

EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE
Monday, 10 September 2012

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held at Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 10 September 2012 at 3.30 pm

Present

Members:

Alderman Gordon Haines (Chairman)
Barbara Newman (Deputy Chairman)
George Abrahams
Alderman John Garbutt
Virginia Rounding
Alderman Robert Hall (Ex-Officio Member)
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
Sue Ireland	- Director of Open Spaces
Paul Thomson	- Superintendent, Epping Forest
Andy Barnard	- Superintendent, Burnham Beeches & Stoke Common
Bob Warnock	- Superintendent, City Commons
Jeremy Dagley	- Conservation Manager, Epping Forest

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Deputy John Barker, Deputy Stella Currie, Deputy Stanley Ginsburg, Deputy Catherine McGuinness and Dr. Peter Hardwick.

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

Verderer Richard Morris declared a personal interest in respect of the Epping Forest Centenary Trust for which he volunteered (this was a standing declaration).

The Chairman advised that he had received a letter from the Ranger, the Duke of Gloucester, which stated that the Duke had enjoyed opening the Epping Forest Visitor Centre, the *View*, at the Epping Forest Ladies' Day held on 12 July 2012 and thanked the Chairman for his invitation.

3. **MINUTES**

The public minutes and summary of the meeting held on 9 July 2012 were approved, subject to two minor amendments.

MATTERS ARISING

Minutes (item 3)

Members noted that a letter refuting earlier inaccurate statements made regarding the dam improvements at Highams Park had been sent to the local newspaper, however it was not published.

Review of the Governance Arrangements Implemented in 2011

In response to a Member's query, the Town Clerk advised that the Committee's comments would be considered by the Governance Review Working Party, due to next meet in late September 2012, which would make recommendations to the Policy & Resources Committee. The Policy & Resources Committee would then present a report on Committee governance to the Court of Common Council for decision. This process would take several months, but the Town Clerk assured Members that they would report any significant developments to the Committee.

AMENDMENT OF AGENDA ORDER

The Chairman advised that as the Committee was currently quorate only for Epping Forest business, these agenda items would be considered ahead of Burnham Beeches & Stoke Common business, thus amending the agenda order.

In response to a Member's query, the Town Clerk advised that the Committee's quorum was any five Members. By inference, only those Members present with voting rights could contribute towards a quorum. Currently all four Verderers were present, however there were only three voting City Members present. The Committee's terms of reference stated that the Verderers were present for the consideration of business relating to Epping Forest only. Consequently the Committee was currently quorate for Epping Forest business, but not business relating to Burnham Beeches & Stoke Common or the City Commons. It was anticipated that additional Committee Members would arrive shortly and allow for a quorate discussion of business relating to Burnham Beeches & Stoke Common and the City Commons.

Epping Forest

4. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

The Superintendent of Epping Forest provided a verbal update regarding the following:

- Starters and Leavers Recruitment to the posts of Forest Keeper (South); Conservation Arborist; Mechanic and Litter Truck Operative had recently been completed. A Conservation Arborist had also left the organisation on medical grounds.

