

**EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE**  
**Monday, 20 May 2019**

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held at  
Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 20 May 2019 at  
11.30 am

**Present**

**Members:**

Graeme Smith (Chairman)  
Deputy Philip Woodhouse (Deputy Chairman)  
Peter Bennett  
Alderman Robert Howard  
Alderman Robert Hughes-Penney  
Caroline Haines  
Gregory Lawrence  
Benjamin Murphy  
Sylvia Moys  
Jeremy Simons  
Verderer Michael Chapman DL  
Verderer Nicholas Munday

**Officers:**

Richard Holt	- Town Clerk's Department
Carl Locsin	- Town Clerk's Department
Kate Smith	- Town Clerk's Department
Alison Elam	- Group Accountant, Chamberlain's Department
Colin Buttery	- Director of Open Spaces & Heritage
Gerry Kiefer	- Open Spaces Business Manager
Paul Thomson	- Superintendent, Epping Forest
Jacqueline Eggleston	- Head of Visitor Services (Epping Forest)
Jeremy Dagley	- Head of Conservation (Epping Forest)
Jo Hurst	- Business Manager (Epping Forest)
Hadyn Robson	- Support Services Manager
Juliane Heinecke	- Department of Open Spaces
Martin Hartup	- Head Ranger, Department of Open Spaces

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Verderer Melissa Murphy and Verderer Joanna Thomas.

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

Sylvia Moys declared that she was a Council Taxpayer in the London Borough of Croydon.

3. **ORDER OF THE COURT OF COMMON COUNCIL**

**RESOLVED** – That the order of the Court of Common Council be received.

4. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

The Committee proceeded to elect a Chairman in accordance with Standing Order No. 29. The Town Clerk read a list of Members eligible to stand and Graeme Smith being the only Member expressing their willingness to serve was duly elected Chairman for the ensuing year and took the Chair.

**RESOLVED** – That Graeme Smith be elected for the ensuing year.

The Chairman thanked the Committee for their support and welcomed new Members, Alderman Robert Howard and Alderman Robert Hughes-Penney to the Committee. The Committee expressed their thanks to the outgoing Chairman Deputy Phillip Woodhouse.

**VOTE OF THANKS**

Proposed by Gregory Lawrence;

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

That the Members of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee wish to place on record their sincere appreciation to

**Deputy Phillip Woodhouse**

Their very great and sincere thanks and appreciation for the distinguished manner, in which he has served as Chairman since 9th May 2016.

MUCH has been achieved during Philip's Chairmanship in what has been a challenging financial and political period. He has combined sage counsel, an eye for detail and forward-thinking with enthusiasm and good humour throughout the Committee's proceedings, alongside a wide range of sub-Committees, liaison groups and panels.

Philip oversaw the passage of the City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Act 2018 from its October 2016 Third Reading in the House of Commons, to the gaining of Royal Assent on 15 March 2018.

He has played a decisive role in improving the governance of Epping Forest, through the introduction of a dedicated Consultative Committee, and the

addition of an Epping Forest District Council and Essex County Council Liaison Group in November 2016. Philip also oversaw the successful appointment of two new Verderers during 2018.

Epping Forest also celebrated the Forest's inclusion in the Queens Commonwealth Canopy with a Royal Visit by Prince Harry and hosted the signing of the Ancient Tree Forum Concordat during the celebrations of the 800<sup>th</sup> year of the Forest Charter, which included a sponsored float in the Lord Mayor's Show.

Philip has provided considerable support to officers involved in the need to protect the Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) through the Local Plan development process. At Burnham Beeches, SAC protection was included in South Bucks District Council's 'Draft Local Plan' public consultation document, that is expected to be presented to the Secretary of State later this year. Philip has also played a very active role during the Epping Forest District Local Plan Regulation 18 & 19 depositions and subsequent Examination in Public, also successfully laying the foundations for the fifteen-year SAC Mitigation Strategy.

The introduction of Public Space Protection Orders at Burnham Beeches also came under Philip's Chairmanship continuing to ensure that all visitors can appropriately share and enjoy the open space.

Both the Commons and Epping Forest's ten-year Countryside Stewardship Schemes, have been completed during Philip's term, ensuring the restoration of hundreds of acres of wood-pasture habitats, and the successful move to in-house management of the Epping Forest conservation grazing scheme. Philip also guided the successful Countryside Stewardship Applications at both Stoke Common and Burnham Beeches.

