

Committee(s):	Date(s):	Item no.
Epping Forest and Commons Committee	14 May 2012	
Subject: Election of Verderers 2013	Public	
Report of: Town Clerk	For Decision	

Summary

The Epping Forest Act 1878 provides that four Verderers be elected to serve on your Committee, and that these elections should take place every seventh year.

To enable the election to take place the Register of Commoners must be revised and formally settled. Nomination meetings then take place, followed if necessary by a Poll. This report lays out the timeline for this process.

A further report will be brought to your next Committee on the dates for the special meetings to settle the register, nomination meetings and polls. That report will also consider the issue of Corporation proxy voting.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:-

- as in the last election in 2006, the number of polling stations be kept at 4 in the northern parishes and one in the southern parishes, it being left to the discretion of the Town Clerk as to the precise location
- approval be given to a fee of £125 to be paid to each of the 10 poll clerks should their services be required (such a fee reflecting the hours of poll and current rates for such work)
- Members note that the cost of the election (anticipated to be £10,000 - £15,000), will be met from the Town Clerk's Elections budget

Main Report

Background

1. The Epping Forest Act 1878 requires that elections are held every seven years to return four Verderers to serve on your Committee. Two Verderers are elected for the northern Forest parishes and two for the southern Forest parishes. Elections have been held every seventh year since 1880, no later than the twentieth day of March in each election year. The Verderers take office on the twenty-fifth day of March in the year of election.

2. The next election of Verderers must be held no later than 20 March 2013, and to enable this election to take place the Register of Commoners (those eligible to vote) must be revised.

3. This history of the Verderers dates from 1130 when their function was to act as Forest Magistrates enforcing the Forest Laws and looking after interests of the Crown. The 1878 Epping Forest Act perpetuated the position of Verderer, but modified the role to represent the interests of commoners as full members of your Committee. With the change in the character of the Forest, and the decline in grazing land, the Verderers have for many years now considered their role more widely representing both commoners and the public living around the Forest.

Proposals

Timetable

4. The following timetable is proposed:

Town Clerk to write to those on the existing register inviting claims	By end of July 2012
Notice of intention to revise register to be published in local newspapers and placed on Epping Forest notice boards	By end of July 2012
Town Clerk to write to Local Authorities requesting them to check the Register against their electoral rolls	By end of July 2012
Draft Revised Register printed and placed on deposit	By the end of December 2012
Notice of deposited Register and Special Meetings to be published in local newspapers and placed on Epping Forest notice boards	December 2012
Meeting to settle the Register (Guildhall)	January / February 2013
Meeting to settle the Register (Epping Forest)	January / February 2013
Settled Register printed and put on deposit	January / February 2013
Town Clerk to write to all those on Register notifying them of the details of the Nomination meetings and poll	February 2013

dates	
Notice of settled Register, Nomination meetings and dates & places of polls to be published in local newspapers and placed on Epping Forest notice boards	February 2013
Arrange with all persons with more than one registration to choose a polling station	February 2013
Nomination meetings	March 2013
Write to all on Register advising a poll has been demanded	March 2013
Polling days	By 20 th March 2013 (north) By 20 th March 2013 (south) (Polls for the north and south must be held on separate days)
Announce result	March 2013

5. It is proposed that dates for the special meetings of this Committee to settle the Register of Commoners, the dates for the nomination meetings and for the polls be presented to the next meeting of your Committee following consultation with the Recorder of the City of London, the Chairman and Deputy Chairman.

Register of Commoners

6. The Register of Commoners is a register of those persons entitled to vote in the election of Verderers. The register is made in two parts: the northern Forest parishes of Epping, Theydon Bois, Loughton, Waltham Holy Cross, Buckhurst Hill (formally part of Chingford) and Chigwell; and the southern Forest parishes of Woodford, Walthamstow, Leyton, Wanstead, East Ham (formerly Little Ilford) and West Ham.
7. Commoners are those owners and occupiers of land and tenements lying within the ancient boundary of Epping Forest. This is however restricted to owners and occupiers of land comprising at least half an acre of old enclosure and not covered by buildings. An “occupier” is someone with a legal interest in land, at least a tenancy. Both the owner of a qualifying piece of land and an occupier are entitled to be entered on the Register but where several persons are joint tenants they are considered as one,

and only one may be entered on the Register. If they fail to select one name, the Conservators will make the selection.

