

EPPING FOREST CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 13 February 2019

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee held at the Guildhall EC2 at 7.00 pm

Present

Members:

Deputy Philip Woodhouse (Chairman)	Brian McGhie – Epping Forest Conservation Volunteers
Judith Adams - Epping Forest Heritage Trust	Gordon Turpin - Highams Park Planning Group
Martin Boyle - Theydon Bois and District Rural	Steve Williamson - Royal Epping Forest Golf Club
Susan Creevy - Loughton Residents Association	Tim Wright - Orion Harriers
Tim Harris - WREN Wildlife & Conservation Group	Verderer Dr. Joanna Thomas
Andy Irvine - Bushwood Area Residents	Verderer Michael Chapman DL
Carol Pummell - Epping Forest Riders Association	Verderer Melissa Murphy
Tricia Moxey - Bedford House Community Association	Verderer Nicholas Munday

Officers:

Richard Holt	- Town Clerk's Department
Colin BATTERY	- Director of Open Spaces
Paul Thomson	- Superintendent, Epping Forest
Jeremy Dagley	- Head of Conservation, Epping Forest
Jacqueline Eggleston	- Head of Visitor Services, Epping Forest
Jo Hurst	- Business Manager, Epping Forest
Martin Newham	- Head Forest Keeper, Epping Forest
Geoff Sinclair	- Head of Operations, Epping Forest

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Graeme Smith, Jo Blackman, Jill Carter, Mathew Frith, Paul Morris, Enid Walsh, Robert Levene (Tricia Moxey represented the Bedford House Community Association) and Sylvia Moys.

The Chairman introduced Verderer Nicholas Munday to his first meeting of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee.

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

There were no declarations.

3. **MINUTES**

The Committee considered the minutes of the previous meeting of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee held on 10 October 2018. The Superintendent of Epping Forest explained that the procurement of the Deer Strategy Review had been delayed to the beginning of the new academic year to ensure various institutions could bid for the work. A Member of the Committee raised an amendment to the minutes adding that Wren Wildlife Conservation Group statement should highlight the effect to ground-nesting Skylarks (a Red Data list species) and Meadow Pipits.

RESOLVED- that the public minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2018 be approved as a correct record.

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

The Committee received the minutes of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee meetings held on 19th of November 2018 and 14th of January 2019. The Chairman highlighted that these minutes were on the agenda for information and to provide Consultative Committee Members with a helpful summary of matters discussed at the Epping Forest and Commons Committee.

RESOLVED- that the minutes of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee meetings held on 19th of November 2018 and 14th of January 2019 be noted.

5. **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 October to November 2018. The Superintendent of Epping Forest made the following points.

Budgets

The Superintendent informed the Committee that Epping Forest was at 60% spend against a profile spend of 66%, which indicated a small underspend.

Fly Tipping

Members were updated by the Superintendent on the issue of fly tipping within Epping Forest including the number of reported incidents, specific sites of vulnerability and steps taken to increase site security. A Member of the Committee asked for further details on the measures taken to limit fly tipping within Wanstead Flats. The Superintendent informed the Committee that two full-time Enforcement Officers had been recruited at Epping Forest to pursue prosecutions under the Environmental Protection Act; the gating and regular opening and closing of gates at car parks was being undertaken and co-operation was being improved with neighbouring Local Authorities and Police Services to help limit fly tipping in the area. Following a point raised by the Chairman, the Superintendent confirmed that the downturn in the construction

industry had complicated the picture, but there was anecdotal evidence to suggest that our recent anti-fly tipping measures had displaced some tipping from within the Forest to areas further away.

Rough Sleepers

The Superintendent informed Members of the number of rough sleepers' sites found within Epping Forest and noted that a decline in rough sleeping was expected over the winter months due to the adverse weather and the opening of seasonal night shelters. In response to questions on rough sleepers the Head Forest Keeper advised that rough sleepers should be reported on the Epping Forest 24-hour line 020 8532 1010 and confirmed that while it was difficult to generalise around individuals whose lives were clearly in crisis given good initial multi-agency support most rough sleepers can secure positive outcomes and do not return to the Forest.

Grazing

The Superintendent provided Members with an update on grazing within Epping Forest which included details of the new cattle handling installation at Great Gregories Farm, the visit of former Verderer and Honorary Reeve Michael Davies, the record number of grazing days and the award of the City Corporation 'Innovative and Improved new ways of working' prize to the Epping Forest Grazing Team.

