

**EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE**  
**Monday, 15 January 2018**

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held at  
Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 15 January 2018 at  
11.30 am

**Present**

**Members:**

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

**Officers:**

Colin BATTERY	-	Director of Open Spaces
Paul Thomson	-	Superintendent of Epping Forest
Alison Elam	-	Chamberlain's Department
Natasha Dogra	-	Town Clerk's Department
Leanne Murphy	-	Town Clerk's Department
Carl Locsin	-	Town Clerk's Department
Andy Barnard	-	Superintendent, The Commons & Heritage
Jeremy Dagley	-	Open Spaces Department
Jo Hurst	-	Open Spaces Department
Jacqueline Eggleston	-	Open Spaces Department
Andy Thwaites	-	Open Spaces Department

1. **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **MINUTES**

The Chairman on behalf of the Committee congratulated Sylvia Moys on her award of an MBE in the New Year's Honours List.

The minutes were amended at item 10 paragraph 2 were to read 'up to' £8,000 and at Item 14 where Recommendation A was amended to substitute retention

for banking and include 'on a gearing ratio of 1:10' after the phrase land retention scheme.

RESOLVED – that the minutes otherwise be agreed as an accurate record.

**4. SCHEDULE OF VISITS 2018**

RESOLVED – that the schedule of visits be agreed for the ensuing year.

Members discussed the number of visits to the Commons. The Committee agreed that it was helpful for Members of the local groups and consultative committees to visit the relevant areas. Some Members said that they too were part of the consultative committees and would be visiting Burnham Beeches and Ashtead Common in the coming week.

**5. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

Members received 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.

The Committee were informed that on 7<sup>th</sup> January, 38 travellers' units and approximately 40 additional vehicles arrived on Burnham Beeches. Eviction notices were served the day after and all units left voluntarily. The Committee agreed that the recording of registration number of the vehicles should be logged centrally so that information could be lawfully shared to track the movement of travellers to and from City Corporation sites. Officers agreed to investigate this matter.

Members said that the Rotary Club raised and donated £1,000 to the site. The Committee placed on record their thanks to the Club.

RESOLVED – that the update be received.

**6. ASHTEAD COMMON TRUSTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2017**

The Trustee's Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2017 for Ashtead Common were presented in the format required by the Charity Commission.

In response to a query, Members noted that there was no legacy policy currently in place but was being investigated by the Fundraising Board to be incorporated across all of the City Corporation's open spaces.

RESOLVED - that the report be received.

**7. BURNHAM BEECHES AND STOKE COMMON TRUSTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2017**

The Trustee's Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2017 for Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common were presented in the format required by the Charity Commission.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

8. **WEST WICKHAM COMMON AND SPRING PARK WOOD COULSDON AND OTHER COMMONS TRUSTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2017**

The Trustee's Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2017 for West Wickham Common and Spring Park Wood, Coulsdon and Other Commons were presented in the format required by the Charity Commission. Officers were instructed to keep a close eye on levels of funding available to the Commons post Brexit.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

9. **THE KENLEY FUND**

Members were informed that a fundraising appeal was organised jointly by the Kenley Airfield Friends Group and the City Corporation in 2005 to raise funds for the Coulsdon and Other Commons Charity to acquire the World War II Officer's Mess site that adjoins Kenley Common (the Kenley Fund).

RESOLVED – that Members:

- Agree to credit to the Kenley Fund the interest that would have been accrued to date, debiting the West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons local risk budget by the amount that the City could have attained for this fund, namely £3,315.03 to 31 March 2017.
- Instruct the Superintendent of The Commons to seek a suitable project (or projects) to be funded by the Kenley Fund, in consultation with the Kenley Airfield Friends Group.

10. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

Members received a summary of progress with the work programme at Epping Forest across October and November 2017.

Of particular note was further progress on the passage of the City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Bill; continuing high levels of fly tipping averaging 55% up on the previous year; the completion of the surfacing of the Woodford Green wayleave; continuing Operational works majoring on tree safety and wood pasture restoration, together with a successful series of visitor events and very positive publicity for the 800 year celebrations for the Forest Charter through both national media and the Lord Mayor's Show.