During what was a challenging time for the protection of Epping Forest from Invasive Non-Native Species and pathogens, Phillip has provided steady leadership which resulted in the successful control of an outbreak of Ramorum Disease in September 2016; the close monitoring of the arrival of the Oak Processionary Moth in Autumn 2016 and the successful eradication of Floating Pennywort at Wanstead Park.

Pursuing his interest in formal sport, Philip has championed the return of Chingford Golf Course management into full City Corporation control resulting in increases in play and profitability and has taken a close interest in the progress of Wanstead Flats to Stage Two of the Football Foundation's 'Parklife' programme.

Philip has played a pivotal role in the delivery of the Kenley Revival Project, supporting this project through its 3-year delivery phase. Notable achievements have included the completion of the visitor activities programme including community archaeology and extensive school engagement events, and planning consent for the new site signage.

The retention of 9 Green Flag and 4 Green Heritage Scheme Awards for each of his three years of Chairmanship are a testimony to Philip's interest in the quality of the visitor offer across Epping Forest and the City Commons.

FINALLY, the Committee wishes to place on record its recognition of Philip's distinguished contribution to the work of the Committee and in thanking him for his generous hospitality, his colleagues convey to him their good wishes for the future, with happy memories of a substantial body of achievement over the past three years.

5. **ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN**

The Committee proceeded to elect a Deputy Chairman in accordance with Standing Order No. 30. The Town Clerk informed the Committee, that in accordance with Standing Order No. 30(3)(a), Deputy Phillip Woodhouse as the immediate Past Chairman and having indicated his willingness to serve was accordingly declared to be the Deputy Chairman for the ensuing year.

**RESOLVED** – That Deputy Philip Woodhouse be elected as Deputy Chairman for the ensuing year.

6. **MINUTES**

The Committee considered the minutes of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee held on 11 March 2019.

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as an accurate record.

**MATTERS ARISING**

**Legal dispute with Avanti:** Further to the update listed in the minutes of the previous meeting regarding the Kenley Revival project the Director of Open Spaces explained that City of London Corporation had received a reply from Avanti within the twenty-eight-day deadline and that negotiations with the company were ongoing.

**Operational Property Review:** A Member of the Committee asked for an update on the Operational Property Review at Epping Forest. The Director of Open Spaces confirmed that the review was continuing with the Open Spaces Department working closely with colleagues in the City Surveyor's. In addition, it was confirmed that £2M had already been raised by the disposal of properties declared surplus.

**Major Event Wanstead Flats:** It was raised that the report on the proposed music event was due to be considered at the May meeting of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee but that there was no report present on the Agenda. The Director of Open Spaces explained that further advice had been received from the Comptroller's Department and that the report would now be considered by the Committee in July 2019.

7. **2019/20 COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS**

The Committee considered a report of the Town Clerk, inviting Members to appoint their sub committees for 2019/20. The Town Clerk invited the Committee to consider the report of the Town Clerk relating to the appointment of sub committees. The Chairman waived the maximum membership listed against each group to encourage greater Member participation. It was noted that the Consultative Committees and Groups would continue with its membership for the previous year with the exception of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee to which Caroline Haines was additionally appointed and the Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common Consultation Group to which Alderman Robert Hughes-Penney was additionally appointed.

A Member of the Committee commented that during the recent committee visit to Epping Forest on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May Members visited the Suntrap Visitor Centre and suggested that the Epping Forest Joint Consultative Committee consider establishing a relationship with the Environmental Education centre. The Superintendent agreed to investigate the matter but emphasised that unlike FSC, Suntrap did not form part of the Epping Forest landholding.

Following a question from a Member of the Committee the Chairman confirmed that the Terms of Reference for the Ashtead Common Consultation Group allow for local Councillors to remain as members in a private context if not re-elected to their respective local authorities.

**RESOLVED** – That the following appointments be agreed:

**Ashtead Commons Consultation Group**

Deputy Philip Woodhouse  
Graeme Smith  
Sylvia Moys  
Jeremy Simons

**Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common Consultation Group**

Deputy Philip Woodhouse  
Graeme Smith  
Sylvia Moys  
Alderman Robert Hughes-Penney

**Coulsdon Commons, West Wickham & Spring Park Consultation Group**

Deputy Philip Woodhouse  
Graeme Smith  
Sylvia Moys  
Jeremy Simons

**Epping Forest Joint Consultative Committee**

(Agreement calls for only three places for each partner organisation).

