

**EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE**  
**Monday, 9 July 2012**

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held at Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 9 July 2012 at 11.30 am

**Present**

**Members:**

Alderman Gordon Haines (Chairman)  
Barbara Newman (Deputy Chairman)  
George Abrahams  
Deputy John Barker  
Deputy Stella Currie  
Alderman John Garbutt  
Deputy Stanley Ginsburg  
Gregory Lawrence  
Deputy Catherine McGuinness  
Verderer Peter Adams  
Verderer Michael Chapman  
Verderer Richard Morris  
Verderer Dr. Joanna Thomas

**Officers:**

Edward Foale	- Committee & Member Services Officer, Town Clerk's Department
Esther Sumner	- Policy Officer, Town Clerk's Department
Alison Elam	- Group Accountant, Chamberlain's Department
Roger Adams	- City Surveyor's Department
Sue Ireland	- Director of Open Spaces
Paul Thomson	- Superintendent, Epping Forest
Andy Barnard	- Superintendent, Burnham Beeches & Stoke Common
Bob Warnock	- Superintendent, City Commons
Alison Tapply	- Community Liaison Officer

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Virginia Rounding, Alderman Robert Hall and Dr. Peter Hardwick.

**2. MINUTES**

The public minutes and summary of the meeting held on 14 May 2012 were approved, subject to the following amendments:

## **Present**

### **Members:**

John *Barker*

### Connaught Water (item 6)

In response to a Member's query, the Superintendent of Epping Forest advised that the landscape contractor UPM Tilhill would return to the site in September after the School Holidays to undertake further 'snagging' works. Any safety related planting would be undertaken later in November/December 2012 to maximise the opportunities for plant establishment.

### 2012/13 Committee Appointment (item 7)

#### **Epping Forest Management Plan Steering Group to Comprise:**

Chairman for the time being

Deputy Chairman for the time being

Deputy Stella Currie

Deputy Catherine McGuinness

*The Four Verderers*

*Mr Gordon Wyatt (or other Natural England nominated representative)*

*The Superintendent of Epping Forest*

## **MATTERS ARISING**

Several Members expressed dismay at a recent article that had appeared in a local newspaper that made inaccurate statements. Members agreed that the Chairman would issue a letter correcting the claims made in the article.

The Chairman put to the Committee for its consideration that Members and officers could choose to remain seated at meetings of the Committee.

**RESOLVED:** That Members and officers can choose to remain seated at meetings of the Committee until further notice.

### **3. DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF ANY PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA**

Deputy Catherine McGuinness and Verderer Richard Morris declared a personal interest in respect of the Epping Forest Centenary Trust for which they both volunteered (this was a standing declaration).

### **4. REVIEW OF THE GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS IMPLEMENTED IN 2011**

The Committee received a report of the Town Clerk, prepared on behalf of the Governance Review Working Party, which sought comments from the Committee on the governance arrangements introduced in 2011 and the impact that they may have had on the operation of the Committee.

A Member expressed that they believed it was unnecessary for one of the eight Committee Members appointed by the Court of Common Council to have less than five years' service on the Court at the time of appointment. Discussion ensued and the Committee decided to maintain this clause for the benefit of stimulating newer Common Council Members' interests in the Committee.

A Member, also a Verderer, advised that they believed that the Epping Forest Act 1878 gave Verderers equal rights to Common Council Members regardless of which of the assets under the Committee's management was under discussion. They believed that the wording "for the consideration of business relating to Epping Forest only" listed in the Committee's terms of reference contravened the Epping Forest Act 1878. The Town Clerk advised that recent legal advice had indicated that the point of continuity from the Epping Forest Committee referenced in the Act related only to the Committee's function in managing Epping Forest and not to the management of the City Commons and Burnham Beaches Estates, which had been added to the Committee's portfolio a reasonable time after the Act.

A Member advised that there was a discrepancy between what the membership outlined within the report and that outlined within the terms of reference. The report advised that there were ten Members appointed by the Court of Common Council, whereas the terms of reference advised that there were eight Members appointed by the Court of Common Council and two Aldermen nominated by the Court of Aldermen. Members agreed to refer this matter to the Governance Review Working Party for consideration.

**RESOLVED:** that the Committee submit the discussion captured above for consideration by the Governance Review Working Party.

