

EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE
Monday, 11 March 2019

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held at
Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 11 March 2019 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
Sylvia Moys
Jeremy Simons
Verderer Michael Chapman DL
Verderer Melissa Murphy
Verderer Dr. Joanna Thomas
Verderer Nicholas Munday

Officers:

Richard Holt	- Town Clerk's Department
Carl Locsin	- Town Clerk's Department
Alison Elam	- Group Accountant, Chamberlain's Department
Michael Radcliffe	- City Surveyor's Department
Nicholas Welland	- City Surveyor's Department
Tim Munday	- Department of the Built Environment
Paul Monaghan	- Department of the Built Environment
Colin Buttery	- Director of Open Spaces & Heritage
Gerry Kiefer	- Open Spaces Business Manager
Paul Thomson	- Superintendent, Epping Forest
Hadyn Robson	- Support Services Manager
Jacqueline Eggleston	- Head of Visitor Services (Epping Forest)
Jeremy Dagley	- Head of Conservation (Epping Forest)
Jo Hurst	- Business Manager (Epping Forest)

1. APOLOGIES

Further to the Chairman's suggestion Members changed the order of business and items were considered in the following order: Items 1-7, Item 12, Items 8-30.

Apologies were received from Jeremy Simons who informed the Town Clerk that he would have to leave the Committee meeting early.

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

There were no declarations.

3. **MINUTES**

The Committee considered the minutes of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee held on 14 January 2019. A Member raised that the 'Forest Commission' should be corrected to 'Forestry Commission' in the minutes. A Member noted several typographic errors within the public minutes and requested that the minutes be agreed subject to those corrections.

MATTERS ARISING

The Superintendent confirmed that the letter to the student to congratulate them on their painting of Epping Forest featured on the City of London School for Girls Christmas card had been sent.

RESOLVED – That, pending the corrections above, the minutes of the meeting on 14 January 2019 be agreed as a correct record.

4. **BREXIT UPDATE**

The Director of Open Spaces was heard regarding implications of Brexit for the management of Epping Forest and the City Commons. The Director of Open Spaces reassured Members that the long-term risk associated with the Brexit process were being considered by the Open Spaces Department and the department were in discussions with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs regarding the post-Brexit grant arrangements which will remain initially similar to EU levels until 2021.

RESOLVED- That the update be noted.

5. **ANNUAL REVIEW OF TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Committee considered a report of the Town Clerk regarding the Epping Forest & Commons Committee's Terms of Reference. The Chairman noted that Verderer Nicholas Munday will be added to the Verderers listed in the Committee's Terms of Reference. In addition, the Chairman raised that the two Aldermanic appointments to the Committee changed simultaneously and requested in future that these appointments are to be staggered to allow for an Alderman with experience of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee to provide continuity.

A Member of the Committee raised that they did not believe that the Committee's Terms of Reference accurately reflected the proposed constitution of the Epping Forest Act 1878. The Superintendent noted that this issue had been raised before and addressed at Committee. The Superintendent confirmed that the Comptroller and City Solicitor's judgment would be provided to the Member.

RESOLVED- that: -

- I. The terms of reference of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee, subject to any comments, be approved for submission to the Court of Common Council in April, and that any further changes required in the lead up to the Court's appointment of Committees be delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman; and
- II. The frequency of the Committee's meetings be agreed.

6. FINAL DEPARTMENTAL HIGH-LEVEL BUSINESS PLANS 2019/20 - OPEN SPACES DEPARTMENT

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the final high-level business plan for the Open Spaces Department for 2019/20. A Member noted that Capital funds were required for the developments at Wanstead Park and questioned whether these funds had been costed in the business plan. The Director emphasised that the Plan covered Local Risk budgets rather than Capital. The Chamberlain confirmed that they were aware of the funds needed at Wanstead which was being addressed through the Gateway project process.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

7. EPPING FOREST CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE DRAFT MINUTES

The Committee received the draft minutes of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee 13 February 2019.

A Member of the Committee questioned the accuracy of the approval timeline, for a proposed major event to be held in September 2020, added to the draft minutes for Member's information and commented that the timeline did not clarify when public consultation would take place. The Director of Open Spaces replied by outlining that there would be two key stages within the decision-making process; in May the Epping Forest and Commons Committee will consider whether to grant 'in principle' permission for the event to be held and, if approved, the event provider will apply for licenses to each of the required responsible authorities, which would be administered by the relevant local authority. Public consultation regarding the detail of the event would then be undertaken, before the Local Authority determines whether to licence the event. A Member commented that this would mean that the key decision would be taken after the event organisers had already spent a large amount of money.