A Member raised a query regarding the pruning of trees as a defensive measure. Officers acknowledged that the growing number of claims was a challenging issue. Members were assured that individual insurance claims were vigorously challenged using London Tree Officer Association guidance best practice. In response to a query regarding Wanstead Flats and the reduction in football matches Members noted that further investment was needed to improve facilities at the Flats and that there was a clear trend away

from weekend towards a preference to play on week nights on artificial grass pitches. Members were informed that the sweet chestnut infected was situated at The Warren. It had been felled but the area remained under close inspections

RESOLVED – that the update be received.

11. **APPOINTMENT OF A VERDERER OF EPPING FOREST**

Members were informed that following the resignation of Richard Morris OBE who has served as a Verderer of Epping Forest since 1998, the Committee is asked to note the vacancy for one northern Forest Parish Verderer and, taking into account that the septennial elections are not scheduled to take place until 2020, approve the commencement of an appointment process to result in the selection of a new Verderer of Epping Forest.

The Committee agreed that the shortlisting should be done by the Director, and that the interviews would take place at The Warren. Members agreed that the working party should consist of the Chairman, Deputy Chairman, Verderer Chapman, Verderer Thomas, Verderer Adams, Mrs Haines, Mrs Newman and the Director of Open Spaces.

RESOLVED – that Members:

1. Noted the vacancy for a Verderer of Epping Forest.
2. Approved the commencement of an appointment process to select a northern Forest Parish Verderer of Epping Forest (in line with the requirements of the Epping Forest Acts 1878 & 1880) for a tenure of Office to conclude in 2020 ahead of the septennial elections of all four Verderers of Epping Forest.
3. Approved the composition of a Working Party to consider applications for the position of a Verderer of Epping Forest.
4. Approved the revised timetable for the appointment process.

12. **EPPING FOREST TRUSTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2017**

The Trustee's Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2017 for Epping Forest were presented in the format required by the Charity Commission.

A Member queried the reason for the increase in sales income from £40,547 in 2015/16 to £133,886 in 2016/17. Officers said the largest increase was £46k relating to the sale of surplus vehicle fleet which was a one-off item for 2016/17. In addition, the management golfing operation was brought back in house and income was obtained from sales of golfing equipment etc. There were also increased sales from the visitor centres particularly the View which included new items such as venison and beef. Sales of drinks, ice creams, wood and timber products were also up on the previous year.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

13. **PARTICIPATION IN A TREES OUTSIDE WOODS (TOWS) JOINT PROJECT BID TO HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND**

Members noted that the national trees and woodlands protection charity, the Woodland Trust (WT), is developing a *Trees Outside Woods* (TOWs) Project across England & Wales for a Stage 1 bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and other funders during 2018.

Members raised concerns regarding the impact of deer on any planting programme and sought further information regarding the City Corporation's likely investment in the project. Officers assured members that any planting programme would receive appropriate protection, and that the report committed Officers to a further report on any final proposal.

RESOLVED – that Members approve the joint development, with OneEppingForest and other partners, of a draft project proposal under the Trees Outside Woods umbrella project, for inclusion in WT's Stage 1 bid(s) to the Heritage Lottery Fund, subject to the draft proposal being submitted to Grand Committee for scrutiny prior to any final agreement on submission of a project bid.

14. **COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP GRANT SCHEME APPLICATION**

Since 2008 funding has been received as grants from the government's Entry and Higher Levels within the Environmental Stewardship Scheme (ESS). Over the life of this ESS (2008-2018) these grant monies will have brought in a total of over £1.77 million in revenue, providing vital support for approved habitat conservation work under the Epping Forest Management Plan (EF Plan). This funding been used to support EF Plan prescriptions for undertaking essential maintenance and restoration of the internationally and nationally-important habitats throughout Epping Forest.

