

EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE
Monday, 8 July 2019

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held at
Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 8 July 2019 at 11.30
am

Present

Members:

Deputy Philip Woodhouse (Deputy Chairman)
Peter Bennett
Caroline Haines
Sylvia Moys
Benjamin Murphy
Verderer Michael Chapman DL
Verderer Nicholas Munday
Verderer Melissa Murphy
Verderer Dr. Joanna Thomas
Jeremy Simons
Alderman Robert Howard

In attendance:

Chief Commoner Deputy Tom Hoffman

Officers:

Richard Holt	- Town Clerk's Department
Nigel Lefton	- Remembrancer's
Carl Locsin	- Town Clerk's Department
Derek Cobbing	- Finance Manager, Chamberlain's Department
Alison Elam	- Group Accountant, Chamberlain's Department
Alison Bunn	- Assistant Director City Surveyor's Department
Nicholas Welland	- Principal Surveyor City Surveyor's Department
Paul Thomson	- Superintendent, Epping Forest
Andy Barnard	- Superintendent, The Commons
Helen Read	- Conservation Officer, Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common
Jacqueline Eggleston	- Head of Visitor Services, Epping Forest
Jeremy Dagley	- Head of Conservation, Open Spaces
Martin Falder	- Project Officer Open Spaces Department
Sally Gadsdon	- Environmental Stewardship Officer, Epping Forest
Jo Hurst	- Business Manager, Epping Forest
Gerry Kiefer	- Open Spaces Business Manager

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from the Chairman Graeme Doshi-Smith, Gregory Lawrence and Alderman Robert Hughes-Penney.

In the absence of the Chairman the Deputy Chairman took the Chair for the meeting.

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

Benjamin Murphy declared that he was acquainted with the farm business tenant of Copped Hall Park listed at item 24.

3. **MINUTES**

The Committee considered the public minutes and non-public summary of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee held on 20 May 2019.

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

Matters Arising

Sports Strategy: further to the comments listed in the minutes of the previous meeting a Member highlighted the recent Breakfast Briefing on the Sports Strategy and Members discussed the need for the work of Open Spaces to be represented within the Strategy. Members commented that the Breakfast Briefing had been a positive and helpful exercise but noted that they were still not fully in agreement with the direction of the Sports Strategy. The Chairman suggested that the minute from the previous meeting of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee be used to guide discussions at future breakfast briefing sessions on the Sports Strategy.

Election of Verderer: The Town Clerk informed the Committee of the dates of the various meetings in February 2020 in connection with the election of Verderers namely; two nomination meetings to be held on Monday 24 February, election in the north to be held on Wednesday 26 February and election in the south to be held on Thursday 27 February.

4. **BREXIT UPDATE**

Members noted that as, the Director of Open Spaces was unable to attend, the meeting no substantive update on Brexit would be received.

5. **CYCLICAL WORKS PROGRAMME BID - 2020/21**

The Committee received a report of the City Surveyor on the Cyclical Works programme bid for 2020/21. The report set out the provisional list of cyclical projects being considered for properties under the management of Epping Forest and Commons Committee.

A Member requested further information on the trend of spending and the volume and value of works deferred to future years, which the City Surveyor agreed to provide.

Replying to a Members query regarding the work at Great Gregories Farm Barn the Director of Open Spaces confirmed that a detailed survey had confirmed the presence the white asbestos in cement roofing panels and a plan for the careful removal of this dangerous material will follow best practice procedures.

A Member of the Committee questioned if appropriate level of assessment had been completed on the Timber Classroom refurbishment works. The Director of Open Spaces confirmed that a full building assessment, provided by an external consultant, would take place to confirm the condition of the building.

Replying to a further query from a Member of a Committee concerning the nature of The Grotto consolidation work, the Director of Open Spaces explained that a future report would be considered by the Epping Forest and Commons Committee which would outline the future plans for the Temple and Grotto Folly projects.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

6. OPEN SPACES DEPARTMENTAL BUSINESS PLAN 2018/19 - YEAR END PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Open Spaces Department Business Plan 2018/19. The report provided key examples of some of the activities the Department undertook last year to achieve Department's three top line objectives: 'Open Spaces and Historic Sites are Thriving and Accessible', 'Spaces Enrich People's Lives' and 'Business Practices are Responsible and Sustainable'.

Replying to a Member's query it was confirmed that engagement with the staff survey in the Open Spaces Department had been comparatively higher than other Departments in the City of London Corporation.

A Member commended the Department for only having a £13,000 overspend and requested further information on the measures the department used to assess success against the aims in the Open Spaces Department Business Plan 2018/19. The Director of Open Spaces confirmed that Officers were still waiting for the appropriated statistical information to be made available to measure against the aims in the Open Spaces Department Business Plan 2018/19. The Chairman requested that this information be circulated to all Members of the Committee once available.

