings which would take place a minimum of three times per year.

The Committee will be supported by the Town Clerks Department and will consider reports provided by the Superintendent and his Senior Managers. Other Committee members will also be welcomed. The remaining 16 attendants must be nominated members of groups holding a specific interest in the Forest, either with large membership, a broad geographical spread across the whole Forest and with knowledge or interest in the themes of heritage, environment, conservation, recreation/sport or voluntary and friends groups.

Groups should be formal, constituted organisations, or, with discretion, working to achieve a constitution within a fixed time frame.

Members agreed with option 1 – to schedule the first meeting of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee with terms laid out herein, to commence in autumn 2017, with the Consultative Committee itself to review terms and make recommendations after its third meeting.

Resolved – that Members

- Approve the Terms of Reference for a representative Epping Forest Consultative Committee
- Approve the commencement of a selection procedure for the creation of Epping Forest Consultative Committee meetings as outlined herein.

11. REVENUE OUTTURN 2016/17 - EPPING FOREST

The Committee noted that the Director had an adverse variance on his local risk budget position of £131,000 mainly due to increased reactive works needed on invasive species, hazardous trees and investment in property maintenance. This Outturn position has been aggregated with budget variations on services overseen by other committees, which produces a City Cash overall favourable budget position of £167,000 (Local Risk) across all Open Spaces. A request to carry forward all of this £167,000 will be considered by the Chamberlain in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Resource Allocation Sub Committee.

The City Surveyor's favourable budget variance of £150,000 is mainly due to a cautious approach within the Additional Works Programme with a number of works being carried forward within the 3 year work allocation. The decrease of £112,000 in recharges is mainly due to a reduction in Support Services Costs and Learning recharges.

Resolved – that the report be received.

12. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

Members noted a general update on issues across the nine sites within 'The Commons' division that may be of interest to members and is supplementary to the monthly email updates.

Resolved – that the report be received.

13. REVENUE OUTTURN 2016/17 - THE COMMONS

The Committee noted that there were no significant variances across Local Risk, Central Risk, and Recharges. The £22,000 (Local Risk) worse than budget position has been aggregated with budget variations on services overseen by other committees, which produces a City's Cash overall better than budget position of £167,000 (Local Risk) across all Open Spaces. A request to carry forward all of this £167,000 will be considered by the Chamberlain in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Resource Allocation Sub Committee.

Resolved – that the update be received.

14. BURNHAM BEECHES DOG CONTROL ORDERS

The Committee noted that all Dog Control Orders (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 20th 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. As the DCOs at Burnham Beeches came into force on 1st December 2014, they must be extended by 30th November 2017, if they are to continue in force. At the January 2017 meeting of this Committee members authorised the Superintendent to consult on extending the effect of the existing DCOs at Burnham Beeches beyond 30th November 2017 as PSPOs.

Members noted the outcome of that recent public consultation exercise. The consultation exercise was conducted in two phases both of which indicated good levels of support for extending the existing DCOS as PSPOs until 2020. An iPetition was conducted by local dog walkers that provided alternative proposals. This report sought committee's decision concerning the continued use of the existing DCOs as PSPOs guided by the outcome of the consultation exercise.

The Chairman and Members of the Committee thanked the Superintendent and his team for all of their hard work and an excellent committee report.

Resolved – that Members supported Option 1 as explained within and resolved to extend the effect of the existing DCOs at Burnham Beeches, once they have become PSPOs, for three years from 1st December 2017, and authorise the Comptroller and City Solicitor to make replacement orders.

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

There were no questions.

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

There was no urgent business.

17. 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.

18. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

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

19. BRITISH PIPELINE AGENCY UK OIL PIPELINE (UKOP) PROPOSED DIVERSION - FISHERS GREEN

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces.

20. **FOREST LAND AT IVY CHIMNEYS - VEHICULAR CROSSOVER**
The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces.
21. **ACCESS TO GOLDEN ROW, MOTT STREET, WALTHAM ABBEY**
The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces.
22. **WAYLEAVE - ACCESS TO ELMS PARK HOMES LTD**
The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces.
23. **NON PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**
There were no questions.
24. **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 1.10 pm

Chairman

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