

## EPPING FOREST AND COMMONS COMMITTEE

5 MARCH 2012

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EPPING FOREST AND COMMONS COMMITTEE HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, EC2 ON MONDAY, 5 MARCH 2012 AT 11:00 AM.**

#### **Present**

##### **Members:**

Barbara Newman (Chairman)	Verderer Richard Morris
Alderman Gordon Haines (Deputy Chairman)	Verderer Peter Adams
George Abrahams	Verderer Dr Joanna Thomas
John Bird	Verderer Michael Chapman
Deputy Stella Currie	
Alderman John Garbutt	
Deputy Stanley Ginsburg	
Deputy Greg Lawrence	
Deputy Catherine McGuinness	
Virginia Rounding	

##### **Officers:**

Edward Foale	- Town Clerks Department
Esther Sumner	- Town Clerks Department
Mark Jarvis	- Chamberlain's Department
Paul Monaghan	- City Surveyors Department
Roger Adams	- City Surveyors Department
Richard Chamberlain	- City Surveyors Department
Sue Ireland	- Director Open Spaces
Paul Thomson	- Superintendent of Epping Forest
Bob Warnock	- Superintendent of City Commons
Andy Barnard	- Superintendent of Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common
Rita Bacheta	- Open Spaces Department

#### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Dr. Peter Hardwick and Alderman Robert Hall.

#### **2. DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF PERSONAL OR PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS IN RESPECT OF ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THIS MEETING**

Deputy Catherine McGuinness and Verderer Richard Morris declared a personal interest in respect of the Epping Forest Centenary Trust for which they both volunteered (this was a standing declaration).

#### **3. MINUTES**

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

## **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES:-**

### ***Superintendent's Update (Item 5) – Connaught Water***

The Superintendent of Epping Forest confirmed that it was not possible to install a fence or handrail structure in the raised section of the dam at Connaught Water. However, the possibility of either creating a small raised path edging or the planting of vegetation to create a barrier between visitors and the lake could be investigated. The Director confirmed that either option would be sufficient to meet the City's legal obligations.

The Superintendent of Epping Forest confirmed that the dredged material on the edge of Connaught Water close to the car park would be disposed of appropriately once the material had fully dried out.

### ***Highams Park Lake – Detailed Options Appraisal (item 6 )***

The City Surveyor tabled a document which provided further information on the gauge for monitoring water levels that Members had agreed to install at the previous meeting of the Committee. The City Surveyor confirmed that, in the event of an amber warning, the system would automatically contact the end user via SMS, email and telephone, and appropriate action would be taken. In the event of a red warning, the system would contact the Command Centre in Guildhall via the same media and an emergency response would be initiated. The City Surveyor confirmed that the gauge would be installed in 4 weeks time.

## **4. OPEN SPACES DEPARTMENT BUSINESS PLAN 2012 - 2015 – KEY PROJECTS**

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Open Spaces which outlined the Key Projects that would be included in the Open Spaces Department Business Plan for 2012 – 2015.

In response to a Member's question the Superintendent of Burnham Beaches confirmed that the cost of installing a wood fuel boiler and suitable fuel storage and 'feed system' at the Burnham Beeches & Stoke Common Estate Office could vary between approximately £15k and £25k each year. The cost could be more accurately estimated once it had been decided which make of boiler and storage/feed system would be installed.

In response to a Member's query, the Director recognised that some of the subjects listed as City Commons key projects were actually project categories. The Director undertook to amend the report accordingly and circulate a revised copy to Members before completing the Business Plan.

The Superintendent of Epping Forest advised that opportunities for commemorative tree planting would be featured in the Epping Forest Annual Work Programme, to be submitted to the Committee in May 2012.

The Superintendent of Epping Forest confirmed that the Golf Course Review referenced in the report related solely to Chingford Golf Course, rather than the three tenanted courses located elsewhere in the Forest.

**RESOLVED** : -That the Key Projects for Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common City Commons and Epping Forest be agreed, and included in the

Open Spaces Department Business Plan for 2012 – 2015, subject to Members' approval of the amendments to the City Commons projects.