Replying to a question from a Member of the Committee the Open Spaces Business Manager confirmed that a report on the Central Grants Programme have been considered by the Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee in April and was reported in the may Superintendent's presentation.

A Member of the Committee commented that the changing rooms at Aldersbrook were in desperate need of refurbishment. Further to this, a Member noted that this was an example of the exact grassroots issue that the Corporate Sports Strategy should engage with. The Director of Open Spaces confirmed that Stage II of the Parklife™ proposal would address Pavilion conditions should the Fundamental Review of the Capital project be successful.

It was noted by a Member that the information on the City of London Corporation Website relating to Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) needed to be improved.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

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

The Committee received the draft minutes of the Epping Forest Joint Consultative Committee meeting held on 26 of April 2019.

RESOLVED- That the draft minutes of the Epping Forest Joint Consultative Committee meeting held on 26 of April 2019 be noted.

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

The Committee received the draft minutes of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee meeting held on the 12 June 2019. The Chairman noted that the minutes should list 120 acres not 120,000 acres.

RESOLVED- That the draft minutes of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee meeting held on 12 June 2019 be noted.

9. **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 April to May 2019.

A Member of the Committee expressed concern with regard to the increase in OPM numbers within Epping Forest and questioned if monitoring inspections which had taken place in June were sufficient. The Superintendent explained that OPM was an significant issue for Epping Forest and was being addressed by scientific moth trapping to understand numbers followed by survey inspections, leading to spraying and the mechanical removal of moths centred on popular areas within the Forest. In addition, replying to a query raised by a Member of the Committee, the Director of Open Spaces confirmed lessons learned were shared across different City Corporation Open Spaces as well as other Local Authority Open Spaces.

Replying to a Member's query the Superintendent explained that the use of new software to help record the contribution made by volunteers. A Member highlighted the potential issues GDPR compliance issues holding this data could cause.

A Member asked for further information on the methodology used by the Epping Forest Department to resolve issues with rough sleepers. The Superintendent explained that a Problem Resolution in a Multi-Agency Environment (PRIME) approach was used, working to the 'No Second Night Out' (NSNO) principles, where the Epping Forest worked closely with all the relevant local and enforcement authorities, in addition to homelessness charities, to achieve positive outcomes for rough sleepers and the Forest.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

10. HIGHAMS PARK, LITTLE SALE WOOD AND OAK HILL WOOD INDIVIDUAL SITE PLAN (SEF 21/19)

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Highams Park, Little Sale Wood and Oak Hill Wood Individual Site Plan. The report outlined the property management issues and significant management considerations described in the ISP along with management strategy proposed for the area.

The Chairman asked Members to note that the wording on delegated authority under Standing Orders in the following reports referred to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman.

The Director of Open Spaces confirmed that the ISP would cover the Michael Mallinson Watersports Centre in more detail once Members had reviewed the current lease with Walthamstow Scouts and the potential for Scouts to invest further in the facility.

Replying to a query from a Member of the Committee the Director of Open Spaces agreed to identify a method for archiving Conservation Statements and ISPs in a format that can be accessed by Members online.

RESOLVED- That the draft documents for Highams Park, Little Sale Wood and Oak Hill Wood Individual Site Plan (ISP) be approved for public consultation.

11. THE DEER SANCTUARY, THEYDON BOIS - CONSERVATION STATEMENT (SEF 22B/19)

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Deer Sanctuary, Theydon Bois – Conservation Statement. The report sought the adoption of the draft Conservation Statement for the heritage landscape of Birch Hall Park, also known as the Epping Forest Deer Sanctuary.

Member's attention was drawn to an error regarding the acreage of Birch Hall Park which should read 120 acres.

Replying to a query from a Member of the Committee the Director of Open Spaces confirmed that Committee consideration of the 2016 Conversation Statement had been delayed with the expectation of a companion report on the leaking dam. Members were also asked to that the forthcoming Deer Strategy Review would affect the management policy for the Deer Sanctuary.

Further to comment within the report a Member of the Committee queried whether there were trees effected Ash Dieback Disease within Epping Forest. Replying to this the Director of Open Spaces confirmed that Ash Dieback Disease was present within Epping Forest.

RESOLVED- That the draft Conservation Statement be approved for consultation with key stakeholders.

12. EPPING FOREST BUFFER LANDS - ANNUAL AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS REVIEW FOR 2018 AND PROPOSALS FOR 2019 (SEF 25/19)

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Epping Forest Buffer Lands – Annual Agricultural Holdings review for 2018 and proposals for 2019. The report provided a summary of the main agricultural land management activities completed in 2018/19 and previewed proposed management and wildlife conservation operation.

