

EPPING FOREST CENTRE JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 26 OCTOBER 2011

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EPPING FOREST CENTRE JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTH WING ON WEDNESDAY, 26 OCTOBER 2011 AT 11:30AM.

Present

Members:

Verderer Peter Adams (Chairman)	City of London Corporation
Verderer Richard Morris	City of London Corporation
Chris Kington	Field Studies Council
Anthony Thomas	Field Studies Council
Steve Bunce	Head of Epping Forest Field Centre
Geoffrey Brown	Field Studies Council
Roger Chapman	Field Studies Council

Officers:

Sureka Perera	- Town Clerk's Department
Katie Odling	- Town Clerk's Department
Mark Jarvis	- Chamberlain's Department
Sue Ireland	- Director of Open Spaces
Paul Thomson	- Superintendent of Epping Forest
Jo Hurst	- Epping Forest Department
Tony Fenwick	- Epping Forest Department
Mark Bolland	- Field Studies Council
Robert Lucas	- Field Studies Council
Richard Walker	- Field Studies Council

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Barbara Newman, Alderman Gordon Haines and Andy Simpson (Field Studies Council).

2. DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF PERSONAL OR PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS IN RESPECT OF ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THIS MEETING

There were none.

3. MINUTES

The public minutes of the meeting held on 11 May 2011, were agreed as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

Item 4 – Budget Reductions: 'These might have to be revisited should the CBT grant application prove unsuccessful. Discussions regarding the 2012 grant *would take place in October.*'

4. PROGRESS AT EPPING FOREST FIELD CENTRE IN 2011

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Centre regarding the progress at Epping Forest Field Centre in 2011.

The Head of Centre referred Members to the 'Summer 2011 Newsletter' and provided a brief overview of its content. He announced that on 17th October 2011, the Centre had received its 500,000th learner and a press release would be published in the coming week. He added that the Centre hoped to see further progress in the final academic year of the three year Discovering Epping Forest (DEF) project.

Following a query raised, the Head of Centre informed Members that a Teachers Workshop would be held in July 2012 to undertake the final evaluation of the project and share learning experiences and priorities. Following the evaluation process, teachers would be further consulted, following which, the final report would be produced and brought for consideration at the October/November 2012 meeting of the Epping Forest Joint Consultative Committee. Members also acknowledged the importance of an 'exit strategy' at the end of the three year DEF project.

Finally, Members were informed that a London based company had been commissioned to produce a short DVD in respect of Epping Forest for presentation to future funders.

RECEIVED.

5. DRAFT 2012 EPPING FOREST FIELD CENTRE PLAN AND FINANCIAL ESTIMATES

The Committee considered a Report of the Head of Centre which sought the approval of the Epping Forest and Field Centre 2011 Plan and Financial Estimates.

With the pressures on the Epping Forest Budget in mind, the Head of Centre proposed that the 10% reduction in the City's contribution be phased across two years with a 5% reduction in 2012 and a further 5% in 2013, but noted that this request could be challenged and the Centre would need to demonstrate why it was eligible for exceptional treatment. Members noted that the budget had not yet been brought before the Epping Forest and Commons Committee and the report would therefore be referred to the next meeting on 7 November 2011. A Member expressed concern that an exceptional case had not been presented.

Reference was made to the broad objectives in the Plan on page 11 of the report in respect of programme development and delivery, external affairs and projects and systems.

Alternative means for generating income for the Centre were being considered and the Centre was working with volunteers and associates of Epping Forest to move this matter forward.

Members discussed the account estimates on page 14 of the report which demonstrated the Head of Centre's realistic assessment of the level of income the Centre could generate in the next financial year.

Members noted that the Centre was continuing to improve its ways of working to develop the effectiveness of volunteers, however, it was difficult to predict volunteer numbers. Members noted further that the Centre had seen an increase in the number of volunteers claiming travel expenses.

RESOLVED:- That,

- (i) the report be noted, and
- (ii) the report be referred to the Epping Forest and Commons Committee at its meeting to be held on 7 November 2011, to determine the City Corporation's contribution to the Epping Forest Budget.

6. VISITOR SERVICES ACTIVITIES

The Committee considered a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest which summarised the Visitor Services Activities undertaken between April and September 2011.

Members discussed staff movement from the visitor centre at High Beach to the Chingford Hub and, although the staffing budget had not increased, it was noted that the Chingford Hub required adequate resources in order to operate successfully. The transfer of the management of High Beach to a 3rd Sector partner was being considered and had been discussed with the Heritage Lottery Fund, who were sympathetic to the case. A further report to the Epping Forest and Commons Committee regarding this matter would be presented for consideration in due course.

The Chairman congratulated the Epping Forest Division for their work and highlighted the importance of continued dialogue between the Field Centre and the City Corporation.

RECEIVED.

7. VALUATION OF SITE

The Committee considered a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest which sought to address the request of the Epping Forest JCC of 29 October 2010 to ensure that, in addition to the annual operating grant provided to the Field Studies Council, a monetary value was ascribed to the value of the provision and maintenance of the teaching and staff accommodation provision at High Beach.

Members noted professional valuers Bidwells and the City Surveyor had provided guidance on the market rental value of the education research building and the residential accommodation, indicating a rental value in the region of £77,200 pa. Bidwells had also undertaken an exercise to compare educational facilities across the country and it was agreed this information

would be circulated to the Committee. The Field Studies Council expressed the view that the valuation was much higher than their experience would suggest.

Members supported the principle of placing a value on the education research building; however, considered a further discussion was necessary in order that the Committee was confident the figure was accurate.

RESOLVED:- That,

- (i) the notional figure of £77,200, which represented the value of the City Corporation's contribution towards the provision of accommodation for the purposes of the Field Studies Council, be agreed pending further discussion to ensure that the Committee was confident that the figure was accurate,
- (ii) Subject to (i) above, the amount be acknowledged in any further licence negotiations and declared in Field Studies Council accounts as a benefit in kind, and
- (iii) the market rent value be reviewed on a minimum five year basis.

8. QUESTIONS

There were no questions.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items of further business.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting of the Epping Forest Joint Consultative Committee would be confirmed in due course.

The meeting closed at 12:25pm.

CHAIRMAN

Contact Officer: Katie Odling
tel. no. 020 7332 3414
e-mail: Katie.odling@cityoflondon.gov.uk