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|---|---------------------|
| <b>Committee(s)</b>   | <b>Dated:</b>       |
| Epping Forest Consultative – <i>For discussion</i><br>Epping Forest and Commons – <i>For decision</i> | 130219<br>110319    |
| <b>Subject:</b><br>Business Plan Development at Epping Forest<br>(SEF 6/19b)                          | <b>Public</b>       |
| <b>Report of:</b><br>Colin Buttery, Director of Open Spaces   | <b>For Decision</b> |
| <b>Report author:</b><br>Geoff Sinclair, Head of Operations, Epping Forest                            |                     |

### Summary

A Strategy and Management Plan for Epping Forest for the period of 2019-29 is being developed alongside a 2019-22 Business Plan. Given the relative size of the Forest and the marked variety of the landscapes and habitats there is a need to describe discrete management of key areas.

This report outlines the process whereby Forest operations will be reviewed, and the information used as a baseline from which to assess future resource use and will also provide the detailed activity programme. Several Forest locations and Forest management activities have been identified for early review as part of this process. Each review will involve public consultation with key external stakeholders following Committee consideration.

### Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- i. Offer any comment on the draft
  - a. Theydon Bois Green Individual Site Plan (ISP)
  - b. Highway Verge Management Planning and Development Note
- ii. Subject to such comments approve the undermentioned draft documents for public consultation
  - a. Theydon Bois Green Individual Site Plan (ISP)
  - b. Highway Verge Management Planning and Development Note

### Main Report

#### Background

1. A Strategy and Management Plan for Epping Forest for the period of 2019-29 is being developed. As part of the development process, existing Forest operational activity in key geographical locations and for key activities is being reviewed.

2. The review process comprises an audit of the City Corporation's (CoL) property management issues alongside other significant management considerations to provide an overview of current practice and an outline of longer term aspirations.
3. An Individual Site Plan (ISP) will be prepared for each geographical area and will be subject to regular review. The initial list of Forest locations being assessed is given in Table One. In addition, a number of separate studies have been prepared for areas of the Forest in recent years, particularly those with protected heritage (e.g. Registered Parks & Gardens; Scheduled Ancient Monuments) and these reports will also form part of the collective resource.
4. Site selection for the current review is centered around areas of Epping Forest that have a high number of competing issues and/or high visitor numbers (as determined by evidence from recent Visitor Surveys, including the most recent conducted by *Footprint Ecology* in 2017). As such these ISPs will be able to feed into the developing SAC Mitigation Strategy.

**Table One: ISP Locations: Existing and to be prepared**

| <b>Existing or in production Area Plans</b> |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| Wanstead Park: Parkland Plan                | Loughton Camp              |
| Ambresbury Banks                            | Copped Hall                |
| Swaine's Green                              |                            |
| <b>Proposed ISPs</b>                        |                            |
| Theydon Bois Green                          | Wanstead Flats & Bush Wood |
| Highams Park and The Sale                   | Loughton Greens            |
| Leyton Flats                                | High Beach                 |
| Chingford Lanes: Organ and Mays Lane        | Chingford Hub              |

5. Planning and Development Notes (PDN) are being prepared for the main Forest management activities. These would build on management developed over many years (e.g. grassland mowing programme), which will be cross-referenced to existing management strategies (e.g. Keystone Trees Strategy) and others in preparation or under review (e.g. Wood Pasture Management Strategy). The activities subject to review are listed in Table Two.

**Table Two: Proposed PDN's**

|  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Forest Furniture Management            | Highway Verge Management         |
| Grassland Management                   | Shared Use Trail Management      |
| Wood Pasture Management                | Ancient Tree Management          |
| Vegetation Against Property Management | Invasive Weed Management         |
| Ponds and Wetland Management           | Tree Pest and Disease Management |

6. Cumulatively the Forest Operations works reported through the review will comprise the greater part of the annual Forest management activity. As part of the 2019-22 Business Plan, this information will provide a baseline from which to assess future resource use and will also provide the detailed activity programme.