The agreement with Natural England under ESS terminates in October 2018. The successor scheme to ESS is the Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS), which is aimed at continuing to provide similar focused support for essential biodiversity conservation in England.

Members queried the strain on resources including staff time; the Superintendent emphasised the importance of maintaining access to the CSS funding stream and was satisfied that sufficient staff resource and consultancy support would be available to support any application.

RESOLVED – that Members:

- note the application preparation process ('Proposals' section).
- give approval for officers to make a formal request to enter the CS Scheme's application process to Natural England by mid-spring 2018.
- approve the consideration of the CSS application by the Management Plan Steering Group during spring/summer 2018 prior to seeking approval from Grand Committee for its submission to Natural England.

15. **COW POND RESTORATION BY FROGLIFE THROUGH BID TO HLF**

The charity *Froglife* is proposing a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for funds to enhance toad and other amphibian habitats around London. In addition to restoring habitats, *Froglife* aims to inform and involve local community and volunteer groups through its project. Working with your officers at Epping Forest, *Froglife* would like to put forward Cow Pond, Leyton Flats, as one of the seven ponds that it is looking to restore as part of its project.

Should the bid be successful this would see a £30,000 contract being awarded for the restoration of Cow Pond, involving its re-excavation and re-shaping within its current area. The funding would ensure that no costs would be incurred by the Epping Forest local risk budgets for achieving this restoration. This would represent a significant enhancement of the Forest ponds network in line with the existing Forest Management Plan vision. This would also help to enhance the favourable condition of the Site of Special Scientific Interest in the Leyton Flats area as well as maintaining an historic pond location. Members noted that maintenance costs and responsibility would remain with the City Corporation.

A Member was concerned regarding existing pollution levels in the pond, and the costs that could be incurred by disposing of contaminated. Some Members felt that FrogLife's estimate of £30,000 would not suffice for a project of this size and complexity. Members also asked Officers to investigate the financial viability of FrogLife. Officers that the project would be fully scrutinized by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Officers also reassured members that a series of boreholes were planned to fully understand the hydrology, pollution loading and the potential for the pond's restoration.

Members noted that all HLF projects would be reported through to the Priorities Board and the Corporate Asset Sub Committee for information.

RESOLVED – that Members:

approve and support the bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund by Froglife for funds for the restoration of Cow Pond, Leyton Flats for amphibians and other pond wildlife; and

Instruct City Solicitors to assist in drawing up or overseeing agreements with Froglife in relation to the proposed works and monitoring on Forest Land.

16. **REQUEST FOR HIGHWAY DEDICATION ON FOREST LAND AT GILBERT'S SLADE, WOODFORD NEW ROAD**

This Committee, on 20 November 2017, considered a request from the London Borough of Waltham Forest (LBWF) for the dedication for highway purposes of approximately 66m<sup>2</sup> of Forest Land. This report is necessary as your Committee refused the request and asked for additional information which is contained within this Report.

The dedication would enable the relocation of an existing bus-stop on Forest Land at Woodford New Road and the provision of a footway from the bus-stop to connect to a new signalised pedestrian and cyclist crossing.

In response to a query Members noted that the relocation of the bus-stop allows for the reinstatement of 32m<sup>2</sup> as Forest Land. The resultant net loss from dedication would therefore be 34m<sup>2</sup> prior to completion of negotiations regarding suitable compensatory land from LBWF which would seek 660m<sup>2</sup> of land to compensate for this total loss.

The Superintendent reported that the LBWF had emphasized that there is a strong road safety case for the construction of a signalised crossing based upon the accident record, traffic volume and the pedestrian / traffic ratio at this location. While the Verderers continued to oppose the scheme a majority of members agreed to proceed requesting that Officers investigate with the Highway Authority the potential for the reduction of the speed limit to 30mph.

RESOLVED - that Members:

- Approve the dedication to public highway of approximately 66m<sup>2</sup> of Forest land at Woodford New Road, of which 32m<sup>2</sup> is already in highway use, in favour of the London Borough of Waltham Forest upon appropriate terms, including the provision of suitable compensatory land, and as further agreed by the Superintendent.
- Instruct the Comptroller and City Solicitor to undertake any necessary documentation.