Deputy Philip Woodhouse  
Graeme Smith  
Sylvia Moys  
Gregory Lawrence

### **Epping Forest Consultative Committee**

Philip Woodhouse  
Graeme Smith  
Sylvia Moys  
Benjamin Murphy  
Caroline Haines  
Verderer Chapman  
Verderer Murphy  
Verderer Thomas  
Verderer Munday

### **Epping Forest Management Plan Steering Group**

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

### **Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee Representative**

Verderer Thomas

## **8. THE CITY OF LONDON CORPORATION'S SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY STRATEGY FOR 2019-23**

The Committee received a report of the Town Clerk on the proposed final version of the City of London Corporation's (City Corporation) Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for 2019-2023. The Town Clerk explained that the report was received by the Committee to allow Members the chance to make comments on the Strategy which could be incorporated before it is considered by the Policy and Resources Committee in July.

It was commented by a Member that, while he was supportive of the strategy, it did not properly deal with the issue of student's physical education particularly with relation to academies and schools outside of the Square Mile whose access to facilities was in certain contexts deeply lacking. Further to this point the Member suggested that a success measure be added to the Strategy for students outside of the Square Mile. A Member stated that they agreed with this point and added that in their role as a governor at a school in Croydon similar issues had been apparent. In addition to these points the Member commented that 'pupils' was not an appropriate term and suggested that 'students' be used within the Sports Strategy instead.

A Member noted that the Sports Strategy included a number of aspirations which could well be unachievable given the cost implications and the financial context of the City of London Corporation. Commenting on this the Deputy Chairman noted that a number of organisations had withdrawn from bids to hold major sporting events due to the high costs.

A Member observed that the Sports Strategy had a 'top-down' approach and highlighted the lack of engagement with the local community. Further to this point a Member raised that the Strategy placed importance on international status rather than the wellbeing of the local population. In addition, it was commented that the Strategy did not include details of the important role that Open Spaces played in relation to sport. The Deputy Chairman agreed and commented that the strategy needed to reference the twenty-one million visits accessing the City of London Corporation's open spaces annually. Members agreed that, as there were considerable concerns regarding the Sports Strategy, the Committee would note and not endorse it.

**RESOLVED**-That the report be noted.

9. **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.

Replying to a query from a Member of the Committee it was confirmed that while every possible action was taken to avoid disturbing bats when maintaining trees in the Commons there were no extra cost associated with this.

A Member requested further information on the work undertaken between City of London Corporation Officers and Heathrow airport. The Director of Open Spaces explained that Heathrow Airport are required to deliver a biodiversity net gain as a result of the third runway development and the City of London Corporation staff were being engaged as consultants.

In response to a question from a Member of the Committee the Director of Open Spaces confirmed that best practice regarding engagement with local plans was shared amongst teams within the Open Spaces Department. Further to the incident at Burnham Beeches involving traveller caravans a Member of the Committee commented that this was a major issue for open spaces across the country and asked if the City of London Corporation worked with other local authorities to resolve these issues. The Director of Open Spaces confirmed that responses to illegal trespasses were coordinated regionally with all relevant local authorities engaged in the process.

**RESOLVED**-That the report be noted.

10. **PROPOSED NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE STATUS FOR THE COULSDON COMMONS AND HAPPY VALLEY**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces regarding the declaration of a proposed National Nature Reserve (covering the Coulsdon Commons and Happy Valley) with Natural England and in partnership with the London Borough of Croydon. Members commented that the proposed National Nature Reserve was good news for the City of London Corporation and thanked officers for their work on the project.

**RESOLVED-** That the confirmation, by Natural England in summer 2019, of the 'South London Downs National Nature Reserve' be approved, with completion of their formal declaration process by November 2019.

**11. PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDERS ANNUALISED FIGURES UPDATE FOR BURNHAM BEECHES**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) at Burnham Beeches. The Director of Open Spaces informed the Committee that the report had been produced further to a request by Members on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2017 for annualised Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) figures to be presented to the Committee. The information in the report summarised activity in relation to PSPOs, at Burnham Beeches in the preceding year.

