

EPPING FOREST CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 10 October 2018

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee held at the Hope Centre, 201 High Road, Loughton at 7.00 pm

Present

Members:

Graeme Smith - Deputy Chairman	Robert Levene - Bedford House
Benjamin Murphy	Community Association
Sylvia Moys	Brian McGhie – Epping Forest
Judith Adams - Epping Forest Heritage Trust	Conservation Volunteers
Jo Blackman - Friends of Wanstead	Paul Morris - Epping Forest Forum
Parklands	Carol Pummell - Epping Forest Riders
Jill Carter - Highams Residents Association	Association
Susan Creevy - Loughton Residents	Gordon Turpin - Highams Park Planning
Association	Group
Matthew Frith - London Wildlife Trust	Enid Walsh - Open Spaces Society
James Head – Wren Wildlife & Conservation	Steve Williamson - Royal Epping Forest
Group	Golf Club
Andy Irvine - Bushwood Area Residents	Tim Wright - Orion Harriers
Association	Verderer Michael Chapman DL

Officers:

Colin Buttery	- Director of Open Spaces
Paul Thomson	- Superintendent, Epping Forest
Jeremy Dagley	- Head of Conservation, Epping Forest
Jacqueline Eggleston	- Head of Operations, Epping Forest
Jo Hurst	- Business Manager, Epping Forest
Martin Newnham	- Head Forest Keeper, Epping Forest
Geoff Sinclair	- Head of Operations, Epping Forest
Leanne Murphy	- Town Clerk's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Chairman Deputy Philip Woodhouse (the meeting was chaired by Deputy Chairman Graeme Smith), Martin Boyle, Tim Harris (James Heal represented the Wren Wildlife & Conservation Group), Verderer Dr Joanna Thomas and Verderer Melissa Murphy.

2. DECLARATIONS

There were no declarations.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the public minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2018 be approved as a correct record

4. **MINUTES OF THE EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE**

a) **9 July 2018**

The Committee noted the minutes of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held on 9 July 2018.

b) **10 September 2018**

The Committee noted the minutes of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held on 10 September 2018.

5. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE APRIL/MAY & JUNE/JULY**

Members received a presentation from the Superintendent of Epping Forest and noted his report summarising the Epping Forest Division's activities across April to July 2018. The following comments were made:

Staff and Volunteers

- The Superintendent advised Members that recruitment was underway to address a series of staff shortages. It was noted that the team had sadly lost Litter Van Driver Russell Stock and Consultant Peter Wilkinson.

Award winners

- Epping Forest has received the prestigious Green Flag Award for the 15th time in a row and a Green Heritage Award for 2018/19 from the environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy.

Weather

- The Superintendent advised that after the wetter than average April, the very dry and hot summer had had an impact with the Forest reflecting 2% lower than normal on a heat map.

Parklife

- The Football Foundation has provided a grant of £34,777 to enable the City of London Corporation to develop plans for a hub at Wanstead Flats football.

Forest Services

Fly tipping

- Members were advised that fly-tipping and littering had significantly increased over the hot summer months.

Rough Sleepers

- Members were advised that there had been a number of rough sleepers at the Forest over the summer months and that the City of London Corporation was working to find better outcomes to resolve rough sleeping on the Forest.

Deer vehicle collisions

- Members were advised that the number of deer related road accidents was moving proportionally down from 2017.

Fire

- The Superintendent advised that the extremely hot weather and lack of rainfall had led to 37 forest fires throughout the summer reaching a damaging burn of approximately 60 acres at Wanstead Flats. The Police and Fire Services were still looking investigating suspected arson at the flats.
- Annual training with the Fire Authority is due to take place in the spring.

Heritage, Landscape and Nature Conservation

Biodiversity

- Members were advised that a number of rare birds and invertebrates have been spotted in the Forest.
- It was noted that there had been a population explosion of the beech leaf mining weevil *Orchestes fagi* and the Team had received guidance from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) regarding treatment.

Grazing

- Conservation grazing took place throughout the summer.
- The Superintendent noted that a report regarding the Eagle Pond Heritage Landscape would come to the next meeting.