Duck pond usage

A Member raised the issue of signage at the duck ponds with Epping Forest highlighting that members of the public were still feeding the ducks. The Superintendent explained that further work had been undertaken to engage on the issue of duck feeding and highlighted the Epping Forest Heritage Trust's Duck Champion scheme which sought to engage duck feeders in positive dialogue. In addition, it was noted that the policy approach on this issue would be need for patient and long-term interventions to help address behaviours quite literally learnt 'at Mothers knee'. It was commented by a Member that while clear signage was still key, they agreed the problem would require a long-term solution.

Deer Strategy

A Member of the Committee asked the Superintendent to provide further information regarding the purpose of the Deer Strategy and the potential involvement of universities in the production of the Strategy. The Superintendent explained that the 1996 Deer Management Strategy needs to be reviewed in the light of increasing and unsustainable numbers of deer which were causing a range of impacts including increased deer-vehicle collisions; damage to crops and overgrazing of woodland understoreys. The Strategy would review the previous assumptions around stocking levels; consider industry best practice and review innovative methods around sustainably managing deer numbers.

RESOLVED- that the report be noted.

6. BUSINESS PLAN DEVELOPMENT AT EPPING FOREST

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Business Plan Development at Epping Forest. The Head of Operations for Epping Forest introduced the report, highlighting the general process and key work practices outlined in the report.

A member questioned what the process for consultation had been with regard to the Theydon Bois Green paper. The Head of Operations explained that the report had been considered via the formal Committees process after a targeted consultation with a number of key stakeholders ahead of public consultation on the proposals.

The Chairman commented on the issues caused by the telephone cables at sites such as Theydon Bois and asked Officers to provide the Committee with more information on this issue. The Head of Operations explained that a range of buried utility infrastructure was relatively common within the Forest. A number of utilities had been installed without agreement and their presence could cause delays in project delivery. The Head Forest Keeper informed the Committee that the City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Act 2018 provided the City with further powers to mitigate these issues but urged the Committee to contact Epping Forest with any information that they may have on the illegal insertion of telephone or broadband cables within the Forest.

A Member of the Committee representing the Theydon Bois Parish Council read a short statement as follows from the Parish Council on the City of London Plans for the Management of Theydon Bois Green:

'The Parish Council welcomed the opportunity to have a much closer working relationship with the City of London over the maintenance on the village green.

Theydon Bois Green, including the Avenue of Trees and the Village Pond are the principle assets of the Village. Regrettably, due to a lack of investment and inactivity on the part of the City Corporation, the village pond in particular, has taken on a 'shabby' appearance with the islands on the pond completely overgrown and the ditches and from the pond blocked in places. Rats are now thriving in the area.

Suggested dates in the Detailed Activity Plan for the maintenance of the areas, going as far out as 2027, is unhelpful and it is hoped that via a closer working relationship these areas can be addressed in the short-term rather than in the long-term.

The Parish Council is also keen to maintain the historic benches in current position under the Avenue of trees. Part of the attraction of these benches is that they offer residents the opportunity to sit in the shade under the trees during the summer season.'

The Head of Operations replied that works listed within the report are spread out over time and the 2027 year should therefore not be seen as a start date for all works. In addition, it was confirmed that maintenance works on the islands on the pond would be beginning in 2020. The Head of Operations commented

that Theydon Bois Green site plan should be considered in the context of the requirements of the whole Forest, and welcomed the opportunity to work more closely with the Parish Council going forward. A Member thanked officers for the new information within the report and highlighted the opportunities for local volunteers to work in partnership with the City Corporation to improve the area.

It was highlighted by a Member that the responsibility for the maintenance of Theydon Bois Green had been agreed with Theydon some time ago and questioned if this agreement was still relevant to the City Corporation. The Superintendent confirmed that the City Corporation valued the Care and Maintenance agreements which allowed communities to add value to their local areas of the Forest. The Individual Site Plans (ISP) were an attempt to more carefully detail all the responsibilities and aspirations of a site with a view to building future partnerships on specific projects and that the ISP approach was underway at Highams Park which had been working really successfully through clear dialogue and mutual support.

RESOLVED- that the report be noted.

7. TREE PESTS AND DISEASES: OAK PROCESSIONARY MOTH URGENT UPDATE

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces which provided Members with an urgent update on the challenges being faced due to the spread of Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) across the Open Spaces in the care of The City of London. The Director of Open Spaces noted that the OPM treatment had cost £100,000 in 2018 and was estimated to cost in the region of £200,000 this year and is likely to increase exponentially thereafter. In addition, he explained that the OPM was already present at various sites in Epping Forest highlighting that education would be a key factor in mitigating the impact of OPM. The Head of Conservation for Epping Forest detailed that currently the Forest had 100 effected trees and 200 OPM nests but that this was expected to be in the 1000's soon.