- Wet Weather The Forest had experienced very wet weather over the previous two months, with 131.5mm of rain, 246.7% of average rainfall, in July, and 48mm or 85% of average rainfall in August.
- 'The View' Official Opening & Ladies Day An official launch and opening had been held for the Epping Forest Visitor Centre, known as "The View" on 12 July 2012.
- 'The View' Exhibition The team was continuing to add objects and poster displays.
- Olympic and Paralympic Games Transport arrangements had worked well. Car Parks had coped with additional pressures and the various campsites in close proximity to the Forest had not caused problems.
- Muster, Briefing and Deployment Centre, Wanstead Flats The Centre had operated successfully with a canteen catering for 800 Officers at one sitting, three 150 person briefing tents and stables for 40 horses.
- Outdoor Theatre at Wanstead Park Ticket sales were linked to weather. 56 tickets were sold for Henry V; 121 tickets were sold for HMS Pinafore and 'The Twits' was sold out with 480 tickets sold and an additional £150 taken for unofficial seating.
- Period Games To celebrate the Olympics, the Visitor Services Team held three popular-themed game events in August with 300 attendees attending the Tudor Games; 94 attending the Regency Games and 260 attending the Victorian Games.
- Flytipping 73 Fly tips were recorded over the past 2 months compared to 156 for the same period last year. Overall fly tips were down 20.9% with 537 rather than 679 tips.
- Joint Operation with London and Essex Fire Brigades – 15 July 2012 F35 Woodford White Watch led a valuable joint exercise with two brigades and Forest Keepers from South and Central teams.
- Highams Park Lake Further public meetings were held, together with continued liaison with Walthamstow Scouts. A Friends of Highams Park group was to be formed in cooperation with London Borough of Waltham Forest's Open Spaces Team.
- Football Bookings The Chairman of the Wanstead Flats Playing Fields Committee – John Walker-Arnott – had resigned. Verderer Adams had been selected as the interim Chair. Season booking currently stood at 65% occupancy for Saturdays and 79% for Sundays.
- Ragwort Control Policy and Survey 2012 A Ragwort Policy had been developed, including a protocol and action plan with maps of the different treatment priority zones. The 2012 survey was currently being undertaken in the high priority zones with follow-up action where necessary.
- Meeting with English Heritage and English Nature on Scheduled Ancient Monuments Conservation Management Plans for Ambresbury Banks and Loughton Camp were subject to differing requirements by two Government Agencies. Helpful discussions had taken place to agree a shared strategy with the City of London.
- Knolly's Nursery Application, Pick Hill, Waltham Abbey The City of London had objected to a proposal for 115 dwellings in the Metropolitan Green Belt close to Forest Land.

- Consultation and Core Plan and Local Strategy Staff at Epping Forest were working on documents for the Epping Forest District Local Plan and London Borough of Waltham Forest Core Strategy. Epping Forest-focused policies had been included in the Core Strategy for the first time.
- Department for Transport Aviation Strategy The City had been asked to respond to a consultation on the various options available for the expansion of London aviation capacity. Consultation would close on 31 October 2012.
- Branching Out Outreach Events Four introductory events had been held, which included the Kingswood Estate, Epping which backed onto Buffer Land at Coopersale Common.
- Meet the Cattle and Meet the Arborists Events Epping staff staged further events to familiarise the community with the Conservation work at Epping Forest.
- Waymarked Trails Two further guided walk trails had been installed, with the Hornbeam Trail at Hollow Pond/Waterworks roundabout and the Beech Trail, which included Loughton Camp.
- Volunteer Hours 551 volunteer hours were recorded for July and August 2012.
- Project 824 In partnership with Epping Forest Centenary Trust, 60 Scouts had worked on a Boardwalk construction at Connaught Water; coppicing and clearance work at Woodchip Ride; wood-pasture restoration at Bury Wood and clearance work at Bulrush Pond.

In response to a Member's query regarding the City of London Apprenticeship Scheme, the Superintendent undertook to examine apprenticeship opportunities at Epping Forest. The Director also advised that the City scheme had been used in the past but many of these apprentices sought more City-based experience and were not keen to travel to the Epping Forest divisional offices.

In response to a Member's query, the Superintendent advised that the siting of Surface to Air Missiles close to Epping Forest had been permitted by neighbouring landowners.

In response to a Member's query about the Ragwort Policy and the costs of its control, the Conservation Manager advised that a range of control measures were taken including the use of selective herbicides in the highest priority zones. The approximate cost of this work this year had been around £6,000. However, at some sites Ragwort was also controlled or cut as part of ongoing mowing work at no additional cost and some Ragwort was hand-pulled.

In response to a question from the Chairman on the skills needed to respond to the detail of the Aviation Strategy, the Superintendent advised that it might be prudent to commission specialist consultants to provide advice on aviation policy in the future, however this would not be necessary for the current document.