RESOLVED- That: -

- i. The procurement of land agency advice as required for negotiations with tenants be approved; and
- ii. That the procurement of contract services for the carrying out of agricultural management, including fencing and weed control, as required, following City Procurement procedures be approved; and
- iii. That general management proposals be approved; and
- iv. That the Town Clerk, in association with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, be delegated the responsibility to settle a tenancy dispute regarding boundaries and alleged damage by deer browsing.

13. APPLICATION FOR USE OF EPPING FOREST LAND AT WANSTEAD FLATS FOR A MUSIC CONCERT. SEF 29/19

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces regarding the application for use of Epping Forest Land at Wanstead Flats for a music concert. The report outlined the key details of the proposed event and the feedback from stakeholders which have been received.

The Director of Open Spaces introduced the report and explained that a number of conditions would be placed on the event organisers Mama Festivals Ltd including meeting measures which Officers deemed necessary to limit the ecological impact of holding the event. In addition, the Committee were reminded of a petition by residents local to Wanstead Flats opposing the event which had reached 450 signatures.

The Chairman reiterated the point made at item 10 that both the Chairman and Deputy Chairman would be consulted on the final negotiations and agreement of contractual terms in relation to the use of the land at Wanstead Flats.

Members discussed the Wanstead Flats, Epping Forest Preliminary Ecological Appraisal which had be published as a late appendix to the report. Members raised concern that adequate time had not been allowed to properly assess the Ecological Appraisal and noted that local authorities who would be considering licensing the event, if agreed, would expect the Committee to have properly

assessed its ecological impact. Further to this the Director of Open Spaces explained that, while it was regrettable that the report had been finalised so late, but that its content had also largely been covered in the main report. In addition, it was noted that the proposed event did not reach the statutory threshold for an ecological assessment and that the Epping Forest management team were confident that any ecological impacts were indirect and manageable with the suitable mitigation measures in place, as demonstrated by the organisation of similar events.

A Member raised that Members should consider the proposed event in their context as trustees of Epping Forest and, in this context, they felt that the report should be agreed. Further to this point a Member agreed, highlighting the extensive work completed by Officers on mitigation strategies and noted that Redbridge County Council would more directly assess the effect on local people.

The Chief Commoner emphasised that, while the City of London Corporation took the concerns expressed by local residents very seriously, he felt that the conditions placed on the event and the assurances by the Epping Forest management team were sufficient for the Committee to agree the report. Moreover, the Chief Commoner explained that within the context of the City of London Corporation's Fundamental Review process the income generated by the event would be extremely valuable for the continued support of Epping Forest by the City of London Corporation. Members agreed that a balanced view was required when assessing the decision taking into account all factors and requested that they remained informed of any substantive developments regarding the proposed event.

The Committee moved to vote on the recommendations. Members voted unanimously in favour of the recommendations in the report. There were no abstentions.

RESOLVED- That:

- I. The provision of a licence to use of land with Mama Festivals Ltd for an outdoor temporary event on land at Wanstead Flats for the purposes of a three-day music concert as proposed in this report and in line with the Epping Forest Events policy be approved, subject to:
 - a. Mama Festivals Ltd mitigating against any environmental issues arising from the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and undertaking any additional protected species surveys if required within the appraisal.
 - b. Mama Festivals Ltd successfully obtaining a Premises Licence for the event under the Licensing Act 2003 and any other necessary consents.
 - c. The Director of Open Spaces being satisfied that the final proposals and agreed mitigating actions are consistent with the Events Policy and in compliance with the duties of the Conservators.

- II. That the authority be delegated the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, to complete final negotiations and agreement of contractual terms; taking in to account the specific environmental considerations and constraints in relation to the use of this land.
- III. That the Comptroller & City Solicitor be authorised to enter into the necessary agreements on such as he and the Director of Open Spaces consider appropriate.

14. EPPING FOREST AND THE COMMONS RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Epping Forest and Commons Risk Management Report. The report provided Members with an update on the management of risks undertaken by the Open Spaces Department and the Epping Forest and the Commons Divisions.

RESOLVED- That: -

- I. The Epping Forest Risk Register included at Appendix 2 be approved; and
- II. That the Commons Risk Register included at Appendix 3, including the removal of one green risk be approved; and
- III. The addition of one amber risk to The Commons Risk Register be approved; and
- IV. The Corporate Risk Matrix at Appendix 1 and the Current and Target Risk Score Grids for Epping Forest and The Commons at Appendices 4 and 5 be noted; and
- V. The Risk History report at Appendix 6 be noted.