### **Current Position**

7. Each ISP and PDN adopts a standard structure that is common to both review processes. The intention is to maintain a relatively concise format and to direct the reader to additional sources of information where they exist rather than repeat the details in the reports. The standard report structure is outlined below:
  - a. Background – a brief description of the extent of the site or activity covered;
  - b. Risk Management Issues – a list of operational and health and safety risk management issues;
  - c. Management Considerations – a list of identified management considerations, with respect to ecology, community, access, heritage, landscape and any other identified management issues;
  - d. Potential Enhancement Projects Requiring External Support – a list of projects that would enhance the quality of one or more aspects of the site or activity, for which additional support would be required;
  - e. Management Strategy – a summary of the key overall objectives for managing the site or activity;
  - f. Outline Management Programme – a summary of the management actions identified for the site or activity, with anticipated timelines for completion;
  - g. External Operational Stakeholders – a list of external stakeholders who have an operational input and who have been consulted as part of the review process;
  - h. Bibliography – a list of existing reports (if available) that have formed part of the review; and
  - i. Appendices – including a detailed activity plan.
8. The reviews are being undertaken in tandem with and in full knowledge of the Management Strategy development. In addition to presenting a rationale for the management activity concerned, each review will identify priority activities to be included as either part of the Forest operations programme, undertaken with existing resources, or where they require additional support to be progressed.
9. The individual ISP and PDN reports form part of the policy development process for the Management Strategy and subsequent Business Plan, which will be subject to public consultation and will ensure the Forest's management is considered in a fuller context. Each review will however involve consultation with key external stakeholders, that will be listed in each report, to ensure the range of

issues to be considered are captured in the audit process. External public consultation will once external stakeholder consultation has been completed.

10. Accompanying this report are drafts of the 'Theydon Bois Green' ISP and the draft Highway Verge Management PDN which have been developed through the above process.

## **Proposals**

11. It is proposed that each subsequent ISP and PDN report is brought to the Epping Forest and Commons Committee and the Epping Forest Consultative Committee for information.
12. A draft ISP report on Theydon Bois Green and a PDN on Highway Verge Management are presented for information as part of this development process.

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

13. City of London Corporate Plan 2018 - 2023: the restoration and maintenance of the internationally and nationally-important habitats of Epping Forest directly underscore the *third pillar* of the Corporate Plan, which is to "*shape outstanding environments*". The development of ISP's and PDN form part of the operational planning to achieve this aim of the Corporate Plan.
14. Open Spaces Department Business Plan 2016-19: The Strategic Vision of this plan is to 'Preserve and protect our world class green spaces for the benefit of our local communities and the environment.' and one of the Department Objectives is to 'Protect and conserve the ecology, biodiversity and heritage of our sites.' The preparation of the Epping Forest Management Strategy and Management Plan for 2019-29 is a key action in the Departmental Business Plan.

## **Financial Implications**

15. PDN preparation will be undertaken through existing staff resources.
16. The staff resource to prepare the ISPs has been achieved through reconfiguring the existing Forest Operations team's staff resource, following staff retirement.
17. Most of the existing work programme outcomes will be met from Local Risk Budgets and/or the Combined Work programme (CWP). The more aspirational elements of the ISPs and PDNs do not represent financial commitments at this stage and will be the subject of further Committee approvals regarding funding and grant/partnership arrangements before any implementation and adoption into the maintenance programme would be considered.

## **Conclusion**

18. A Forest Operations review process is being implemented as part of the development of the 2019-29 Epping Forest Management Strategy and Management Plan and the 2019-2022 Epping Forest Business Plan
19. The review process will include consultation with key internal and external stakeholders and cumulatively the reviews will provide a base line from which to assess future resource use and provide the detailed Forest operations activity programme.
20. A draft ISP reports have been given for information covering Theydon Bois Green and a PDN on Highway Verge Management.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Theydon Bois Green: Forest Operations Individual Site Plan
- Appendix 2 – Highway Verge Management

## **Geoff Sinclair**

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