The Chairman commented that public surgeries were already in progress with key groups and highlighted the meeting of 9 March 2019 at The Temple, Wanstead Park. The Deputy Chairman added that the matter had also been discussed at the Epping Forest Consultative Committee in October of 2018. The Director of Open Spaces confirmed that an informal consultation process had begun in the Summer of 2018 and application to the relevant local authority would involve a formalised public consultation. A Member commented that it

was important to make clear that the time for public consultation had already started.

RESOLVED-That the minutes be noted.

8. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

The Committee received a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest which provided Members with a summary of the Epping Forest Division's activities across December to January 2019. The Superintendent of Epping Forest made the following points.

Operational Property Review

The Superintendent informed Members that an Operational Property Review would be considered by the relevant Committees including the Epping Forest & Commons Committee in May. It was noted that the report would detail the proposed exchange of a number of properties on the Woodredon Estate. Following a question from the Chairman the Superintendent confirmed that the properties which were considered surplus had not yet been determined.

Fly Tipping

The Superintendent noted that incidents of Fly Tipping were sixty two percent down within Epping Forest and informed Members that a vehicle had been seized in connection to fly tipping in the area. In addition, it was explained that the City could choose to either sell the seized vehicle or for it to be crushed. Members agreed to have the vehicle crushed as the example set would be helpful in deterring future offenders. A Member of the Committee thanked the volunteers active within the Forest for their work to combat fly tipping and commented that a small hardcore were still persistent with fly tipping. The Superintendent confirmed that those persistently fly tipping often had a connection to organised crime and therefore were difficult to prosecute. Replying to a Member's question it was confirmed that the City of London Corporation was keen to work with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on a scheme related to fly tipping.

Police Incidents

Members were informed by the Superintendent of two incidents involving the police which took place within Epping Forest. The Superintendent detailed an incident of armed police response to two men dressed in army uniforms and explained the incident was not serious as the two men were metal detectorists. Following this a Member questioned if the City of London issued licenses for metal detectorists within Epping Forest. The Superintendent explained that licenses were not issued for the use of metal detectors. Members noted a second incident involving an unexplained death within the forest.

Rough Sleepers

The Committee was informed that four rough sleepers' sites had been cleared within Epping Forest with all the occupants given assistance by Redbridge Homeless Team or St Mungo's Homeless Charity.

Visitor events

The Superintendent informed Members of a number of visitor events in Epping Forest and noted specially the *Your View of the Forest* event and the talk on the 2018 fire at Wanstead flats. It was also noted that five organisations connected to the Forest had received awards from City Bridge Trust.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

9. **BUSINESS PLAN DEVELOPMENT AT EPPING FOREST**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the 2019-22 Business Plan for Epping Forest. The Superintendent introduced the report and highlighted that given the size of the Forest Individual Site Plans (ISP) and Planning & Development Notes (PDN) would be necessary to manage delivery of the Management Strategy and Business Plan.

A Member of the Committee commented that the works included in the Theydon Bois Green ISP would be affected by the previous agreements with the Theydon Bois Parish Council and requested that a list of local authorities' schemes, which affect the business plan, be added to provide context. The Superintendent replied that the Theydon Bois Green Individual Site Plan references the Care and Maintenance Agreement.

A Member questioned what the reasoning was for the requirement for 'hand cutting' referenced with relation to Highway verge management. The Superintendent explained that this was required in some locations because of the presence of parked cars adjacent to the Highway verge. A Member noted the number of Coal-tax posts within Epping Forest and questioned the responsibility for the maintenance of the posts. The Superintendent confirmed that the City Surveyor held the responsibility for the maintenance of the coal posts.

Replying to a Member's query on the Epping Forest Management Strategy the Superintendent confirmed that the strategy would be considered by the Epping Forest Management Plan Working Group in the next few months so that future ISPs can be assessed against the Committee's strategic objectives.

It was suggested by a Member that a digest of the ISPs and PDNs was placed on City of London Corporation website. The Superintendent explained that a review was underway into the Website's content and the Member's point would be considered as part of that process.

RESOLVED- That the Theydon Bois Green Individual Site Plan (ISP) and Highway Verge Management Planning and Development Note are approved for public consultation.

