

## **EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE** **Monday, 9 September 2013**

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held at  
Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 9 September 2013 at  
11.00 am

### **Present**

#### **Members:**

Alderman Gordon Haines (Chairman)  
Deputy Stanley Ginsburg (Deputy Chairman)  
George Abrahams  
Deputy John Barker  
Sheriff & Alderman Jeffrey Evans  
Alderman Robert Hall (Ex-Officio Member)  
Deputy Catherine McGuinness  
Sylvia Moys  
Barbara Newman  
Virginia Rounding  
Ian Seaton  
Verderer Peter Adams  
Verderer Michael Chapman  
Verderer Richard Morris  
Verderer Dr. Joanna Thomas

#### **Officers:**

Natasha Dogra	- Town Clerk's Office
Sue Ireland	- Director, Open Spaces
Andy Barnard	- Superintendent, Burnham Beeches & Stoke Common
Paul Thomson	- Superintendent, Epping Forest
Bob Warnock	- Superintendent, City Commons
Jo Hurst	- Epping Forest
Mark Jarvis	- Chamberlains Department

#### **1. APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies.

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

Deputy Catherine McGuinness and Verderer Richard Morris declared a standing interest as Trustees for the Epping Forest Centenary Trust.

#### **3. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** – That the public minutes and summary of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2013 be approved as a correct record.

A Member sought clarification in relation to Deer Management regarding the reference to an accelerated cull being counter-productive. The point was qualified to recognise that a rapid reduction in the Deer population would reduce the opportunity to positively manage the gender balance of the herd.

**Matters Arising:**

The Director of Open Spaces informed Members that she had provided Deputy McGuinness with the requested information on resources and costs of using other City of London officers to assist with responding to planning issues. Consequently, the Director has been asked to prepare a report regarding resourcing for the Open Spaces Committee to consider.

**4. GREEN FLAG AWARDS 2013**

The Committee received the report of the Director of Open Spaces which stated that once again the City of London Open Spaces have been successful in the Green Flag and London in Bloom award schemes.

Members were informed that all of the City of London's Open Spaces were successful in retaining their Green Flag status. Nine sites received additional Green Heritage Awards: Epping Forest, Ashted Common, Kenley Common, Burnham Beeches, Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood, West Ham Park, Bunhill Fields and the Cemetery and Crematorium.

Feedback reports from judges were received for a majority of the sites for the Green Flag awards. In response to a query, Members were informed that each site received different judges each year. Officers endeavoured to explain to the judges the context of each site in the limited time available for assessment. The Superintendents recognised the need to improve communication where judges had not enquired about specific policies and plans during the assessment process. Members asked that the Director of Open Spaces to relay the Committee's comments at her debriefing with Keep Britain Tidy regarding the appointment of judges with appropriate background and experience.

In response to a query from Members, Officers informed the Committee that the minimum pass mark was 66. Members noted that this year scores ranging between 70 and 80 had been achieved.

Members noted that the lack of signage in and around the Epping Forest had been highlighted by the judges, and asked that Officers follow this up to ensure adequate signage was erected. It was noted that the Superintendents were addressing issues relating to litter and fly tipping, and further information would be provided as part of their individual updates.

The Chairman, thanked the Director, Superintendent, Officers and Volunteers of Open Spaces for all of their hard work, and asked that special thanks be sent to the Officers and Volunteers for their contributions. This was supported by Members of the Committee.

**RESOLVED** – That Members noted:

(i) That the great success achieved by the City of London's Open Spaces in the Green Flag and London in Bloom Awards is noted and reported to the Court of Common Council on the 24th October 2013.

(ii) That the members of staff and volunteers at all the Open Spaces are congratulated on their contribution to the success in the awards.

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

The Superintendent of Epping Forest provided a brief verbal update to the Committee, with reference being made to the following:

### **New Herdsman**

Epping Forest's contract partner - Wildlife and Countryside Services – had recruited a new herdsman to replace the previous post holder.

### **Fires**

Epping Forest had been at a Fire Severity Index of 4 for most of July and August relieved only by rain in August. Epping Forest had experienced a series of fires mostly on Leyton and Wanstead Flats with the most serious incident being a series of 3 fires on Leyton Flats during the afternoon of 19th July which saw Fires close to Forest School; land close to the former Lido site and east of Hollow Pond. At its height the latter fire was fought by 12 tenders. Fires were continuing despite a reduced severity rating of 3 with fires at Wanstead and Leyton Flats during early September.

### **Rough Sleeper Clearances**

Clearances had increased by 63% to 44 from 27 for the same period in 2012. Epping Forest staff had met with MPS; London Borough of Redbridge and third sector agencies to develop a joint protocol that will more effectively coordinate the approach of all agencies.

### **Unexploded Ordnance**

Two teenagers uncovered an unexploded hand grenade with their metal detector prompting the public evacuation of Leyton Flats and closure of Whipps Cross Road while the Royal Logistic Corps destroyed the ordnance with a controlled explosion.

### **Fly tipping**

Overall fly tips remain down 17% on 2012. The commercial component of the fly tips continues to increase with Claypit Hill, High Beach being subject to a 12mt fly tip along 0.25 miles of the road on 15th August. There were also problems with a 15mt multiple fly tip across 4 weeks at Fairmead Road which was eventually cleared in September.