**5. ELECTION OF VERDERERS - DATES OF NOMINATION AND POLLS**

The Committee received a report of the Town Clerk, which followed on from the report submitted to the previous Committee meeting regarding the election of Verderers, which had to take place no later than 20 March 2013.

In response to a Member's query, the Town Clerk clarified that the Epping Forest & Commons Committee had the option of using one proxy vote in each parish and the Port Health & Environmental Services Committee had the same option, which meant that overall the City could have two separate votes in the Verderers election. Discussion ensued and Members decided that the Committee would not use the proxy vote as it presented a conflict of interest, as the Committee would be voting for one of its own Members.

In response to a Member's query, the Town Clerk clarified that the election rules and procedures were laid out in the Epping Forest Act 1878, which predated election reforms and was not affected by subsequent reform to national and local elections. The Act consequently did not allow for a secret ballot. The Director advised that it would not be possible to amend this without consulting parliament.

**RESOLVED:** that,

- i) the Committee's proxy vote in the election of Verderers 2013 not be utilised.
- ii) two special meetings of the Committee to settle the Register of Commoners be held on 25th and 29th January 2013.

- iii) the nomination meetings be held on 25th February 2013 and, if polls be demanded, they be held on 27th February in the southern parishes and 28th February 2013 in the northern parishes.
6. **REVENUE OUTTURN 2011/12 - EPPING FOREST AND COMMONS**  
The Committee received a joint report of the Chamberlain and the Director of Open Spaces. The report compared the revenue outturn for the services overseen by the Committee in 2011/12 with the final agreed budget for the year. Members noted that in total there was a better than budget position of £686,000 for the services overseen by the Committee compared with the final agreed budget for the year.

**RECEIVED**

7. **DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER URGENCY POWERS**  
The Committee received a report of the Town Clerk that provided details of action taken under urgency procedures by the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Committee, in accordance with Standing Order No. 41(a).

The following decision as noted:

Consultation on Implementation of Amendments to the Reservoirs Act 1975

**RECEIVED**

8. **CONTROL OF DOGS**  
The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces relative to Dog Control Orders. The report informed the Committee of the City's recent acquisition of a Designation Order, which enabled the City to make and enforce Dog Control Orders, as a Secondary Authority outside the Square Mile, which came into force on 31 May 2012.

The Director informed the Committee of new proposals by Government that could see Dog Control Orders replaced by a Community Protection Order, which would address a wider range of persistent, place-based anti-social behaviour.

**RESOLVED:** that Members,

- i) note the report and the approach to trialling Dog Control Orders and;
- ii) approve that engagement with the Government on maintaining Secondary Authority status within the proposed new regime for anti-social behaviour can proceed.

**City Commons**

9. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**  
The Superintendent of the City Commons provided a verbal update regarding the following:

- Leavers One Ranger had recently left and one commenced maternity leave.
- Wildflower Recognition Course Staff and volunteers had completed a course on wildflower recognition to assist with the programme of site condition assessments.
- Farm Animals The cattle had been put to the bull and a further six deer had been purchased to bolster the grazing on Ashted Common.
- Events Six community led events had been held in across the Commons over the last two months, which had been very successful.
- Work Programme Hay making and grass cutting was continuing although severely affected by the weather. Ragwort pulling was currently underway, with which scouts and horse riders were assisting.
- Tendering Contracts for the veteran tree management at Ashted Common had been put out to tender.
- Oak Processionary Moth – the Superintendent had been in contact with the Forest Commission regarding measures to counter the risk the moth presented. Staff would go on additional training in the near future.

## RECEIVED

### Burnham Beeches

#### 10. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

The Superintendent of Burnham Beeches provided a verbal update regarding the following:

- Pollard Creation Pollard creation works were underway, as well as maintaining those planted fifteen years ago.
- Work Experience Several 15/16 year olds recently had work experience placements at the estate office, which proved very successful.
- Bench Repairs Several benches would be repaired in the near future. Volunteers were actively involved.
- Bracken Bashing Bracken bashing would be undertaken over the summer.
- Dog Control A responsible dog ownership campaign had been launched ahead of the proposed pilot of the City's recently acquired dog control orders.
- Play Burnham Beeches had recently staged a production of "Down the Rabbit Hole," a parody of Lewis Carroll's "Through the Looking Glass," which had been well received.