10. **EAGLE POND DRAFT CONSERVATION STATEMENT**

The Committee considered a joint report of the City Surveyor and the Director of Open Spaces on the Conservation Statement for the heritage landscape of Eagle Pond. The Superintendent explained that key lessons had been learned from a similar project at Highams Park and that the Statement included 19 policies to protect the landscape. Also noting that all aspirational projects were

clearly described as being subject to further Committee approval and external funding.

A Member requested clarification on the ownership of Eagle Pond and questioned if the City of London Corporation held responsibility for the maintenance of the Large Raised Reservoir. The Superintendent confirmed that the statutory undertakers included the City Corporation who hold in trust the Pond and the west bank; Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service who own the dam and the south bank and the London Borough of Redbridge who own the Snaresbrook Road frontage. Currently only Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service contributed to the maintenance of the dam. A Member questioned whether, as a fellow statutory undertaker, the City could request more public access to Snaresbrook Crown Court gardens. The Superintendent confirmed that the City Surveyor had a policy regarding more public access which needed to be balanced with the security requirements of Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service.

Replying to a question from a Member of the Committee the Director of Open Spaces confirmed that legal advice from the Environmental Agency had been received regarding the joint responsibilities of statutory undertakers and could be shared with Members.

RESOLVED- That Members approved the draft Eagle Pond Conservation Statement for public consultation.

11. **PROVISION OF STAFF WELFARE FACILITIES AT CHINGFORD GOLF COURSE**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Chingford Golf Course Staff Welfare Facilities at Jubilee Retreat, where a new delivery mechanism was being sought following planning restrictions on the Committee's preferred option of a container-based facility. The Chamberlain informed the Committee that the project could be funded by a carry forward from the previous financial year.

It was highlighted by a Member that, once vacated, Flat 1 within the Chingford Golf Course complex could be utilised for rental income and questioned if the Officers had considered this option. The Director of Open Spaces replied that the potential for rental income at this property had been considered and confirmed that it was planned to be let as an Assured Shorthold Tenancy at £1,200 per month.

It was raised by a Member that the option of working with the Orion Harriers to share the existing clubhouse should be considered further. The Superintendent explained that shared ownership of the accommodation would cause a number of issues regarding the nature of the lease; information technology security and safeguarding. The Chairman agreed that the shared ownership with the Orion Harriers should be considered further as this represented a significantly decreased expenditure and the report be approved subject to officers conducting a review of potential shared facility options.

RESOLVED- Members approved that a Gateway 1-5 Authority to Start Work be submitted to the Projects Sub (Policy & Resources) Committee for March 2019 and associated capitalisation of local risk funds.

12. **WANSTEAD PARK PONDS PROJECT**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Wanstead Park Ponds Project. The report detailed the context of the Ponds at Wanstead Park and explained the required actions which needed to be taken advance the project to the next gateway.

RESOLVED- that: -

- I. The project proposal to progression to the next Gateway be approved; and
- II. That the budget of £150 000 to get to next gateway be approved.

13. **MAJOR EVENT WANSTEAD FLATS UPDATE**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces regarding the application for a large-scale music concert to take place on Wanstead Flats in September 2020.

A Member requested clarity on the expected income to be gained from holding agreeing the event at Wanstead Flats in September 2020. The Director of Open Spaces confirmed the complete details of the event would be available for Members consideration in the report presented Epping Forest & Commons Committee in May.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

14. **EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN – RESPONSES TO THE INSPECTOR’S MATTERS, ISSUES & QUESTIONS (SEF 09/19)**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces regarding the Epping Forest District Council Local Plan. The Director of Open Spaces informed Members of the key issues included in the Local Plan including the Habitats Regulations Assessment, Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs) and possible effect on the green belt. In addition, it was noted that the key hearing on the matter of legal compliance would be held on the 21st of May.

A Member commended the Officers for their work on the Local Plan and questioned whether there had been contact with the Lee Valley Parks Authority. The Director of Open Spaces confirmed that some informal meetings had been held with the Parks Authority during which agreement on the key issues had been established.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

15. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

The Committee received a report of the Superintendent of 'The Commons' which provided an update on the issues across the nine sites within 'The Commons' division.

In reference to the Kenley Revival project the Chairman questioned whether the project's Principal Designer and Contract Administrator Avanti had replied yet to Beale and Company's letter noting the twenty-eight-day deadline. The Director of Open Spaces confirmed that no reply had been received from Avanti and speculated the intention from Avanti was to delay the process.

