

## EPHING FOREST CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 29 January 2020

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

### **Present**

#### **Members:**

Deputy Philip Woodhouse (Deputy Chairman)  
Carol Pummell (Epping Forest Riders Association)  
Gil James (Friends of Wanstead Parklands)  
Jill Carter (Highams Residents Association)  
Judith Adams (Epping Forest Heritage Trust)  
Martin Boyle (Theydon Bois & District Rural Preservation Society)  
Paul Morris (Epping Forest Forum)  
Gordon Turpin Highams Park Planning Groups (inc Snedders)  
Tim Wright Orion Harriers  
Robert Levene (Bedford House Residents Association)  
Susan Creevy (Loughton Residents Association)  
Sybil Ritten as a substitution for Andy Irvine (Bushwood Area Residents Association)  
Tim Harris (WREN Wildlife & Conservation Group)  
Steve Williamson Royal Epping Forest Golf Club  
Verderer Nicholas Munday  
Verderer Melissa Murphy  
Verderer Michael Chapman DL

#### **Officers:**

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

### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from the Chairman Graeme Doshi-Smith, Sylvia Moys, Caroline Haines, Mathew Frith, Mark Squire and Verderer Dr Jonna Thomas.

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

There were no declarations received.

### **3. MINUTES**

The Committee considered the minutes of the previous meeting of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of October 2019.

Replying to a query from a member of the Committee the Town Clerk confirmed that comments made would be recorded without specific attribution to any group and would be fully anonymised. A Member also noted that they were marked as present when they were not in attendance.

**RESOLVED-** That the minutes of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2019, subject to the corrections specified, be approved as an accurate record.

4. **SETTLEMENT OF THE COMMONERS REGISTER AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE VERDERERS ELECTION**

The Committee received a verbal update from the Director of Open Spaces on the Election of Verderers 2020. The Committee were informed of the details of the 2020 election including the meetings to settle the register of Commoners and the dates of the Nomination meetings where candidates can be nominated for election.

Replying to a query from a member of the Committee the Director of Open Spaces confirmed that, in compliance with legislation, there was no requirement for voters to provide poll clerks with proof of Identification.

A member of the Committee questioned if the 0.5 qualifying acre and 7 years' service requirements could be relaxed to allow for a greater engagement from residents of Epping Forest. The Director Open Spaces explained the requirements were specified within the Epping Forest Act 1878 and would require adjustment to primary legislation which would be a complex and costly undertaking. It was noted by a member of the Committee that despite the limited electorate for the election they understood that the modern Verderer's role was to represent the interests of the whole forest.

**RESOLVED-** That the update be noted.

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

The Committee received the minutes of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee on the 18<sup>th</sup> of November 2019.

**RESOLVED-** That the minutes be noted.

6. **EPPING FOREST - SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE FOR AUGUST TO SEPTEMBER 2019 (SEF 44/19)**

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 August to September 2019.

**RESOLVED-** That the report be noted.

7. **EPPING FOREST - SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE FOR OCTOBER TO NOVEMBER 2019 (SEF 01/20)**

The Committee received a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest which provided Members with a summary of the Epping Forest Division's activities in October to November 2019.

**RESOLVED-** That the report be noted.

8. **VEGETATION AGAINST PROPERTY: POLICY DEVELOPMENT NOTE SEF 02/20**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces which provided the Vegetation against Property Policy Development Note. The report outlined the Policy Development note (PDN) that has been prepared on the management of Vegetation Against Property (VAP) where substantial subsidence compensation claims can arise from the impact of our trees on neighbours' buildings.

Replying to a query from a member of the committee the Director of Open Spaces explained that interventions may not always be financial and may involve the removal of Forest trees. Where monies are required for VAP compensation settlement would not be drawn from the Forest Fund or operational budgets, and instead was met by the City Corporation's Central Funds through a mixture of self-insurance and insurance premiums.

In answer to a Member's question the Director of Open Spaces confirmed that the majority of claims came from three Forest compartments. It was explained that, while modern building regulations made it easier to mitigate issues regarding VAP, many properties affected were built to a less exacting standard. In answer to a further question regarding the primacy of the Forest over later housing, the Director confirmed that legal advice would be procured to test this proposition. In addition, the Director of Open Spaces noted that the department would continue to develop defensive management systems and defend the established legal position.

**RESOLVED-** That the report be noted.

9. **WANSTEAD FLATS INDIVIDUAL SITE PLAN SEF 03/20**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Wanstead Flats Individual Site Plan. The report outlined the Individual Site Plan (ISP) that had been prepared for Wanstead Flats.

The Committee discussed fly tipping in the forest with Members noting that communication and outreach could be key issues with regard to stopping fly tipping at Wanstead Flats and across the Forest. The Chairman noted the considerable £320,000 cost incurred by the City of London Corporation in combating fly tipping within the Forest. The Committee were informed that the dumping of large quantities of bread had encouraged an increase in brown rat populations at particular Wanstead Flats sites.

It was confirmed that the Epping Forest Management Strategy was the primary mechanism for stakeholder consultation. With regard to the Wanstead Flats ISP, and indeed other ISPs, Officers would consider how best to engage with a wider audience.

A member noted the success of the Duck Champion project which had encouraged visitors to substitute healthier foodstuffs instead of bread.

The Director of Open Spaces, replying to a query regarding the level of ambition regarding skylark numbers from a member of the Committee, explained that Skylark numbers were being actively monitored and that a further report would be produced for the October Committee meeting. In addition, it was confirmed bat numbers were not planned to be recorded due to limitations on resources, but that Officers were aware of a significant number of bats present at a number of sites within the Forest.

Replying to the Committee members' concern on a perceived conflict within the Epping Forest Management Strategy between conservation and events, the Director of Open Spaces confirmed that the Department's events policy had inbuilt habitat impact considerations and noted that Officers were seeking to strike a balance between the effect on the environment and maximising income for the management of the Forest by hosting events.

**RESOLVED-** That the report be noted.

10. **EPPING FOREST WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2020/2021 SEF 04/20**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Epping Forest Work Programme for 2020/2021.

A member of the Committee commented on the requirement to educate on the particulars of wood pasture and pollarding, noting the lack of awareness within some sections of the users of Epping Forest. The Deputy Chairman noted that a clear message from Committee members was that new and varied communications methods would be helpful to inform the public of issues regarding Epping Forest.

**RESOLVED-** That the report be noted.

11. **QUESTIONS**

In response to a question from a member of the Committee the Director of Open Spaces confirmed that information regarding fly tipping would be emailed to those interested.

The Director of Open Spaces responded to concerns raised about rough sleepers at Bushwood, confirming that Officers worked to No Second Night Out (NSNO) guidance and worked alongside a range of partners including St Mungo's; Local Authority Housing Officers; Metropolitan Police Service and Borders Agency staff to secure the best possible outcomes for rough sleepers. The Director encouraged residents to use the 'what3words' mobile phone application to help accurately locate reports of rough sleeping.

A member of the Committee commented on the damage that had been caused by combination of the wet weather and improper use of the ancient earthworks noting the need to enforce bylaws. The Director of Open Spaces explained that the Voluntary Warden Scheme had been utilised to help alleviate this issue.

12. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no further business considered by the Committee.

**The meeting closed at 9.01 pm**

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Chairman

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