15. 2019 COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP GRANT APPLICATION PROPOSALS

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the 2019 Countryside Stewardship Grant application proposals. The Director of Open Spaces confirmed that the Epping Forest Management Plan Steering group would consider Countryside Stewardship Grant applications at the groups next meeting.

The Director of Open Spaces reassured Members that the proposed Management Strategy included a central objective of restoring wood pasture as promoted with the grant application.

Replying to a concern raised by a Member of the Committee the Director of Open Spaces explained that an in-depth pricing exercise had been undertaken with a number of external contractors assessed.

RESOLVED-That: -

- i. The progress of the developing the grant proposals as listed in Appendices 1-3, be noted; and

- ii. That the Director of Open Spaces be authorised, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, to complete the grant negotiations with the grant body (Natural England); and
- iii. That authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman to sign the finalised grant application for income estimated around £5.5 million over 10 years; and
- iv. That the Comptroller and City Solicitor be instructed to undertake such documentation as necessary; and
- v. That limited changes can be made to the funding proposals after the end of August 2019 be noted; and
- vi. The predicted income and expenditure for the grant works as listed at Appendix 3, be noted; and
- vii. That the grant works will be delivered through a combination of in-house teams, contractors and volunteers coordinated by the Epping Forest Conservation Team be noted.

16. REVENUE OUTTURN 2018/19 - EPPING FOREST

The Committee considered a report of the Chamberlain on the Revenue Outturn 2018/19 for Epping Forest.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

17. 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. The Director of Open Spaces explained that staffing replacements were being considered with regard to the Fundamental Review.

A Member of the Committee questioned why the report did not make reference to the Open Spaces learning programme. The Director of Open Spaces explained that the Commons Division was not currently included in the Learning Team's Work Programme.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

18. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AND SUBMISSION OF A PARTNERSHIP FUNDING BID TO HEATHROW AIRPORT LIMITED

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Proposed development and submission of a partnership funding bid to Heathrow Airport Limited. The report outlined a partnership proposal to develop a funding submission to the Secretary of State of Transport to create and restore Habitats of Principle Importance (HPI) in and around the Burnham Beeches SAC.

The Chairman commented that he supported the report and requested that Officers aim to maximise income from the project.

RESOLVED- That: -

- I. The Delegated Authority be granted to the Director of Open Spaces, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy, to agree a Memorandum of Understanding with Heathrow Airport Limited that will:
 - a. Guide the City's 'promotion and coordination role' during the development of the project
 - b. Lead to the submission of a collaborative bid to Heathrow Airport Limited to fund a landscape scale project that will secure 'net biodiversity gain' in and around Burnham Beeches SAC.
- II. That the indicative timetable (paragraph 12) provided by Heathrow Airport Limited be noted.

19. REVENUE OUTTURN 2018/19 - THE COMMONS

The Committee received a report of the Chamberlain on the Revenue Outturn 2018/19 for The Commons. The report compared the revenue outturn for the services overseen by the Committee in 2018/19 with the final agreed budget for the year.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

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

There were no public questions received.

21. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

There was no urgent business considered in public session.

22. 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.

23. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

Members considered the non-public minutes of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee on 20 May 2019.

RESOLVED- That the non-public minutes of the meeting on 11 May 2019 be agreed as an accurate record.

24. BUFFER LANDS AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS REVIEW: REVIEW OF COPPED HALL NORTH FARM BUSINESS TENANCY (SEF 25/19C)

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Buffer Lands Agricultural Holdings Review: review of Copped Hall North Farm Business Tenancy.

RESOLVED- That the report be agreed.

25. ACCESS RIGHTS - MONKHAMS COTTAGE, AIMES GREEN, WALTHAM ABBEY, ESSEX SEF 30/19

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Access Rights Monkham's Cottage, Aimes Green, Waltham Abbey.

RESOLVED- That the report be agreed.

26. **NON-PUBLIC APPENDIX: APPLICATION FOR USE OF EPPING FOREST LAND AT WANSTEAD FLATS FOR A MUSIC CONCERT. SEF 28/19B FINANCIAL PROPOSALS**

The Committee received a non-public appendix to be viewed in conjunction with item 13.

RESOLVED- That the appendix be noted.

27. **NON-PUBLIC APPENDIX: PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AND SUBMISSION OF A PARTNERSHIP FUNDING BID TO HEATHROW AIRPORT LIMITED**

The Committee received a non-public appendix to be viewed in conjunction with item 18.

RESOLVED- That the appendix to be noted.

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

There were no non-public questions received.

29. **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 considered.

The meeting ended at 1.40 pm

Chairman

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