RECEIVED

5. **EPPING FOREST TRUSTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2012**

The Committee received a report of the Chamberlain containing the Trustee's Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2012 for Epping Forest, presented in the format required by the Charity Commission.

A Member, also a Verderer, believed that the Verderers should have been included within the report as a Trustee of Epping Forest. The Chamberlain undertook to clarify this query.

In response to a Member's query on risk, the Director advised that the Epping Forest staff were employed by the City of London and not the Charitable Trust. Consequently, a reduction in staff was not a risk to the Trust.

In response to a Member's query, the Chamberlain and the Director undertook to investigate whether a reserves policy for the Trust should exist.

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6. **CONSULTATION BY EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL ON THE INTRODUCTION OF THREE DOG CONTROL ORDERS ON PUBLIC OPEN SPACE, CURRENTLY INCLUDING EPPING FOREST LAND**

Members considered a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest that informed the Committee of proposals by Epping Forest District Council to introduce three of the five Dog Control Orders on public open spaces, including Epping Forest Land, for the control of dog fouling; the placing of dogs on leads when directed and regulation on the maximum numbers of dogs each person could have in their control.

In response to a Member's query, the Superintendent advised that a lead length would be difficult to enforce.

Members requested that the proposed exception for woodland to be clarified in relation to Epping Forest.

A Member also advised that it would be best if efforts could be made to ensure that all local authorities had the same policy across the Forest in order to avoid a situation in which an action could be acceptable in one authority and an offence in another.

RESOLVED: that the Superintendent of Epping Forest be authorised to respond to the Epping Forest District Council's consultation on Dog Control Orders expressing the City's support for their introduction on Forest Land to:

- i) support a Dog Control Order to control dog fouling over the whole of the Epping Forest district, including City of London Epping Forest land, making it an offence to fail to pick up dog faeces deposited on any public land.
- ii) support a Dog Control Order that allows an authorised officer to request that a dog be put on a leash on any public land in Epping Forest District,

including City of London Epping Forest land, but decline to recommend a leash length.

- iii) support Epping Forest District Council's proposed dog control orders, including City of London Epping Forest land, that restricts the number of dogs a person can have in their control on any public land to four.

7. GRANT OF LICENCE TO LONDON BOROUGH OF NEWHAM FOR A PUBLIC FIREWORKS DISPLAY

Members considered a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest seeking approval for the grant of a licence for a fee of £5,000 to the London Borough of Newham to stage a public Fireworks Display on Sunday 4 November 2012 at the Wanstead Flats Events Area adjacent to Centre Road.

In response to a question by the Chairman regarding the fixed nature of the fee for the last 6 years, the Superintendent agreed to review the licence value in conjunction with the City Surveyor for any future requests.

RESOLVED: That Members,

- i) approve the grant of a licence to the London Borough of Newham for a fee of £5,000 plus a refundable deposit of £5,000 to enable it to stage a public fireworks event on Wanstead Flats on the 4 November 2012.
- ii) delegate authority to the Town Clerk in accordance with standing order 41(b), in consultation with the Superintendent of Epping Forest, the City Surveyor and the Comptroller & City Solicitor, to determine appropriate terms and the completion of any necessary documentation.
- iii) consent to the making of fires (for the purposes of lighting fireworks as part of the Firework Display) pursuant to Byelaw 3.6 of the Epping Forest Byelaws 1980.
- iv) consent to the use of vehicles required in connection with the Firework Display pursuant to Byelaw 3.11 of the Epping Forest Byelaws 1980.

8. EPPING FOREST WOODLAND PLANTING APPEAL

Members considered a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest that sought approval for the establishment of a woodland habitat on up to 2.063 hectares (5.1 acres) within the latest 12.035 hectares (29.74 acres) of land acquisition at Horseshoe Hill, Upshire.