Replying to a query regarding photograph examples of the OPM, the Director of Open Spaces clarified that the Forestry Commission website was a useful recourse for material on OPM.

<https://www.forestry.gov.uk/oakproceSSIONARYmoth>

In addition, it was confirmed that in April new signage would be produced to inform visitors to the Forest of the potential dangers of OPM when it was expected that new nests would form.

A Member asked if there were specific sites where the OPM was particularly prevalent. The Head of Conservation replied that OPM was predominantly located at sites with open grown oak but added that the sites where the OPM nests were likely to be encountered by visitors had already been identified.

RESOLVED- that the report be noted.

8. EAGLE POND CONSERVATION STATEMENT

The Committee received a joint report of the City Surveyor and Director of Open Spaces on the Eagle Pond Conservation Statement. The Head of Operations commented that the Statement aimed to balance both development and heritage concerns.

A Member suggested that not all edges of the pond should be left open, in order to create more secluded areas. A Member added that car park closer to the pond would improve accessibility but accepted that may not be a practical. The Head Forest Keeper explained that the relevant local authorities were considering change to the traffic management plan in the area which could open up opportunities for improving access to the pond.

RESOLVED- that the report be noted.

9. **MAJOR EVENT WANSTEAD FLATS UPDATE**

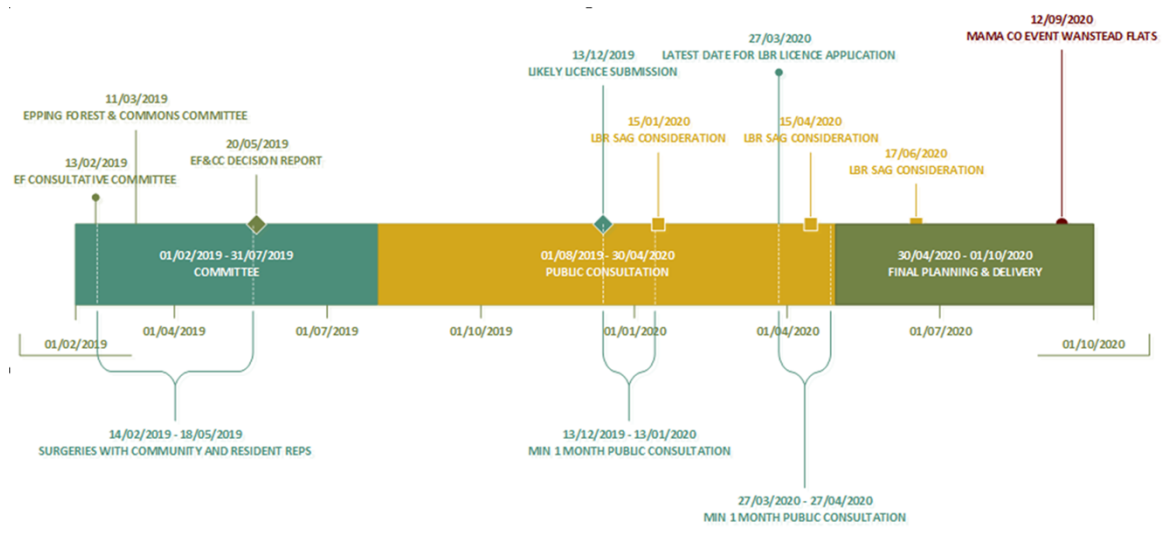
The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces which provided Members with an update on the Major Event at Wanstead Flats. The Head of Visitor Services explained that the report had been produced in response to the previous discussion on the Major Event at Wanstead Flats and noted that meetings with local community members would be taking place in the proceeding weeks. It was added that Newham, Redbridge and Waltham Forest were already aware of the proposed event and that communications with these local authorities have started.

The Chairman questioned when the event promotor would be required to apply to the relevant local authorities for mandatory licenses to hold the event. The Head of Visitor Services replied that while this was only legally required to consult four weeks after the submission date, it was accepted that, as an experienced event provider, MAMA Festivals Ltd would apply well in advance of this deadline. A Member asked for the clarification on the approval process for the event.

The Head of Visitor Services confirmed that event would be considered through a two-stage process. During the first phase a detailed proposal for the event will be further considered by the Epping Forest and Commons Committee which will include evidence of the proposed extensive public consultation process. If the proposal for the event is agreed 'in principle' by the Epping Forest and Commons Committee. The second phase would involve application from the event organisers to each of the required responsible authorities, which would be administered by the relevant local authority, who is in turn advised by a Safety Advisory Board. The Head of Visitor Services added that, part of the second phase of the approval process, the City Corporation can refuse to agree to allow the event even after the licenses have been approved. Further to this the Head Forest Keeper explained that representatives of the City Corporation would also be present on the many of the Safety Advisory Boards involved in the second phase of consideration.