## **EPPING FOREST**

### **5. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

The Superintendent of Epping Forest provided an update regarding the following: -

- The Superintendent informed Members of the Committee of new starters and leavers as follows: -
  1. New Starters - Jenny Harris – Finance Officer.
  2. Leavers Jonathan Preston – Senior Forest Keeper (Central).
- Flytipping - There had been 20% fewer incidents in January and February 2012 than in the corresponding months for 2011.
- Missing Person – Forest Keepers had been involved in a search for a missing person on 25 and 26 February 2012.
- Suicide – An individual had been found hanged on Chingford Plains on 28 February 2012. In response to a Member's question, the Superintendent confirmed that the staff involved were being given as much support as effectively possible. Given the anonymity sought in most cases, it was difficult to involve the Chaplain to Epping Forest in supporting the families of the bereaved. However the offer of Chaplaincy support was being routinely made via Police Family Liaison Officers.
- Bell Common Dog attack – A Labrador had recently been seriously wounded in an attack by another dog.
- Pole Hill Dog Attack – Following a recent dog attack on a young visitor, which resulted in serious injuries, a local dog owner received a twelve-week prison sentence on a two year suspension, 200 hours of community service and a £450 fine. The dog was destroyed.
- Cold Weather – The February snow had stayed at Epping Forest for over a week. The local media had been persuaded to remove images of forest visitors standing on frozen lakes. Concerted advisory information had helped prevent any reoccurrence of public stranding on the ice, though Fire Crews had helped rescue a dog trapped in Connaught Water.
- Jacks Hill, Theydon Bois – A litter-picking event had taken place in the Long Running Area with twelve sacks of rubbish, which included sex litter collected. GoPetition was hosting a campaign against the use of the area as a Public Sex Environment, eighteen signatures had been collected in the last two months.

- Staples Road Flood Alleviation Scheme – At the request of the Superintendent, the Environment Agency had used cleft oak fencing instead of metal fencing in order to protect the silt trap in Staples Road.
- Speed Restrictions – 40mph speed restrictions had been scheduled to be introduced on the following roads on 2 March: A104 Epping New Road; A121 Goldings Hill & Woodridden Hill; B172 Coppice Row; Crown Hill; Theydon Road and Daws Hill. A 30mph speed restriction had also been introduced on Earl's Path. In response to a Member's question the Superintendent advised that a speed monitoring exercise would take place in due course, which would then inform the necessity for any further enforcement action.
- Cattle Grids Public Inquiry – A decision from the Secretary of State was expected in March.
- Knighton Woods – English Heritage had given formal notice that they were considering a request to place Knighton Woods on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic interest. In response to a Member's query, the Superintendent undertook to submit a report to a future meeting of the Committee in order to aid discussion on the matter and attain a Committee resolution either in favour of or against Knighton Woods' registration.
- Grazier – Wildlife and Countryside Services had signed a three-year contract.
- Australian Stonecrop Survey – 146 ponds had been surveyed, 14% of which were found to have been colonised by the invasive weed.
- Annual Sudden Oak Death Phytophthora Ramorum Survey – Both Rhododendron and Larch, which act as a host plant for the Phytophthora Ramorum parasitic fungus, were surveyed. No infections had been revealed.
- Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme (VAQAS) Awards – All three Visitor Centres had qualified for the England Tourist Board VAQAS Award this year.
- Discovering Epping Forest (DEF) – 25 schools were midway through the six DEF modules.
- Family Learning Events – There had recently been over 400 participants in a series of World War II themed events.
- Woodford Green – The London Borough of Redbridge had recently approached the Superintendent regarding the use of land at Woodford Green for a Children's Play Area. In response to a Member's question the Superintendent confirmed that he would meet with the London Borough of Redbridge Councillors in the near future and would seek the approval of the Committee for any proposed installation.

- Highams Park Lake – A consultation exercise was continuing with the local community. Permission to reproduce the Humphry Repton Red Book had been received from the estate of the late Sir Henry Warner.
- Connaught Water – A new car park and Easy Access Route had opened in February. The car park had a slightly reduced capacity, due to new provision for disabled parking bays. Staff had received a mixed response to the macadam and Mastertint surfaces. Concerns regarding the raised pathway height had been noted and use would be monitored.
- Coach House Visitor Centre – A handover was anticipated in March 2012.
- Butlers Retreat Café/Restaurant – The Butler's Retreat had opened to the public on 5 February 2012.
- Landscaping at High Beach – The landscaping and road realignment project had resulted in the closure of parts of Manor Road from 9 January for up to sixteen weeks.
- Volunteers – The Epping Forest Volunteers had collectively accrued 706 hours between December 2011 and January 2012.
- John Muir Award – the Chairman had presented eleven teachers and pupils from Mark Hall School, Harlow with John Muir Awards.
- Visitor Survey – Twelve staff and volunteers had worked on the survey in 2011 with Alison Millward Associates. The visitor survey results would be reported to the Committee in the near future.
- Drought – Between March 2011 and February 2012 Epping Forest had received 71% of its long term average rainfall, and 26% of usual February rainfall. Levels in streams, ponds and lakes had been left at an unusually low level.