Replying to a question from a Member of the Committee the Director of Open Spaces explained action had been undertaken by the department to educate visitors to Burnham Beeches on the PSPO but that first time visitors to the Beeches were still the most likely to break the PSPO.

**RESOLVED-**That the report be noted.

**12. 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 January to March 2019. The Superintendent of Epping Forest made the following points.

Of particular note was an increase in fly tips, following a year of declining numbers; the continuing lack of rainfall; continued investment in work programmes to develop Countryside Stewardship applications and a final version of the SAC Mitigation Strategy; works to remove fire damaged vegetation at Wanstead Flats; the submission of further evidence at the Epping Forest District Council Local Planning Examination in Public; improvements to Chingford Golf Course and a successful close to the grassroots football season.

A Member asked if there were any key lessons which could be taken from successful reduction of incidents of fly tipping at Wanstead Flats. Replying to this the Superintendent explained that the improved car park security and regular night-time closure of car parks in the area had been very effective in limiting the number of fly tipping incidents at Wanstead Flats but noted an increase in roadside tipping. A Member noted the positive media reception on the van which was seized and crushed due to the involvement in fly tipping. In response to a further question, the Superintendent confirmed that a further 15 incidents of fly tipping were currently being investigated.

Replying to a Member's question on Deer Vehicle Collisions it was confirmed that traffic volume and speed, together with a large deer population, were the key factors that were contributing to the number of collisions.

In response to a question from a Member of the Committee on the proposed music event at Wanstead Flats, the Superintendent apologised for the delay in bringing a report on this matter to the Committee for consideration. In addition, it was confirmed that the delay to the report would not impact on the application for the required licenses from the relevant local authority which subject to Committee approval were likely to be submitted in September.

**RESOLVED** – That the update be noted.

**13. ELECTION OF EPPING FOREST VERDERERS 2020**

The Committee considered a joint report of the Town Clerk and the Director of Open Spaces on the proposed process for the election of four Verderers in accordance with the Epping Forest Act 1878 by no later than 20 March 2020. The Director of Open Spaces highlighted that the only material changes to the processes from the report considered seven years ago was in relation to the Comptroller's advice on settling the electoral register and the use of social media to publicise the election.

A Member asked for further information on the proposed changes to the process for the 2020 election. Replying to this the Superintendent of Epping Forest confirmed that previously the register of voters was settled by additional Committee meetings, however, it was now proposed that officers undertake this task. It was explained the primary area for consideration regarding the register was instances where multiple occupants were registered for the same land and a single voter would need to be chosen as a representative.

**RESOLVED-That: -**

- I. The timetable for the election of Verderers outlined in this report is approved; and
- II. That it is approved that the number of polling stations be kept at four in the northern parishes and one in the southern parishes, it being left to the discretion of the Town Clerk as to the precise location; and
- III. That authority be delegated to the Town Clerk and the Director of Open Spaces to review the Register of Commoners and carry out all necessary procedural and administrative steps relating to the review and settlement of the Register and the subsequent election of Verderers; and
- IV. That delegated authority be granted to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, to approve the draft revised register to be placed on deposit prior to the settling of the Register in its final form; and
- V. That delegated authority be granted to the Town Clerk to hear any claims or objections and to settle the final form of the Register; and
- VI. That authority be delegated to the Town Clerk to settle the level of remuneration for the ten poll clerks should their services be required (such a fee reflecting the hours of poll and current rates for such work); and
- VII. That the cost of the election (anticipated to be in the order of £15,000) which will be met from the Town Clerk's Elections budget be noted; and

VIII. That the proxy vote of each Committee not being exercised for the 2020 election of Verderers be agreed.

14. **EPPING FOREST OPERATIONS PROGRAMME FOR 2019/2020**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on conservation, visitor access and risk management projects proposed in the Forest for the year 2019/20. Replying to a question from a Member of the Committee the Director of Open Spaces confirmed that additional measures can be undertaken following a number of fires in the previous year.

A Member of the Committee queried the status of the Epping Forest overall management plan. The Director of Open Spaces clarified that the proposed plan was ready for Members consideration. Replying to a Members question the Director of Open Spaces explained that a variety of funding options were being explored.

**RESOLVED-** That the annual work programme as summarised in the main report be approved.

15. **2019 COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP GRANT APPLICATION**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the 2019 Countryside Stewardship Grant application.

