

EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE
Monday, 14 May 2018

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held at
Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 14 May 2018 at
11.30 am

Present

Members:

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

Officers:

Colin Buttery	- Director of Open Spaces
Paul Thomson	- Superintendent of Epping Forest & Wanstead Park
Martin Hartup	- Head Ranger Burnham Beeches
Alison Elam	- Group Accountant, Chamberlain's Department
Natasha Dogra	- Town Clerk's Department
Michael Radcliffe	- City Surveyors Department
Carl Locsin	- Department of Built Environment
Jeremy Dagley	- Town Clerk's Department
Jacqueline Eggleston	- Head of Conservation Epping Forest
Jo Hurst	- Head of Visitor Services, Epping Forest
	- Business Manager Epping Forest

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. THE ORDER OF THE COURT OF COMMON COUNCIL

Resolved – that the order of the Court of Common Council be received.

4. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

Resolved – that Philip Woodhouse, being the only Member expressing an interest in serving as Chairman, be elected for the ensuing year.

The Chairman thanked the Committee for their support and welcomed new Members to the Committee. The Committee expressed their thanks to Mrs Barbara Newman who had stepped down from the Committee after a long period of service. Members also noted the sad passing of the long serving Verderer and friend of the Committee, Verderer Peter Adams. Members expressed their thanks to Mr Adams and his family and agreed that his expertise and friendship would be dearly missed.

5. **ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN**

Resolved – that Graeme Smith, being the only Member expressing an interest in serving as Deputy Chairman, be elected for the ensuing year.

6. **MINUTES**

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

Matters arising:

The Town Clerk informed the Committee that a report concerning the election of an interim Verderer covering the current vacancy would be submitted to the July meeting. Members were informed that legal advice had been sought regarding the process and it was noted that it was in the gift of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee to appoint the interim Verderer. A report would be submitted to the Court of Common Council for their information following a successful appointment.

A Member confirmed that he was now clear about the Environment Agency flood mapping that had been used in the previous Superintendent's presentation.

7. **DRAFT EPPING FOREST JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES**

Resolved – that the draft minutes be received.

8. **DRAFT EPPING FOREST CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES**

Resolved – that the draft minutes be received.

9. **COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS**

The Committee were invited to consider the report of the Town Clerk relating to the appointment of sub committees.

Resolved – that the following appointments be agreed:

Ashtead Commons Consultative Committee

Philip Woodhouse

Graeme Smith

Sylvia Moys

Jeremy Simons

Burnham Beeches Consultation Group

Philip Woodhouse
Graeme Smith
Sylvia Moys

West Wickham, Spring Park and Coulsdon Commons Consultative Committee

Philip Woodhouse
Graeme Smith
Sylvia Moys
Jeremy Simons

Epping Forest Consultative Committee

Philip Woodhouse
Graeme Smith
Sylvia Moys
Benjamin Murphy
Verderer Thomas
Verderer Chapman
Verderer Murphy

Epping Forest Joint Consultative Committee

Philip Woodhouse
Graeme Smith
Sylvia Moys
Gregory Lawrence
Verderer Thomas

Epping Forest Management Plan Steering Group

Philip Woodhouse
Graeme Smith
Sylvia Moys
Benjamin Murphy
Verderer Thomas
Verderer Chapman
Verderer Murphy

Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee Representative

Verderer Jo Thomas

10. FINAL DEPARTMENTAL BUSINESS PLAN 2018/19

Members noted the final high-level business plan for the Open Spaces Department for 2018/19. The plan identifies three top line objectives with four outcomes sitting under each objective. These objectives and outcomes are pertinent to the whole range of services provided by the Department. The Plan also shows how the Open Spaces Business Plan helps to deliver the outcomes of the Corporate Plan 2018 – 2023 by referencing the Corporate Plan numbered outcomes alongside the Departments outcomes, programmes and projects.

Members raised concerns regarding the number and relative merits of the Capital Proposals included within the Business Plan. The Director agreed to provide more to Committee on this matter.

Resolved – that the plan be received.

11. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

Members noted the Epping Forest Division's activities across February 2018 to March 2018.

Of particular note was the provision of Royal Assent for the City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Act 2018; end-of-year budgeting to within 1.6% of budget target; a marked fall in reported rough sleeping in Epping Forest; savings of almost 6,000 on the first 3 months of the revised waste management contract; completion of 222.5 acres of wood pasture restoration; the birth of 28 calves through winter calving and the successful reorganisation of the Sport turf teams.

In response to a query regarding Enforcement Officers and Forest Keepers Members were informed that two new part-time temporary Enforcement Officers had been appointed replacing the previous Enforcement Officer in the Forest keeper team to maintain the focus of fly-tipping prosecutions. Members were delighted to see that more hard copies of Forest Focus had been requested. Information about work in the Forest was being well publicised to a wide circle.

Members asked if there was any merit in joining with local authorities to tackle the problem of fly tipping and asking for witnesses to the crime through signing. Members agreed that officers in local authorities should be approached to seek collaboration opportunities. Officers were investigating the possibility of roaming cameras to tackle the issue. A Member queried the correlation between fly tipping and rough sleeping. Officers said that they would circulate the in-depth data to the Member outside of the meeting.