In response to a Member's query, the Superintendent advised that a cash machine at Wake Arms had recently been stolen using an excavator owned by UPM Tilhill which had been removed from the High Beech construction site. Any legal liability lay with the contractor.

In response to a Member's query, the Superintendent advised that humans were not currently believed to be susceptible to the Schmallenberg virus, but it presented a serious threat to livestock. Staff and graziers at Epping would continue to monitor DEFRA veterinary advice over the coming months and take action where appropriate.

**RECEIVED.**

## 6. PLANNING CASEWORK

Consideration was given to a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest which provided detail on information regarding planning objections made on behalf of the Committee, which sought to protect the context and setting of Epping Forest and further environmental damage.

Members noted three amendments to the report as follows:

- i) Summary: *'The Forest with its crescent form and its 271 kilometre boundary is particularly susceptible to impacts from poorly **conceived** development.'*
- ii) Paragraph 10: *'Brief descriptions of the 7 applications having the most potential or actual impact on the Forest and its Buffer lands, are given in paragraphs 11 - 18 below and their position as shown on the attached map, "Planning applications with potential significant impact".'*
- iii) Appendix 1: All paragraph references on the map should be three lower than detailed.

**RECEIVED.**

## 7. WANSTEAD FLATS PLAYING FIELDS COMMITTEE

Consideration was given to a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest which outlined the development of the Wanstead Flats Playing Fields Committee (WFPFC) over the past 55 years and sought approval to reconstitute the current Committee arrangements.

**RESOLVED** : - That,

- i) the 55 years of diligent service by the WFPFC to the conduct of sport at Wanstead Flats be duly acknowledged by the Conservators of Epping Forest;
- ii) the wide ranging reconstitution of the WFPFC be supported by the Conservators and 3 months' notice given under Section 6 of the annually renewed agreement to cease the operation of the current Committee arrangements from 31 March 2012; and
- iii) the WFPFC be asked to nominate an interim Chairman to guide the reconstitution of the Committee to fulfil a new and invigorated role in the development; fundraising; promotion and support for a wider range of inclusive sport activities at Wanstead Flats.

## 8. STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT – UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest which outlined the outcomes of the public consultation on the Epping Forest SCI and detailed the proposed changes to the document originally considered by the Committee on 9 May 2011. The 28 recommended revisions to the document were designed to improve and standardise the future consultation practice of the Conservators.

**RESOLVED** : - That the revised Epping Forest Statement of Community Involvement (Appendix 1 to the report) be adopted.

## 9. **MUSIC IN THE PARK – PROPOSED CONCERT AT THE TEMPLE, WANSTEAD PARK**

Consideration was given to a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest which outlined a request from the Aldersbrook Families Association Music in Wanstead Park Committee for permission to hold a concert in the Temple Portico and Garden at Wanstead Park on Saturday 7 July 2012.

Members noted the following amendment to the conclusion of the report:

- i) *the activities detailed in paragraphs 5 to 15 and the appropriately modified activities as detailed in paragraphs 17 to 18.*

**RESOLVED** : - That,

- i) permission be granted to the Music in the Wanstead Park Committee to stage a concert in Wanstead Park on Saturday 7 July 2012 from 14:00 – 23:00 as outlined in paragraphs 5 – 15 of the report;
- ii) the Superintendent be delegated authority to approve further concerts for a three year period between 2012 – 2015 upon such terms similar to those the Conservators granted in previous years; and
- iii) a licence be granted during the concert for the following six 1903 Byelaw offences: playing games (Byelaw 8); playing instruments (Byelaw 10); vehicles (Byelaw 14); setting booths and tents (Byelaw 27); play equipment (Byelaw 29); sale of intoxicating liquors (Byelaw 30); and one 1950 additional Byelaw vehicles (Byelaw 4), and remove the penalty for closure of Park (Byelaw 1); placing notices (Byelaw 15); lighting fires (Byelaw 22); animal rides (Byelaw 32) and additional Byelaw riding horses (Byelaw 3).