### **Nitrous Oxide Canisters**

Keepers and Litter staff noted a sudden and significant increase in Nitrous Oxide canisters being recovered from a range of sites including Wanstead Park; Standard Green; Staples Road Pond and Woodford Golf Course. The Nitrous Oxide gas had been inhaled as an alternative to other drugs.

### **Green Flag Results**

Epping Forest retained at Green Flag and Green Heritage for the eleventh year in succession.

### **Football Association Visit**

Following from a meeting with the Chairman, FA officials visited Wanstead Flats to discuss possible grant support for pavilion refurbishment; grounds maintenance and community outreach.

### **Wanstead Park**

English Heritage's Strategic Assessment for Wanstead Park which identifies 143 separate heritage assets within the Grade II\* Park and Garden has been published. Consultants JBA have been appointed to undertake a Hydrology Study of the Park. Sections of the concrete fence at the Park have collapsed due to possible concrete rot.

### **Highams Park Lake**

The Conservation Management Plan for the Lake area will be published shortly. Notice has been served on the Scout Association for the occupancy of the Michael Mallinson Watersports Centre and the City Surveyor is evaluating the Park Storage hut for potential use by Walthamstow Scouts.

### **Cattle Grids**

The last of the four Tier 1 Grids at Wake Road was completed in August.

### **Forest Events**

Forest Keepers staged a successful Dog Day at Wanstead Park on 9<sup>th</sup> June; supported the Church End Community picnic on 23<sup>rd</sup> June and hosted the Music in the Park event on 13<sup>th</sup> July. Three Illyria Theatre Company events were staged at Wanstead Park 'As You Like It on 28<sup>th</sup> July', 'Babe the Sheep-Pig' on 13<sup>th</sup> August and 'The Mikado' on 29<sup>th</sup> August.

### **Prosecutions**

Epping Forest undertook a successful prosecution on dog control with the dog owner being fined a total of £130 with £220 costs.

### **Staff Workday**

24 staff litter picked over 50 bags of rubbish on Wanstead Flats across the morning of 12<sup>th</sup> June.

### **Community Outreach**

On 13<sup>th</sup> August hosted Redbridge 'Fun for All' targeting Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic families with children with learning difficulties. Waltham Abbey Holy Family Catholic School's sixth form returned for a second year to litter pick Chingford Plan and Barn Hoppitt. Woodcraft Folk camped on the Forest for a week from 29<sup>th</sup> July.

### **Jubilee Pond, Wanstead Flats**

The pond relining was completed in June is now successfully holding water, reducing the call on abstracted water with the use of 2 km of surface drains to supplement rainfall. Ground Control has commenced construction of the

natural play facility and easy access trail and will finish work in September following a successful planning consent for the improvement of the Lakehouse Road car park. The Deputy Chairman addressed members of the Lake House Group ahead of their AGM on 19<sup>th</sup> August.

### **Scout Project Volunteer Hours:**

#### **Video Work**

Epping Forest has commissioned a series of videos outlining its work which include interviews with key staff and will include a video of the November meeting of this Committee.

#### **Recent Publicity**

In addition to the national publicity associated with Fires, Epping Forest was featured in an episode of the popular BBC Detective drama 'New Tricks' which was transmitted in September. Epping Forest was featured in a Guardian article by Sarah Maitland as an inspiration for National Parks, and featured in a Radio 4 programme 'What's the Point of the Lord Mayor of London'.

#### **Ladies Day 2014**

The Lord Mayor's office has confirmed the date of the next Ladies Day as 11<sup>th</sup> June 2014.

Members were concerned by the fly tipping data highlighted in the Superintendents update and queried whether local people and businesses could be engaged when attempting to catch those responsible. Members suggested looking through the CCTV footage of local businesses and using CCTV cameras around the Forest. The Director of Open Spaces said she had been invited to join the panel of a Board responsible for lobbying on national issues and the first issue to be considered was which Government department was responsible for environmental matters such as fly tipping.

Members noted the excellent work being done to promote community engagement and thanked Officers for their contribution to the outreach programme. It was noted that Officers must maintain a good dialogue with other service providers such as Suntrap, The Field Studies Council and the Epping Forest Centenary Trust as each have certain specialities and do not want to duplicate effort. The Superintendent reassured members that there was good dialogue between the Learning Partners and work was underway to secure the legacy from Heritage Lottery funding.

The Committee noted that the Superintendent had featured on the programme titled "What's the point of the Lord Mayor of London" and congratulated him on playing an informative role. In response to a query from Members with regards to signage being designed by Cod Steaks Ltd, Officers informed the Committee that designs would be submitted to the Committee in due course.

## **6. NATURAL PLAY STRUCTURES AT EPPING FOREST**

The Committee received the report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest and noted that the wooded areas of Epping Forest offered a rich diversity of

opportunity for informal play by young people. Some areas of the Forest, notably the flats, plains and greens offer less play potential, and may coincide with shortfalls of traditional playground facilities managed by local authorities. In such circumstances, the Committee had previously authorised the siting of traditional playgrounds on Epping Forest land.