Oak Processionary Moth (OPM)

- Members were advised that there had been a significant rise in OPM nests leading to a busy period of work to manually move the nests with Essex Bridleways Association.
- It was noted that only four nests were found in 2017 and that the response to OPM would be re-evaluated to manage the dramatic rise.

Land Registration

- The Superintendent advised that a tribunal hearing date was awaited following a re-submission regarding the case of a land claim on Forest Land at Broomhill Road, Woodford Green.

Visitor Services

- Members were advised that there had been significant social media growth and as of 19 June 2018 was as follows - Twitter followers: 6,487 (13% increase); Facebook likes: 1,415 (103% increase); Instagram followers: 1,011 (184% increase).

- Members were advised of two exhibitions which opened in the summer. An exhibition to celebrate 130 years of golf on the Chingford Golf Course, in partnership with the Royal Epping Forest Golf Club, took place on 16 June to 15 July and an exhibition to mark the 140-year anniversary of the passing of the Epping Forest Act of 1878 opened on 21 July.
- The Superintendent noted a pattern of Anti-Social Behaviour following schools breaking up for the summer holidays and advised that the Team were working with schools to prevent this.
- Members were advised that a licensing agreement had been agreed with the Theydon Bois Donkey Derby event organisers.
- With regards to the relinquishment of the Buffer Land Woodredon Estate Properties, the Superintendent advised Members that four properties were under offer and that the future development of Woodredon House would be managed by a freehold disposal of the property and a leasehold retention for the grounds.
- A Member queried the criteria regarding dog and other animal incidents on the Forest noting that there had been a serious dog attack on a horse and a child close to Blackweir Hill which were not referenced in the report. The Superintendent agreed to look into this incident.
- Various Members thanked the Visitor Services Team for supporting work on Walter Spradbery celebration event at The Wilderness, Buckhurst Hill in September.

RECEIVED.

6. **WANSTEAD PARK - BRIEFING NOTE FOR MEMBERS**

Members considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces providing Members with an update regarding Wanstead Park. The following comments were made:

- The Head of Operations advised that the aim of the report was to update Members on the progress of the Parkland Plan and introduce the implications for the Plan of the notification by the Environment Agency in December 2017 of a statutory revised High-Risk category for the three Large Raised Reservoirs (LRR).
- Members were advised that it was recommended that a Project Board be established to support the preparation of a combined LRR and Parkland Plan project proposal to be submitted to the Projects Sub (Policy & Resources) Committee for December 2018.
- A Member noted that there was a lot of frustration in the local community regarding the rate of progress but was grateful that the strategy work

had identified and would ensure necessary works and improvements would take place.

- A Member voiced concern over the annual pumping of up to 294,000 cubic metres of potable water from the chalk aquifer underlying London querying how this was justified. The Superintendent explained that the request for water supply had been carefully considered by the Environmental Agency. The six-year abstraction licence was an interim measure rather than a long-term solution. The aim of the Parkland Plan was to creatively address water conservation through improved catchment management, harvesting neighbouring water sources and storing offering floodwater storage.
- In response to a query regarding wider consultation of the plan, Members were advised that consultation had already taken place with key stakeholders and the plan would come to the Committee for feedback.
- In answer to a Member's question on timescales the Superintendent recorded his thanks to John Cryer MP for calling a Wanstead Park Summit with key agencies which had helped secure a designation from the environment agency after a 3-year hiatus. The High-Risk designation now provided a basis on which an integrated Parkland Plan could be developed.

RESOLVED, that Members support the preparation of a combined LRR and Parkland Plan (Gateway 1/2) project proposal be submitted to the Projects Sub (Policy & Resources) Committee for December 2018.

7. **LONDON BOROUGH OF CULTURE MAY DAY EVENT ON CHINGFORD PLAIN**

Members considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces regarding the London Borough of Culture May Day Event on Chingford Plain and the following points were made:

- The Head of Visitor Services advised that the London Borough of Waltham Forest had become the first London Borough of Culture for 2019 and subsequently the Borough was planning to host its opening event on Epping Forest at Chingford Plain.
- In response to a query regarding how attendees would be prevented from taking a shortcut across golf course land or using it to park cars, Members were advised that the event would be managed by experienced event management company with stewards managing the crowds and parking on pre-planned locations.
- A Member queried whether the Team's staff could cope with the extra pressures caused by this event which would have a 'knock-on effect' on other areas. Members were advised that if it was decided

that extra resources were required following receipt of the final plan, then these would be requested from the organisers.