A Member raised the issue of air quality within Epping Forest and questioned if there had been any consideration by Officers of the effect traffic within the Forest would have on pollution. The Head of Conservation highlighted the impact air pollution had on trees and confirmed that the issue of air quality would be raised by City of London Officers at the upcoming public hearing on the Epping Forest District Local Plan.

**RESOLVED-** That: -

- I. The grant application timetable be noted; and
- II. That the proposed engagement and approval process with Epping Forest & Commons Committee be approved; and
- III. That Members agreed to making two separate applications for funding for the Forest in 2019 and 2020 and a third application for the Buffer Lands in 2020; and
- IV. That the range of operations and Forest locations that are proposed to be funded through this grant be approved.

16. **PROPOSED HONEY LANE (A121) PEDESTRIAN CROSSING POINT – ADJACENT WOODGREEN ROAD/FOREST SIDE JUNCTION**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Proposed Honey Lane (A121) Pedestrian Crossing Point Adjacent Woodgreen Road Forest Side junction.

A Member of the Committee noted that they considered the proposed position of the pedestrian crossing correct and commented that a 20MPH speed limit on Honey Lane would be sensible to improve pedestrian safety. In addition, the Member requested clarification on the use of the Epping Forest buffer lands as

compensatory land for Highway dedications. The Superintendent explained that policy commitments had been made to both increase accessibility to Epping Forest and to retain or expand the existing landholding. In this case the Highway Authority does not possess any suitable land for the exchange and therefore the purchase and dedication of Buffer Land to Forest would address the Trustee's Land Retention Policy objective.

**RESOLVED-** That: -

- I. A clear position that the City Corporation will not consider any further dedication until the land exchange, outstanding since September 2011, for the traffic safety scheme at High Beach is completed be agreed; and
- II. That a negotiating position be agreed requesting the reduction in speed restrictions on Honey Lane from 40mph to 30mph and the installation, with Essex County Council Cabinet Member special approval, of a signalised 'Pegasus' Crossing with the dedication of 10m<sup>2</sup> of Forest Land to facilitate the installation of appropriate tactile paving; and
- III. That Members agreed that should the Highway Authority continue to propose crossing islands and be unable to offer compensatory land already in their ownership contiguous with Forest boundaries, Officers should indicate that Committee would offer the purchase, subject to valuation by the District Valuer, and dedication of Buffer Land as Forest Land as a suitable exchange.

**17. EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN – EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC – MATTERS 1 & 16 LEGAL COMPLIANCE/EPPING FOREST PROTECTION**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Examination in Public of the Epping Forest District Council Local Plan. The Director of Open Spaces provided members with an update on the progress of the Epping Forest District Council Local Plan and the issues which Officers within the Epping Forest management team had raised with the District Council.

**RESOLVED-** That: -

- I. The representations, as summarised in this report, and set out in full in Appendices 1 and 2 to this report be approved; and
- II. That the delegation to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, to continue to work with the District Council and other local authorities to create a full and effective Mitigation Strategy, including consideration of off-site measures on the Buffer Lands and other sites be maintained; and
- III. That the requirement for Epping Forest and Commons Committee to receive a report on the outcome of the Examination-in-Public and the Inspector's findings and main modifications; and
- IV. That Members agreed that the Epping Forest and Commons Committee receives a report on the proposed full Mitigation Strategy for approval.

**18. LONDON BOROUGH OF CULTURE UPDATE**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the London Borough of Culture award to Waltham Forest for 2019. The report updated Committee on the in-kind support to the London Borough of Culture being offered to date and plans for events in Epping Forest across the year.

A Member commented on the quality of the services provided by the Epping Forest visitor centre and thanked Officers and volunteers for their work regarding this. The Head of Visitor Services explained that despite adverse weather conditions the May Day Fayre at Chingford Plain had been a successful event.

**RESOLVED-** That the report be noted.

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

There were no questions received in the public session.

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

There were no urgent items considered in the public session.

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**

The Committee considered the non-public minutes of Epping Forest and Commons Committee on 11 March 2019.

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

23. **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.

24. **SEF 14/19 FOOTBALL ARTIFICIAL GRASS PROVISION UPDATE**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the provision of Football Artificial Grass Wanstead Flats. The report updated Members on progress made on the project, through the Football Foundation's 'Parklife' grant scheme.

**RESOLVED-** That the report be noted.

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

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

**26. 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 12.52 pm**

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Chairman

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