## RECEIVED

#### 11. GRAZING UPDATE

The Superintendent of Burnham Beeches was heard relative to grazing, Members noted the following:

- Transport for Buckinghamshire had recently been informed of the proposed measures.
- A solicitor had recently been employed to finalise any outstanding liability issues and address the concerns of Buckinghamshire Council.
- A group would be taken to view the invisible fencing in action on 10 July 2012.

## RECEIVED

12. **BURNHAM BEECHES CONSULTATION GROUP MINUTES 3 MAY 2012**  
The minutes from the meeting of the Burnham Beeches Consultation Group held on 3 May 2012 were received.

13. **URBAN DEVELOPMENT & BURNHAM BEECHES SAC**  
The Committee received a report of the Superintendent of Burnham Beeches relative to Urban Development in the Burnham Beeches Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The report compared Burnham Beeches with other sites of European Importance where restrictions in planning development had already been put in place or are underway. The report concluded that, due to the high number of visitors originating from the residential areas close to the Beeches, the local planning authority should devise and implement suitable measures to mitigate the adverse impacts of local development via their forthcoming Development Management Development Plan Document.

In response to a Member's comment, the Superintendent corrected the report to state that there were approximately 215,000 dog visits annually, rather than 215,000 dogs visiting annually as many would be repeat visits.

## RECEIVED

### Epping Forest

14. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**  
The Superintendent of Epping Forest provided a verbal update regarding the following:
- Starters and Leavers – The Superintendent updated the Committee regarding staff changes, including the post of Business Manager (Maternity Cover); Conservation Arborist; Forest Centres Officer and Technical Officer. A Forest Keeper had retired and the Assistant Ecologist had resigned to pursue PhD studies.
  - Flytipping – incidents for the months of May and June totalled 178 incidents, which exceeded last years monthly total. Overall there were 464 incidents of flytipping for the January to June period which is behind the 2011 total by 59 incidents or 11%.
  - Ear tagging Fallow Deer fawns Working with the Deer Initiative two fawns had been ear tagged for visual monitoring purposes.
  - Visit by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) Epping Forest hosted a visit by SNH officers studying deer management issues at major forests in the south and east of England.
  - Diamond Jubilee Events The Forest also hosted a number of Jubilee events, including Bell Common with 150 local residents were in attendance.
  - Horse Riders Prosecuted The Forest Keepers had undertaken their first successful prosecutions at Chelmsford Magistrates Court for failure to purchase and failure to display horse licences. The Magistrates awarded fines of £50 and £240 per costs for each offence.
  - Bat Training Two staff had successfully completed training for the mist netting and radio tracking of bats.

- New Cattle Twelve new Longhorn heifers have been purchased to bring the herd back towards the working herd figure of 50. Four heifers are in calf.
- Lousewort mapping The wet heath population of Lousewort had been remapped in 2012 to chart their response to grazing and mowing which shows continued expansion.
- Weed monitoring programme All three keeper teams had been involved in the monitoring of Japanese Knotweed populations. A number of previously treated sites have shown regrowth. Two new Giant Hogweed sites have also been identified in the south of the Forest.
- Ragwort Policy A new policy regarding the treatment of Ragwort including a survey timetable and control methodology was being trialled by staff during the summer.
- Essex Food and Farming Day – 24 May 2012 Two staff members and two volunteers staffed a stand at this important forum speaking to over 500 students across the day.
- Half-Term Family Learning Events 388 visitors participated in three events held during half-term week based around royalty and the Diamond Jubilee.
- Discovering Epping Forest (DEF) – Champions Workshop – 29 June 2012 The new classroom facilities at Chingford hosted an important event to share the teaching opportunities at Epping Forest and help build the DEF legacy for the future.
- Illyria – Henry V – 21 June 2012 Following several sell-out events during 2011, the latest theatre event at Wanstead Park was affected by poor weather with only 56 tickets sold.
- Muster Briefing and Deployment Centre, Wanstead Flats The Metropolitan Police took possession of the eight-acre site on 23 June 2012 and began construction immediately. Two weeks earlier 60 people had attended a demonstration 'People's Picnic' on the area allocated to the site.
- Bushwood, Wanstead Flats Dispersal Order The Metropolitan Police had issued a Dispersal Order on the Bushwood area of Wanstead Flats following a series of aggravated muggings, effective from 26 June 2012.
- Hollow Ponds Wharf F M Conways had been commissioned to undertake £60,000 of wharfage repair works at Hollow Ponds.
- Rainfall Rainfall at Epping Forest had been high with 151% above average rainfall for May 2012 and 228% above average rainfall for June 2012.
- Highams Park Lake Telemetry was under installation.
- Hale End and Highams Park Forum The Superintendent and Assistant Director (City Surveyor) presented to 60 residents with regard to proposals for the Highams Park dam.
- Starstreak Surface-to-Air-Missile (SAM) Battery – Fred Wigg Tower, Wanstead Flats A hearing was scheduled for 2 July 2012 following an application by Council residents to the High Court for an injunction over the siting of the SAM battery atop the building.
- Warlies Park The City completed the freehold acquisition of 29.74 acres of land on the 6th July 2012.