A Member of the Committee commented that early extensive investigation of the details of the event was vital and asked if any further details were available. The Head Visitor of Services confirmed that further details, including draft

heads of terms, would be included in the report considered at the Epping Forest and Commons Committee in May. The Chairman requested that a copy of the approval timeline projected at the Committee be inserted into the minutes for Members information.



A Member asked for clarification on the ‘footprint’ of the event, highlighting that the footprint itself is not the same as the wider area SAG affected. In addition, a Member questioned if event was due to take place over a one- or three-day period. The Head of Visitor Services confirmed that the details of the event would be listed in the Committee report as draft head of terms would be considered in May explaining that public consultation would take place on this.

A Member of the Committee asked when the appropriate time for residents to present their views on this proposed event and highlighted that residents on all sides of Wanstead Flats would be affected by the event. The Director of Open Spaces clarified that the relevant local authorities were the bodies leading on public consultation and commented that the consultations would be positive and extensive. The Chairman noted that the consultation process would be a vital component of the City Corporation’s decision regarding the event and thanked the Member for raising it.

A Member queried what would be the result of the event provider deciding to no longer provide the event. The Head of Visitor Services confirmed that this was a risk for the promoter, but that it was factored into the Epping Forest business plan and was also a risk for the local authorities and the City Corporation.

The Director reassured the Committee that although the Licensing Authority would seek to recover the costs from the promoter of scrutinising the event, there is no financial benefit to the authority who will remain entirely impartial.

The Chairman suggested that, in the interest of time, any further questions on the report from Members be sent via email and highlighted that the minutes of the previous meeting had made the Epping Forest Consultative Committee did not approve the report.

RESOLVED- that the report be noted.

10. **EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN – RESPONSES TO THE INSPECTOR’S MATTERS, ISSUES & QUESTIONS**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces regarding the Examination-in-Public (EiP) on the Epping Forest District Council’s Local Plan. The Head of Conservation introduced the report clarifying that the relevant documentation was publicly available online and highlighted the City of London’s involvement, as the conservators of the Forest, in the public consultation process. In addition, it was explained that the City of London’s concerns on the Local Plan were centred on the continuing protection of the Special Area of Conservation the legal compliance regarding the Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) and Infrastructure Development Plan.

A Member reminded the Committee that a public consultation was underway on the content of the Highams Park Neighbourhood Plan.

The Head of Conservation replied that the City Corporation were aware of this process and would be engaging with the London Borough of Waltham Forest accordingly.

In addition, it was noted that a Memorandum of Understanding had been signed with the relevant local authorities regarding the SAC Mitigation Strategy and that an interim strategy had been developed.

A Member praised the vast amount of work undertaken by the City Corporation on the response to the Local Plan and highlighted the importance of the Local Plan to the continuing defence of Epping Forest.

The Chairman also highlighted the key role of the Verderers of Epping Forest in the process.

RESOLVED- that the report be noted.

11. **QUESTIONS**

The follow questions were raised.

Bird Nest damage

A Member questioned how the City of London Corporation avoided damage to bird nests when completing maintenance works with the Forest. The Head of Operations explained that works were completed within clear site guidance outside of the statutory bird nesting season.

Car Park management

Replying to a question regarding the management of car parks the Head Forest Keeper informed the Committee that Forest Keeper shift patterns were changing to allow the car parks within the Forest to be open for longer periods. Later in the year car parks will be open from 07:00am to 20:00 hours.

Minutes

A Member noted that a question had been asked on the use of the term '**RESOLVED**' within the minutes and asked if there was any further information regarding this point. The Superintendent explained that he recognised that the commonly accepted meaning of Resolved represented a 'determination to do something'. This was the standard term used by the City Corporation Town Clerk's Department within committee minutes. The Superintendent clarified that this did not mean that the Epping Forest Consultative Committee had agreed with item in question and would work with Town Clerks to identify a more suitable word.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

The following items of business were considered by the Committee.

Terms of Reference

The Director of Open Spaces noted that Ruth Holmes on behalf of the London Parks and Gardens Trust had not attended the last three meetings of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee and confirmed that she would be contacted to enquire if she wished to remain as a Member of the Committee.

Epping Forest Reeve appointment

The Chairman informed the Committee that the Epping Forest Parish Council had expressed their desire to appoint a previous Verderer Richard Morris to the position of Reeve and invited Members comment on the proposed appointment. The Committee confirmed their approval of the proposed appointment.

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm

Chairman

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