- A Member was concerned that bad weather plus the extra footfall could have a detrimental effect on the land. Members were advised that protective matting/tracking would be used if there was bad weather and that all routes would not be on the Forest except the event itself.
- The Head of Visitor Services advised Members that all concerns would be factorised in the due diligence checks and that detailed planning for the event would come to the Committee. It was noted that the event would only be licensed if the organisers could demonstrate that all expectations would be managed.

RESOLVED – that Members support the:-

- Agreement for the London Borough of Waltham Forest use of Chingford Plain for an opening event for the inaugural year of the London Borough of Culture, on Monday 6th May 2019.
- Instruction to the Comptroller and City Solicitor to undertake any necessary documentation.

8. **EPPING FOREST LICENCE, PRODUCE AND SPORTS CHARGES**

Members considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces concerning the performance of charges levied for licenced activities, produce sales and formal sports in the last full financial year 2017/18 and proposals for revised charges in 2019/20. The following points were made:

- A Member thanked the City for not raising the green fees, noting that golf was a very competitive market and added that the early proposal on charging helped with marketing plans.
- A Member suggested that the Forest Golf Clubs had a forum to discuss common interests. The Head of Visitor Services noted that there had been regulated meetings with the four clubs to discuss options and hoped this would continue in the future to look at joint operations, marketing, etc, across all four sites.
- A Member felt that the sports day freeze on fees were positive as they would help alleviate pressures on schools.
- In response to a query regarding the high costs of car park event licensing, the Head of Visitor Services advised that this report covered up to April 2018 and the costs regarding newer licences would be reported in the next report.
- Following queries regarding the Bury Road Car Park, Members were advised that the build project for London Overground was behind schedule and would hopefully be finished soon. A

commercial compound rate continued to be charged and the surface would be improved once the compound has been closed down.

RESOLVED – That Members support the:-

- Proposed charges for 2019/20;
- Continued subsidy for association football.

9. **APPLICATION FOR MAJOR EVENT ON WANSTEAD FLATS: FURTHER DETAIL FOR APPROVAL**

Members considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces concerning the Application for a major event on Wanstead Flats The following points were made:

- The Head of Visitor Services advised that major event organisers MAMA & Company are proposing a series of large-scale music concerts to take place on Wanstead Flats during the summer of 2019. This was in accordance with a long legacy of events on Forest Land and the recently approved Open Spaces Events Policy Parts 1 and 2 and the City of London (Open Spaces) Act 2018.
- Members were advised that originally proposals for two concert series were approved in principle by the Epping Forest and Commons Committee on 10 September 2018. The proposal had now changed to a single 6-day Music Festival scheduled to be staged in September 2020.
- A Member asked whether music festivals were an appropriate use of public open space and whether the same organiser was involved at Victoria Park. The Head of Visitor Services emphasised that public recreation and enjoyment was a central duty of the Act. The event would therefore be in policy parameters and the Trustees would need to judge whether such an event was a good idea. The proposed event would be a new festival rather than the relocation of an existing festival.
- Members voiced a number of concerns regarding the scale of the six-day event, the impact and damage it would have on the Forest and wildlife, the impact on the local residents and the precedent this could set for encouraging similar-sized events on the Forest in the future.
- Some Members had concerns regarding the reputation of the organiser based on community concerns raised at other park events. It was noted that this may be a reason that the promoter was looking for a new location to host its events. It was further clarified that this report was proposing a new event and not an existing relocated event.
- The Friends of Wanstead Parklands were not against events in principle but were against this proposal as it contravened the rules on having an event on two consecutive weekends. There were also concerns regarding 1) the impact a large-scale and long duration event would

have on the Forest and wildlife; 2) the limited consultation period and; 3) what was felt to be the negative track record of the promoters.