## **BURNHAM BEECHES & STOKE COMMON**

### 10. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

The Superintendent of Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common provided a verbal update advising that: -

- A 120ft mobile tree platform had been used at Burnham Beeches in order to aid tree climbers. The platform had allowed impressive aerial photographs of the park to be taken. The possibility of using a 200ft mobile tree platform in Burnham Beeches would be investigated later in 2012.
- Two Exmoor ponies had recently been acquired to aid grazing within Burnham Beeches. There were now four Exmoor ponies grazing at the Beeches.
- The Estate Office had recently acquired two electrically aided bicycles, which would aid in reducing the use of petrol-powered vehicles in the parks.
- Graffiti had recently appeared on various buildings, signage and roads within Burnham Beeches. It was currently believed that this was an isolated incident that took place over one night and involved one individual.

- Thames Valley Police were currently trialling a new tracking device within the parks.

**RECEIVED.**

**11. BURNHAM BEECHES AND STOKE COMMON – ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME**

Consideration was given to a report of the Superintendent of Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common regarding the Annual Work Programme for both Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common for the period April 2012 to March 2013 inclusive. The work detailed in the report was extracted from the management plans for Stoke Common and Burnham Beeches approved by the Committee in 2008 and 2012 respectively.

Members noted the following amendment to paragraph o of the report:

*Work towards the implementation of virtual fencing and grids to enable the grazing of the majority of Burnham Beeches by summer **2013**.*

**RECEIVED.**

**CITY COMMONS**

**12. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

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

- Habitat Management work across the Commons had been completed relative to the first year of the Environmental Stewardship Agreement.
- Weed wiping scrub regrowth would take place in April 2012. In the past, this had usually taken place in August.
- Minor fence repairs on Riddlesdown & Coulsdon Common would be moved to the 2012-13 work programme.
- The number of volunteers was still expanding considerably. The Superintendent planned to train a further group of volunteers with leadership skills to work alongside the Rangers in order to supervise tasks and activities.
- The Kenley Airfield Friends Group had submitted a pre-application form to the Heritage Lottery . The Project was entitled "Kenley Revival Project" and aimed to record and conserve the physical heritage of the airfield, to conserve the archive of documents, memories and experiences of those who remember Kenley and to increase awareness and understanding of the role of the airfield during the Battle of Britain.

**RECEIVED.**



**13. ASHTEAD COMMON CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2012 were received. In response to a Member's concern, the Superintendent confirmed that the volunteers were covered by City of London insurance schemes, but were not classified as employees. The Superintendent would clarify this matter at the next meeting of the Ashtead Common Consultative Committee in July 2012.

**RECEIVED.**

**14. CITY COMMONS ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME**

Consideration was given to a report of the Superintendent of City Commons relative to the Annual Work Programme for the City Commons Division for the period April 2012 to March 2013 inclusive.

**RESOLVED** : - That the Annual Work Programme be approved.

**15. SPORTS AND MISCELLANEOUS CHARGES**

Consideration was given to a report of the Superintendent of City Commons which reviewed the charges for sports facilities and miscellaneous items that are provided by the City Commons Division, and sought approval for the proposed charges for 2012/13.

**RESOLVED** : - That the proposed charges for 2012/13 be approved.

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

In response to a Member's question, the Director confirmed that the Committee ties would be purchased by the Open Spaces Department shortly. The ties would then be sold on to individual Committee Members. The precise number of ties to be purchased was currently unknown.

**17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

There were no items of urgent items.

**18. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED:-** That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of the Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act.

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Paragraph(s) in Schedule 12A</b>
19	1 & 3
20	3 & 5
21	1 & 3
22	2 & 3
23 & 24	-
25	3

**19. NON PUBLIC MINUTES**

The non-public minutes and summary of the meeting held on 9 January 2012 were considered.

**20. RESTRICTIVE COVENANT POLICY**

Consideration was given to a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest.

**21. LICENSING AND ADMINISTRATION OF PLEASURE FAIRS AT CHINGFORD PLAIN AND WANSTEAD FLATS FOR 2012**

Consideration was given to a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest.

**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.

**22. EPPING FOREST BUFFER LANDS: ANNUAL AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS REVIEW**

Consideration was given to 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**

There was no other business.

**MEMBERS ONLY**

**25. MEMBERS ONLY MINUTES**

The Members only minutes from 9 January 2012 were considered.

**The Meeting closed at 1:05pm.**

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**CHAIRMAN**

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