RESOLVED: that, subject to the election of the Senior Alderman below the Chair as Lord Mayor in November 2012 and the establishment of the forthcoming Lord Mayor's Appeal,

- i) an area of up to 2.063 hectares (5.1 acres) of grassland within the recent Warlies Park acquisition be dedicated to a habitat creation scheme through woodland planting;
- ii) contributions to the cost of tree planting; access paths, deer fencing and maintenance be met through the Lord Mayor's Appeal combined with additional funding from an application for grant funding from the England Woodland Grant Scheme – Woodland Creation Grant;

- iii) in order to encourage woodland resilience and climate change adaptation, some 10% of the woodland species planted would be selected from the Forestry Commission recommended climate change species lists;
- iv) the new woodland planting/Forest extension be known as 'Gifford's Wood,' subject to the outcome of the election of the next Lord Mayor and the success of the appeal.

9. ENGLISH WOODLAND GRANT SCHEME APPLICATION FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF DEER AND WOODLANDS IN THE EPPING FOREST BUFFER LAND ESTATE

Members received a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest that informed the Committee of the need to improve the condition of Buffer Land woodlands and to bring local deer populations, which continued to damage the woodlands, under effective control.

RESOLVED: that, subject to securing funding,

- i) the twenty-year Draft Woodland Planning Grant Management Plan for the Buffer Land Woodlands to manage sustainably the Buffer Land woodland as part of the wider Buffer Land estate be adopted subject to the successful application for grant aid.
- ii) the five-year Draft Deer Management Plan, which proposed to maintain deer populations in balance with the Buffer Land woodlands and the wider countryside be adopted subject to the successful application for grant aid.
- iii) The Committee approve the submission of an application for grant support to the Forestry Commission English Woodland Grant Scheme – A Woodland Improvement Grant - to fund the cost of undertaking deer and woodland management improvements on up to 75 woodlands within the Buffer Lands between 2012-17.

10. THE CURRENT PURPOSE AND MANAGEMENT OF THE EPPING FOREST DEER SANCTUARY, THEYDON BOIS

Members received a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest that informed the Committee of the history and the current management of the Epping Forest deer sanctuary, an enclosed area of Buffer Land situated to the south west of Theydon Bois, which was purchased at a cost of £5,500 (£101,420 at 2011 prices) especially for this purpose.

Members noted that a further report on the future management of the Epping Forest deer sanctuary would be submitted to the Committee for consideration when the results of historical research had been received and the outcome of the English Woodland Grant Scheme application was known.

A member asked the Committee to also recognise in any future report the importance of the historic parkland landscape at Theydon Bois.

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Business Relating to all Three Estates

11. RISK MANAGEMENT – LOCAL RISK REGISTERS

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces relative to Local Risk Registers. The report provided Members with an opportunity to examine the main local risks for the Open Space charitable trusts that reported to the Committee.

The Director advised that this was the first of a cycle of Local Risk Register reports to be presented to the Committee. In response to a Member's query, the Director agreed to provide more information on the scoring mechanism employed, the wider risk register and the identification of common risks between the three Divisions.

In response to a Member's query, the Director undertook to clarify the division of risk responsibility.

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Burnham Beeches & Stoke Common

12. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

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

- Tree Maintenance A 30 metre high Mobile Elevated Working Platform and TimberWolf Chipper had been borrowed from Epping Forest in order to carry out work on young pollards and veteran trees.
- Safety Tree safety surveys, experimental pollard restoration work and fence repairs had been undertaken across both sites.
- Visit The annual site visit for the Burnham Beeches Consultative Committee had taken place. An invisible fence demonstration was undertaken at Pumpkin Hill.
- Invisible Fencing The trial had been undertaken on Pumpkin Hill, which included the use of virtual cattle grids on the public road. The wires for the grids had been laid with the assistance of a stump-grinder borrowed from Epping Forest. A press release had been issued which advised that animals would be introduced to the area on 19 September 2012. If the trial proved successful, it was hoped that fencing would be expanded to cover 95% of the site by 2014.
- Local Core Strategy The Superintendent had recently met with the Head of Planning and Development Control of South Buckinghamshire District Council to build on their Core Strategy to protect the Burnham Beeches Special Area of Conservation via the forthcoming Development Management Development Plan Document.
- Volunteers 400 hours had been accrued recently. Activities undertaken included bracken bashing, pollard clearance and boardwalk repairs.
- Events A bike ride, heath walk and a half marathon had all recently taken place.