- The Wren Wildlife Conservation Group made a statement opposing the proposal in full on the basis that 1) the Wanstead Flats are an important location for bird nesting and breeding in London which would be disturbed by its close proximity to the event and could potentially have a permanent effect on wildlife in the area; 2) given the scale of the event to the Group had doubts as to whether the impact could be properly mitigated. It was also noted that failure to protect the wildlife in the area would cause broad reputational damage to the City of London Corporation.
- A Member raised concerns regarding the precedent that may be set for other nature reserves across London. It was noted that without long-term ecology surveys, there was not enough information to understand the impacts of such a large-scale event or how to mitigate them.
- A Member stated that there was a feeling in the community that the City of London Corporation did not liaise locally and asked if there was a need for greater promotion of its committees. The Superintendent felt that the City Corporation had been as open and transparent as possible through early public reporting of the proposal at its earliest stages. Once known, the detail of any final event would be the subject of consultation by the event organiser prior to any application to the event organiser.
- The Head of Visitor Services stated that all feedback would be included in the report which would go to the Epping Forest and Commons Committee for consideration. It was noted that full information regarding the event would not be received until there was certainty over the location. Only with certainty around the size and duration of the event could meaningful consultation be undertaken.
- Members were advised that concerns regarding safety and impact and the wilderness would be addressed by wilderness groups and safety advisory groups who would request environmental impact studies and due diligence to address resident's concerns. The event organisers would also have to carry out wide public consultation as a licensing requirement and the Team would assist to ensure all relevant groups are included.
- Members were advised that the planned location was not part of the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Although the proposed event footprint is part of a Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) the area forms part of a long-standing football pitch footprint with a very low conservation value.
- The Director of Open Spaces highlighted the importance of consultation on the proposal occurring prior to the promoter seeking an event licence as this meant that concerns were taken seriously by the promoter who would have to prove to the public and the licensing authority that all the

concerns could be resolved prior to getting a licence. It was noted that the Epping Forest and Commons Committee wanted to understand all concerns prior to making a formal decision.

- To give context, the Director of Open Spaces & Heritage explained that the Forest was under financial stringency and this firm proposal from a promoter provided a good opportunity for the Forest to reach its annual efficiency costs. However, he maintained that this proposal was being fully evaluated and it would not be approved if the organisers could not address all concerns.
- A Member requested that the Committee be provided with a diagram of the decision-making process which Members could take to their organisations.
- In response to a suggestion that the funds from this event be used on the Wanstead Flats, a Member disagreed against ringfencing money from an event for one area stating that Epping Forest was one entity and that any funds should only ever be used where it was needed. This was supported by the Committee.

RESOLVED - Members did not support the proposals outlined in this report.

10. **COMMERCIAL WAYLEAVES REVIEW**

Members considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces concerning the Commercial Wayleave Review and the following points were made:

- The Superintendent explained that a commercial wayleave was a legally recorded personal licence agreement for passage across a public highway/Forest land involving an exchange of money and a set of conditions.
- The Open Spaces Wayleave Review 2015 identified 25 wayleaves granted for non-residential access, including business premises, liveries, public houses and residential park homes. It was agreed that a mechanism was needed to manage the charges allowing access across the Forest
- The Superintendent advised that the recommended charging model to apply on all 25 commercial wayleaves was to base the revised wayleave fee on a percentage of the rateable value for businesses or a multiplier based on residential wayleaves for park home sites.
- In response to a query regarding comparable best practice activity, the Superintendent advised that as a charitable trust the aim was to always ensure the land is being used correctly and it was working on a process to clarify and protect the Forest's rights. The aim was for a fair and consistent policy which would also provide an income for the charity.
- The Director of open Spaces noted that the historic process had not been updated and therefore the rates had not increased gradually over

an extended period. He stated that wayleaves were valuable and needed to be calculate fairly.

- Members supported Option 4 - Using consultant's advice apply new Wayleave fees immediately based on either rateable value or a council tax formula, applying further increases by Committee approval using a recognised multiplier formula.

RESOLVED – That Members support the:

- approval of new commercial wayleave fees immediately based on either rateable value or a council tax formula, applying further increases by Committee approval using a recognised multiplier formula;
- tender a valuation contract with external valuers to value and negotiate the remaining wayleave agreements;
- instruction of the City Solicitor and Comptroller to assist in completing the necessary wayleave agreements.