Resolved – that the update be received.

12. **COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP SCHEME APPLICATION UPDATE FOR EPPING FOREST**

Over the ten-year span (2008 – 2018) of the current Environmental Stewardship Scheme (ESS) the grant monies will have brought in a total of over £1.73 million in revenue, providing vital support for approved conservation work in Epping Forest's internationally and nationally-important habitats. The agreement with Natural England under ESS terminates in October 2018. The successor scheme is the Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS), aimed at providing similar support for biodiversity conservation. Epping Forest remains a priority site for Natural England.

Following the previous report to Committee in January, a further review of the

application process has been undertaken with Natural England (NE). As a result, it has become clear that with withdrawal of fieldwork assistance by NE, changes to mapping, new issues on commoning rights and the request for prior quotations through a procurement process the timetable for application needs to be extended. As the applications for CSS can only be made annually, the application is now proposed for August 2019 rather than 2018.

The Management Plan Steering Group would be consulted on the options in the same way as previously proposed but now over a longer timescale. Approval would be sought from your Committee in July 2019. Any application would be submitted by September 2019 to Natural England for its approval. Any CSS grant payments would start in January 2020. The period without Stewardship grant-funding, therefore, would be increased from 2 months, under the original approved timetable, to 14 months. This creates a deficit in income spread across two FYs, and will require a temporary cessation of any contractor work in FY2019-20 and leave a potential funding gap in that year of £70,000. The aim is to cover this gap with new income from CSS

Resolved – that Members:

- ☐ note the revised, longer timetable for the options appraisal by the Management Plan Steering Group and later application preparation;
- ☐ approve the preparation of a CSS application, consistent with their previous approval, to be presented to the Committee by July 2019.

13. **EPPING FOREST EVENTS POLICY**

Epping Forest, in common with many of the City Corporation's Open Spaces, has a strong history of hosting public events on Forest Land including fairs, circuses, firework displays, concerts, sporting tournaments and charity events. To reflect the increasing volume and complexity of event requests being considered by each Open Space, as well as to address the new opportunities and obligations under the City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Act 2018, which received Royal Assent on 15 March, the Director of Open Spaces is proposing both a Departmental Policy and site specific local policy arrangements which will ensure that events are properly managed; the impact of any event on the Open Space, areas under statutory protection and adjoining communities is minimised and that the costs of hosting the event are properly reflected in any licence fee.

In response to a query Members were assured that the new policy was user friendly and widely appreciated by officers. The Open Spaces Departmental Events Policy was approved by the Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee on 16 April 2018. The Committee agreed that it would be very useful for those planning events to receive a clearer map of the area. Members agreed that health and safety was a vital part of planning any event, and insurance information was an essential aspect of the policy.

The Committee queried the definition of a sports event within the policy. Members were informed that the requests coming in to the department were wide and varied so the policy needed to cover all potential requests and events as flexibly as possible.

Members asked whether any complaints had been received under the new scheme. The Superintendent clarified that there had been a number of queries associated with the new tariff but no formal complaints had been received.

Resolved – that Members noted the approved Open Spaces Departmental Events Policy.

14. EPPING FOREST MITIGATION STRATEGY

Members noted that their approval was sought to develop an Epping Forest Recreational Pressure and Air Pollution Mitigation Strategy which would outline costed interventions that could manage the negative impact of increased air pollution and recreational pressure on the Epping Forest SAC. The implementation of the strategy and monitoring of its effectiveness would be funded by developer contributions which would be calculated according to the number of bedrooms within each new property built within a certain radius of the SAC.

Members noted that ahead of the Committee's consideration of a costed formal strategy, there is a need to implement interim measures to ensure new developments that will shortly receive consent make appropriate financial contributions based on an interim tariff. This interim strategy would cover the mitigation of recreational and urbanisation pressures only. The traffic and air quality modelling have not been provided to allow any mitigation proposals in relation to air pollution impacts.

In response to a query it was noted that Mitigation Strategies are normally developed by the relevant Local Planning Authority. In this instance, because of the City of London Corporation's stewardship of the entire SAC and its involvement in the Memorandum of Understanding for the protection of Epping Forest, the City Corporation is being asked to utilise its conservation land management expertise to help develop the District Council's Strategy.

Resolved – that Members:

☐ Approve the development an Epping Forest Recreational Pressure and Air Pollution Mitigation Strategy for the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

☐ Delegate Authority to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, to agree an interim strategy and tariff.

15. 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 update be received.

16. PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDERS ANNUALISED FIGURES UPDATE FOR BURNHAM BEECHES

At this committee on the 11th September 2017 Members requested that annualised Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) figures are presented to the Committee. The information in this report summarises activity in relation to PSPOs, and the preceding Dog Control Orders (DCOs), at Burnham Beeches for the period 01/04/17 to 31/03/2018.

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

There were no questions.

18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

There was no urgent business.

19. 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.

20. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

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

21. BURNHAM BEECHES CAFES REPORT

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

22. GATEWAY 7 REPORT - HIGHAMS PARK LAKE

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

23. WOODFORD GOLF CLUB - 2018 LICENCE FEE REVIEW

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

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

There were no questions.

25. 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 1:00pm.

Chairman

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