- 'The View' Visitor Centre Practical completion had been completed on 11 May 2012. Installation of the exhibits was completed on Friday 6 July. Staff were working hard to complete all the fit-out procedures behind the scenes in preparation for launch on 12 July. Final landscaping at the gateway site had also been completed.
- Volunteers 202 volunteers accrued 1382 hours of labour during April-May, including helping with landscape works at the new visitor hub car parks.
- Outreach Events The Community Liaison Officer had taken advantage of the sunshine to deliver five outreach events.
- Wanstead Nature Club The Community Liaison Officer and Forest Keepers were supporting a local community group Wren Conservation in launching a new monthly Nature Club on Wanstead Flats.
- Volunteer Led Walks The summer would see a range of events designed and delivered by Epping Forest Volunteers.

## RECEIVED

### 15. **DEER MANAGEMENT ON THE BUFFER LANDS**

The Committee received a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest that updated Members on Deer Management on the Buffer Lands.

The report had been compiled in response to a request by the Committee for an annual report on progress with the implementation of the 1996 Deer Management Strategy in the Buffer Land estates surrounding Epping Forest.

In response to a Member's query, the Superintendent advised that stalkers were licensed to cull deer in return for ownership of the carcass. It had not been practical to charge stalkers to shoot deer as this did not reflect the common practice in the area. It was further noted that the consistently low market price paid for venison limited the viability of financing stalking. The Superintendent also advised that evidence from the counts suggested that there were often too many male deer shot as trophy carcasses across the South West Essex area, which meant there were a disproportionately high number of breeding does in the local population.

## RECEIVED

### 16. **EPPING FOREST ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2012**

The Committee received a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest relative to the Epping Forest Annual Work Programme. Members noted that the Annual Work programme for Epping Forest had been drawn from the Epping Forest Management Plan, which was approved by the Committee in 2004 and covered the period April 2012 to March 2013 inclusive.

A Member expressed concern that the annual work programme could not be considered in a long term context due the fact that the management plan had not yet been written. The Superintendent recognised the Member's concern and advised that the Management Plan was currently being written and would



be presented to the Committee when it had been fully developed in order to encompass an efficient long term commitment and vision.

**RESOLVED:** That, subject to additional reservations expressed by Members, the Annual Work Programme as set out in detail in Appendix 1 of the report be approved.

#### **EXTENSION OF THE MEETING**

At this point, the time limit for Committee meetings as set out in Standing Order No 40 had been reached, but there being more than a two-thirds majority of the Committee present who voted in favour of an extension, the Committee agreed to continue the meeting.

#### **17. VISITOR SURVEY**

The Committee received a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest relative to an ongoing visitor survey. The second year of the Epping Forest Visitor Survey was conducted during 2011 and built upon the survey data gathered during 2010, helping to provide a more accurate picture of the visitor profile for Epping Forest. It was estimated that the total number of visits (rather than visitors) to Epping Forest in 2011 was 4.3 million.

#### **RECEIVED**

#### **18. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

There were no questions.

#### **19. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

There was no urgent business.

#### **20. 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 as follows:-

<u>Item No.</u>	<u>Paragraphs in Schedule 12A</u>
21-22	3
23	1 & 3
24	-
25	3

#### **21. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

The non-public minutes of the meeting held on 14 May 2012 were approved.

#### **22. FUTURE OF HIGH BEECH VISITOR CENTRE**

Members considered a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest.

#### **23. MOBILE REFRESHMENT FACILITIES - WANSTEAD FLATS**

Members considered a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest.

24. **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**

Members considered two urgent items.

**The meeting ended at 1.55pm**

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Chairman

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