11. **EPPING FOREST CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE AND SCHEDULE**

Members considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces and Heritage concerning the Epping Forest Consultative Committee Terms of Reference and Schedule. The following points were made:

- The Business Manager for Epping Forest advised that a deadline of the fourth meeting had been set to finalise the Epping Forest Consultative Committee's Terms of Reference and more complete terms were being proposed for Committee approval. These now covered outstanding elements including determining how many members are required to hold valid proceedings (quorum) and the agreement of a code of conduct for Members.
- A Member felt a key element needed was to allow for the public to input and suggested a framework that allowed time on the agenda for Members to discuss other issues raised. Members were advised that any questions/requests to add something to the agenda needed to be submitted to the Town Clerk and Chairman in advance of the agenda being published. It was agreed that this should be done two weeks prior to the agenda being published (four weeks before the meeting date).
- A Member felt that one week was not long enough to process the contents of the agenda pack and recommended circulation of the agenda two weeks prior to the meeting date to allow groups to review it. Members agreed the Chairman approved this request.
- A Member noted that there was no youth representation on the Committee and it was suggested that one or two members of the Epping Forest Youth Council be co-opted onto the Committee. It was noted the

meetings took place at 7pm and this would be challenging and a safety concern for young people to attend evening meetings. The Business Manager of Epping Forest stated that all relevant groups were invited to join the Committee, and some chose not to be represented. She noted that membership would be refreshed every three years and an offer to all relevant groups would be made again. It was noted that spaces on the Committee could also arise if a representative was a consistent non-attender.

- A Member was confused by the wording of “resolved” in minutes in response to reports and did not feel this accurately explained the decisions of this Committee. The Town Clerk explained that this was the standard wording and style of City of London Corporation reporting used to show a collective view. It was added that reports included the feedback from consultative committees although this was not always explicitly clear. Members agreed that some of the wording in minutes and reports did not translate for a consultative committee and the Superintendent and Chairman agreed to look at the style and process with Officers to better reflect the Committee. A Member suggested including an appendix on the process.
- A Member noted that the Play Policy application was subject to conditions and recommended that Members received updated reports following feedback, so they remained up-to-date. It was noted that most amendments had been made to this report and it would be emailed to the Committee when finalised before being published on the website.

RESOLVED – That Members support the updated Terms of Reference for the Epping Forest Consultative Committee.

12. **QUESTIONS**

RESOLVED - *With two hours having elapsed since the start of the meeting, in accordance with Standing Order No. 40 the Committee agreed at this point to extend the meeting by up to thirty minutes.*

The following questions were raised:

Deer culling

A Member stated that despite the Epping Forest Forum campaigning regarding deer hunting two years ago, there still had not been any feedback or outcome. He argued that as this public issue, all consultation needed to be made public and not come to the Committee for ‘rubber stamping’ later. The Superintendent advised that the Terms of Reference had taken longer than expected but they would be published on the London tender Portal website next week and a report will come to the Committee following the compilation of the Review and ahead of public consultation.

It was argued that the timescale had been too long, and the lack of engagement meant that the public were not aware of what was going on in the background. The Superintendent advised that this work would go out to tender and run for six weeks and would be followed by public consultation in February 2019. Members agreed that the timelines for this public sensitive subject should be made public and the Superintendent agreed that this would be added to the website.

Closure of the Temple

A Member voiced concern regarding the length of time the Temple had been closed which had severely affected the programme of events. Members were advised that the Temple was closed due to the progressive collapse of the ground floor ceiling and the building could not be reopened until surveys had been carried out to establish the cause of the collapse and contractors had completed the repair work. It was noted that this had now taken place, but the Temple required redecoration works before it could be reopened, and this would be advertised on the website when completed.

Car Park Closures

A Member queried what the closure times for all the car parks were as this was not always clear. Members were advised that car park timings were listed on the website which are closed between 4-5pm but timings changed during the summer to between 8.30-9.30pm. It was noted that car parks were occasionally closed for routine Forest works, etc, which was not always posted on the website.

A Member noted that it stated that some car parks open for 24 hours on the website and it was agreed this would be removed to prevent any further confusion.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members were advised that the 2019 meeting dates would be circulated by the Town Clerk in due course.

The meeting closed at 9.15 pm

Chairman

Contact Officer: Leanne Murphy
leanne.murphy@cityoflondon.gov.uk