A Member enquired whether there had been any further progress on the Hillforts project mentioned in the report. The Director of Open Spaces clarified that the project was still being worked on and further information would be made public via the City of London website.

RESOLVED- That the update be noted.

16. **BURNHAM BEECHES AND STOKE COMMON CONSULTATIVE GROUP - DRAFT MINUTES OF 22ND JANUARY 2019**

The Committee received the draft minutes of the 22nd January 2019 meeting of the Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common Consultative Group.

RESOLVED- That the minutes be noted.

17. **ASHTEAD COMMON CONSULTATIVE GROUP- DRAFT MINUTES THURSDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 2019**

The Committee received the draft minutes of the 7 February 2019 meeting of the Ashtead Common Consultative Group. The Chairman thanked Sylvia Moys for Chairing the meeting on 7 February.

RESOLVED- That the minutes be noted.

18. **WEST WICKHAM, SPRING PARK AND COULSDON COMMONS CONSULTATION GROUP- DRAFT MINUTES OF 24 JANUARY 2019**

The Committee received the draft minutes of the 24 January 2019 meeting of the West Wickham, Spring Park and Coulsdon Commons Consultation Group.

RESOLVED- That the minutes be noted.

19. **PROVISION OF CAR PARK CHARGING INFRASTRUCTURE AT BURNHAM BEECHES, RIDDLEDOWN AND FARTHING DOWNS**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the provision of car park charging infrastructure at Burnham Beeches, Riddlesdown and Farthing Downs. The Director of Open Spaces informed the Committee that, further to advice from the Town Clerk's Corporate Programme team, the project category would need to be adjusted to reflect the replacement of existing infrastructure.

RESOLVED- that: -

- I. The project proposal to progression to the next gateway (G5) is agreed; and
- II. That the budget of £5000 to get to the next gateway (G5) is agreed; and
- III. That the total estimated project cost of £130,000 is noted.

20. THE COMMONS MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES 2019-20

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces regarding the Commons management priorities for 2019-2020. The Chairman asked if the required expenditure for the management of Oak Processionary Moth had been incorporated in the Open Spaces department's financial plans. Replying to this the Director of Open Spaces confirmed that this expenditure had been included in the Medium-Term financial plan and Chamberlain's department informed accordingly.

RESOLVED- That the management priorities for The Commons for the period 2019-20 be agreed.

21. THE COMMONS, SPORTS AND MISCELLANEOUS CHARGES

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces which reviewed the charges for sports facilities and miscellaneous items that are provided by The Commons Division and requested approval for the proposed charges for the financial year 2019-20.

The Chairman noted that there had been no review in the previous year and commented that it was important that this did not affect the reviews to the charges in the longer term.

RESOLVED- That the proposed charges for the 2019/20 financial year be agreed.

22. CATERING OPTIONS APPRAISAL REPORT

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Commons division's commissioned independent catering options appraisal report. The Director of Open Spaces informed the Committee that although the income to be gained is relatively low the diversification opportunity remained important.

A Member asked for clarification on whether the catering provider was planned to be internally sourced. The Director of Open Spaces explained that the catering provider would be sourced externally after being advertised to the open market and chosen in accordance with robust evaluation scheme. In addition, it was added that community options for catering providers would also be considered. Following a query from a Member of the Committee it was confirmed that the catering provider would be employed on a trial basis with regular reviews.

RESOLVED- that: -

- I. Further exploration of the potential identified at Riddlesdown Common be approved with further reporting to the Epping Forest & Commons Committee; and
- II. That it is agreed that no further work should be undertaken to pursue the provision of catering concessions for Ashted Common and Farthing Downs.

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

There were no questions received in the public session.

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

There were no urgent items considered in the public session.

25. **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.

26. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

The Committee considered the non-public minutes of their last meeting on 14 January 2019.

RESOLVED-That the non-public minutes of the meeting on the 14 January 2019 were agreed as an accurate record.

27. **USE OF FOREST FUND FOR REFURBISHMENT OF LODGES**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Use of Forest Fund for the Refurbishment of Lodges.

RESOLVED- That the report be approved.

28. **REPORT OF ACTION TAKEN BETWEEN MEETINGS**

The Committee received a report of the Town Clerk on action taken between meetings.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

29. **NON-PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

There were no questions received in the non-public session.

30. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED**

There was one item of non-public business received.

The meeting ended at 1.30 pm

Chairman

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