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13. **BURNHAM BEECHES AND STOKE COMMON TRUSTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2012**

The Committee received a report of the Chamberlain containing the Trustee's Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2012 for Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common, presented in the format required by the Charity Commission.

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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.

14. **USE OF SECONDARY AUTHORITY POWERS TO INTRODUCE DOG CONTROL ORDERS AT BURNHAM BEECHES**

The Committee considered a report of the Superintendent of Burnham Beeches & Stoke Common. The report informed members of the proposal to consult on the introduction of Dog Control Orders at Burnham Beeches National Nature Reserve using the recently acquired powers provided under Secondary Authority status.

A Member believed that use of the word "owner" when restricting the number of dogs an individual could walk was confusing as people frequently walked dogs that did not belong to them.

RESOLVED: That Members approve the proposal to consult on the introduction of Dog Control Orders at Burnham Beeches according to the proposals set out in the report and associated timetable located in the report Appendix.

City Commons

15. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

The Superintendent of City Commons provided a verbal update regarding the following:

- Staffing Two temporary Rangers had recently been hired and a Ranger had been seconded to the Coulsdon & Kenely Team from the Ashted Team. The Rangers had recently provided seven work experience placements.
- Volunteering Accrued hours on Ashted Common were currently 12% lower than as at September 2011. Ashted Common volunteers had suspended activities over August as a large number of them were involved with the Olympics. Volunteer hours on the other Commons were higher than as at September 2011. A volunteer survey was currently being undertaken. Volunteers had recently visited Box Hill and Kingley Vale.

- Winter Work Programme The Programme had commenced on 1 September 2012, which included the restoration of chalk grassland. The tree shear and chipping contract was currently in progress across all four of the Coulsdon Commons. Veteran tree management at Ashtead Common had been retendered and work was scheduled to commence in November 2012. Scrub Management had also been retendered.
- Livestock Last years calves had recently been weaned. There were eighteen pregnant cows, which were expected to calve in January/February 2013. Staff had recently received refresher training on veterinary medicine. The Superintendent was currently investigating the possibility of entering a service level agreement with a local farmer to manage four of the Ashtead cattle over winter.
- Awards In addition to the Green Flag Awards, Ashtead Common and Kenley Common had both received Green Heritage Awards.
- Heritage The Ashtead Common Roman Villa dig had been completed, 2012 saw the penultimate year of excavations. A heritage weekend had recently been held, with over 200 people in attendance.
- Audits & Inspections A Sustainability Audit Verification visit, unannounced Rural Payments Authority spot audit and a grassland management audit had all recently taken place.

In response to a Member's query, the Superintendent advised that he was unaware as to whether he would have an opportunity to view the audit reports before they was published.

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16. CITY COMMONS TRUSTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2012

The Committee received a report of the Chamberlain containing the Trustee's Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2012 for the City Commons, presented in the format required by the Charity Commission.

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17. ASHTEAD COMMON CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Members received the draft minutes of the Ashtead Common Consultative Committee meeting held on 2 July 2012.

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

A Member advised that they had recently observed the Superintendent of Epping Forest make a presentation to the Epping Forest District Council Planning Committee from home via a webcast. They believed that the City should make efforts to offer a similar service at its meetings.

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	1 & 3
22	3
23-24	-

21. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

The non-public minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2012 were approved.

22. **WAYLEAVE CESSATION - 2 ROSE COTTAGES, HONEY LANE, WALTHAM ABBEY**

Members considered a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest.

23. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

There were no questions.

24. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED**

There was no urgent business.

The meeting ended at 5.57 pm

Chairman

**Contact Officer: Edward Foale
tel. no.: 020 7332 1426
edward.foale@cityoflondon.gov.uk**