8. All new claims for inclusion on the register of Commoners are referred to the office of the Superintendent of Epping Forest which has all the relevant plans showing the ancient boundaries of the Forest.
9. The procedure for the revision of the Register of Commoners is as follows:
 - a. Notice of the intention of the Conservators to revise the Register is published in local newspapers and notices are displayed on the various notice boards in the Forest. In 2006, notice was published in the local papers of the Guardian and Gazette Group, and City AM.
 - b. After the receipt and investigation of the claims the Town Clerk prepares a draft Register and this is deposited by the end of December 2012 at Guildhall and various places in the Forest parishes for inspection. Notice of the deposit of the draft Register is again published in local newspaper. This notice also confirms the dates of the two meetings at which your Committee will settle the Register in its final form and at which any interested persons may attend and apply to the Conservators to correct the Register by inserting or deleting any names
 - c. Your Committee settles the Register
 - d. The Register is re-printed in final form
 - e. Notice is published in a similar manner to the former notices giving the date and place of the nomination meetings and, in the event of a poll or polls being demanded, the date of the poll or polls and addresses of the polling stations.
10. In 1993 your Committee agreed that for future elections two days be set aside for settling the Register: one day for a meeting in Guildhall and a different day for a meeting in the Forest. On this basis, the Register would be considered settled at the conclusion of the second meeting. It is recommended that authority be delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman to approve the dates of the special meetings of this Committee to settle the Register of Commoners; and this be reported to the next meeting of your Committee

Returning Officer

11. The Epping Forest Act 1878 provides that the Returning Officer for the elections shall be the Recorder of the City of London, or in his absence or inability, the Common Sergeant of the City of London, or in the absence

or inability of both, a person appointed by the Lord Mayor of the City of London shall be the returning officer.

12. In establishing the dates for the Nomination meeting and Polls, officers will liaise with the Returning Officer, in addition to the Chairman and Deputy Chairman to ensure his availability.

Nominations

13. A candidate for election as Verderer must be resident of one of the various parishes within the area of the Forest, and must not be a Member of Court of Common Council.
14. Nominations are received at Nomination meetings. Separate meetings are held for the northern and southern parishes. Unless otherwise determined by the Returning Officer, these meetings shall be for the duration of one hour.
15. Any qualified person if he consents may be nominated by any elector and seconder. If at the expiration of the hour (or otherwise defined period), there are no more candidates than vacancies, the candidates shall be deemed to be elected. If there are more candidates than vacancies, candidates may be elected by a show of hands. However, if there are more candidates than vacancies, and a poll is demanded the Returning Officer will adjourn the meeting and arrange for a poll to be held not less than twenty four hours and within three clear days after the meeting, and give appropriate notice of the places, date and time of polling.

Polling Stations

16. At the election in 1993 there were nine polling stations, six for the northern parishes and three for the southern parishes. In 1998 your Committee agreed to reduce the number of polling station for the southern parishes to two since the number of electors in these parishes is very small. It was further agreed in 2005 to reduce the number of polling stations in the northern parishes to four and one in the southern parishes. This reflected the fact that the electorate is very small, totalling no more than 150 in the northern parishes and 50 in the southern parishes.
17. As in the last election in 2006, it is recommended that the number of polling stations be kept at 4 in the northern parishes and one in the southern parishes, it being left to the discretion of the Town Clerk as to the precise location. At least one of the polling stations will be located in the parish of Epping as required by clause 21 of Schedule 4 of the Epping Forest Act 1878.

Additional publicity

18. In addition to the formal press notices, discussions have started with the Public Relations Office as to how the election can be promoted and local

knowledge and engagement with the election process and the Verderers be increased. Additional press releases, use of local radio and the City's website are being considered.

Corporation of London proxy voting

19. In the past the Chairman of this Committee has exercised a proxy vote on behalf of the City as landowner in the northern parishes and the Chairman of the Port Health Committee as owner of the cemetery in the southern parishes. If this were to continue it would require a recommendation from this Committee and the Port Health Committee to the Court of Common Council (as it is necessary for the proxies to be sealed by the Court of Common Council).
20. Officers are currently further exploring the legal position in this respect and will come back to the July meeting. Careful thought would need to be given to whether it was appropriate for Members to be voting at local level for those who would join the Committee and you may choose not to take up that option even if it is there Corporate & Strategic Implications
21. The Epping Forest Act 1878 provides for the election of Verderers. Accordingly, the election process has taken place every seven years since 1880.

Implications

22. It is anticipated that the election will cost between £10,000 and £15,000. This cost will be met from a Town Clerk's Elections budget.

Conclusion

23. This report outlines the timescale and process for the Election of Verderers. Legislation provides that the elections be held every seventh year, no later than the twentieth day of March, and that the Verderers take office on the twenty-fifth day of May in the year of the election. In order to start this process notice will be given by the end of July this year of the intention to revise the register.

Background Papers:

Epping Forest Act 1878 (Fourth Schedule)

Appendices:

The Forest boundary is illustrated at Appendix 1.

Contact:

Esther Sumner | esther.sumner@cityoflondon.gov.uk | 1481