#### 17. **'GLAMPING' PROPOSAL FOR EPPING FOREST**

To help address future continuing efficiency savings requirements, this report proposes a feasibility study to consider the introduction of holiday accommodation on Epping Forest 'Buffer Land', in the form of tents, shepherds huts and/or demountable buildings. While the accommodation will be of a temporary nature, supporting infrastructure will need to be installed both below ground such as mains water and sewerage and to provide pedestrian and vehicle access.

A detailed business plan will need to be presented through the Gateway process and a tender process will be necessary. An initial forecast based on the market knowledge of one of the leading 'glamping' operator shows a return on investment within the second year of operation with the potential to produce a surplus for reinvestment in to the management of the Forest estimated as £67,000 net per annum based on a 40% occupancy.

A number of Members raised concerns about the proposal, especially for Gaunts Wood, and agreed that any scheme would require careful management regarding access; parking; waste management and visual impact. Some Members were also concerned over the inclusion of The Warren House grounds. The Director emphasised that this was a request to undertake a feasibility study and that a further report would be submitted to Committee addressing Members' concerns before progressing any proposals.

RESOLVED – that Members asked Officers to progress the feasibility studies and to investigate the proposals further with an in-depth report being submitted to a future Committee meeting for decision.

18. **CRIPSEY BROOK - THORNWOOD FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME**

The Thornwood Flood Alleviation Scheme granted by a licence in March 2000 between the City Corporation and the Environment Agency and Epping Forest District Council, The Cripsey Brook Flood forms a Small Raised Reservoir maintained by the Environment Agency, using Forest Land at Thornwood Common, Lower Forest, to site the reservoir embankment,

The Environment Agency is requesting permission to increase the width of the crest to 1.5m to bring the flood defence up to the statutory standard. The Superintendent advised the Committee that subsequent cartographic work had revealed that the widened embankment may extend outside the licenced area and that a new licence map would be brought before Committee.

RESOLVED – that Members:

- Approve the review of the terms of the licence dated the 20 March 2000 that was granted to the Environment Agency and Epping Forest District Council to enable them to carry out works within the original licenced area to widen the rest of the Cripsey Brook dam to 1.5m but otherwise to retain all other remaining licence terms.
- Note that the Environment Agency is to contribute up to £2,000 towards legal costs.
- Instruct the Comptroller & City Solicitor to undertake any necessary documentation.

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

There were no questions.

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

The Superintendent of Epping Forest brought two items to the attention of the Committee, both of which required delegated authority due to the very short consultation periods which prevented the submission of full reports to your Committee; Epping Forest District Council Local Plan Publication under Regulation 19 of the Town & Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, and London Borough of Waltham Forest New Local Plan Direction of Travel Consultation.

Resolved – that Members agreed to delegate authority in both cases to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman to provide a written response on both Plan proposals by the appropriate deadlines.

21. **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.

22. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

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

23. **WOODFORD GOLF CLUB - 2018 LICENCE FEE REVIEW**  
The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces and Heritage concerning the 2018 Licence Fee review (SEF 11/18) of Woodford Golf Club.
24. **ORION HARRIERS RUNNING CLUB - LEASE RENEWAL**  
The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces and Heritage concerning the Lease Renewal (SEF 09/18) of Orion Harriers Running Club.
25. **BUTLERS RETREAT CAFÉ - LEASE RENEWAL**  
The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces and Heritage concerning the Lease Renewal (SEF 08/18) of Butlers Retreat Café.
26. **LEASE RENEWAL - THE ORIGINAL TEA HUT - CROSS ROADS, HIGH BEACH**  
The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces and Heritage concerning the Lease Renewal (SEF 10/18) of the Original Tea Hut - Cross Roads, High Beach.
27. **NON PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**  
There were no questions.
28. **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 1:40pm.**

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Chairman

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