Members were informed that low key Natural play facilities had been installed at three trial sites in Epping Forest as part of the Branching Out Project and are proving popular with children with no reported incidents to date. The City of London had been approached by both local people and local authorities requesting natural play areas at two further areas of the Forest - Hollow Ponds at Leyton Flats and Woodford Green, where there was deemed to be both insufficient play provision and other locally available public land.

In response to a query from Members, Officers said that Natural Play structures offered a focus for play at honeypot sites and were in keeping with the surroundings, while also re-engaging children with the natural environment in a safe and approachable surrounding. Natural Play provided a bridge between traditional play and the exploration of the wilder parts of the Forest. This was especially significant for children from the urban community who could experience barriers to enjoying and appreciating the Forest.

Officers informed the Committee that compared to standard, metal and plastic playgrounds, natural play areas could be more cost effective. Where materials can be sourced from the Forest, the only capital resource required was installation and landscaping by staff or contractors. Where costs were not met by a local authority, scheduled replacement, maintenance, safety inspections and insurance of users represent additional Local Risk costs.

Members of the Committee expressed their concern over the needs and aspirations detailed in the report requiring further work and until these were revised it would not be helpful to agree the installation of further formal or Natural Play areas. Members asked Officers to review the policy approach. Members agreed to a proposal by the Superintendent to pilot a design approach at Hollow Ponds working in partnership with the London Borough of Waltham Forest who have committed to fund a scheme. Proposals would be developed in partnership with the local community and designs could be brought to a future Committee meeting for Members to consider.

**RESOLVED:** That Members –

- i. Delegate to the Superintendent of Epping Forest responsibility to review the current licences for existing formal play facilities on Epping Forest Land ensuring that investment; maintenance; inspection and insurance obligations are properly maintained;
- ii. Endorse the principal that Natural Play areas can be considered as an option to address the paucity of play facilities in some London Boroughs encompassing Epping Forest;
- iii. Authorise the Superintendent of Epping Forest to negotiate suitable natural play areas at Hollow Pond and Woodford Green with the relevant

stakeholders and bring these designs back to the Epping Forest and Commons Committee for agreement;  
iv. Instruct the Comptroller and City Solicitor to undertake such documentation as necessary.

7. **EPPING FOREST TRUSTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2013**

The Committee considered the report of the Chamberlain and the Trustee's Annual Report and Financial Statements. The draft accounts were circulated to the Chairman and Deputy Chairman. Subsequently the accounts had been signed on behalf of the Trust by the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Finance Committee and had been audited.

8. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

The Superintendent of Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common provided a brief verbal update to the Committee, with reference being made to the following:

**Conservation**

- The Young pollard work had been completed and 63 young pollards received 2<sup>nd</sup> round of cuts i.e. first cut around 10 years ago - including use of a mobile elevated platform
- Cattle grazed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> trial invisible loop for 4 weeks in July and this included either side of the public highway Stewarts Drive
- Bracken control was undertaken by rolling, flailing, weed wiping and spraying by contractors
- Officers took part in a fire drill with Bucks Fire Service at Stoke Common
- Tree safety work had been carried out when the Local Highway Authority closed a section of public road allowing a safe window to work on difficult trees at the road side.

**Events**

- Guided walks events had taken place with grazing/true or false/simple walk/Kids woodland wildlife week
- The Community well-being day took place on the main common and was run with local community Church.
- The Chiltern Commons group visit had been hosted to look at invisible fencing
- The Epping Forest and Commons Committee visit to Burnham Beeches had taken place
- Officers also hosted buggy walks/alternative Simply walk/Burnham Grammar school induction days, and hosted the Burnham Beeches half marathon.

**Volunteers**

- Volunteers had cleared the pine whipped bracken and heather scrapes, and repaired pathways.
- The Regular Eco group was now 4+ people strong each week
- A new office based volunteer had joined the team and was currently cataloguing historical items collected over the last 133 years.

- 127 volunteers had contributed 678 hours, which was slightly quieter than normal due to summer holidays.

#### **Other**

- Visitor survey began collecting demographic data of visitors as part of planning control issues
- Visitor survey began collecting visitor opinions on the implementation of the various Dog Control Orders
- A new Assistant Ranger and new Senior Ranger had joined the team.

#### **9. BURNHAM BEECHES AND STOKE COMMON TRUSTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2013**

The Committee considered the report of the Chamberlain and the Trustee's Annual Report and Financial Statements. The draft accounts were circulated to the Chairman and Deputy Chairman. Subsequently the accounts had been signed on behalf of the Trust by the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Finance Committee and had been audited.

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

The Superintendent of City Commons provided a brief verbal update to the Committee, with reference being made to the following:

##### **Staff Changes**

The Project Officer and Assistant Project Officer had both left the Division to take up new appointments. The Superintendents PA retired in July. The Superintendent was proposing to restructure the Division and aimed to bring a report to the November Committee.

##### **Volunteers**

Additional volunteer tasks over the summer had meant an increase in 7% on the same point last year. 3582 hours were completed by volunteers since April 2013.

##### **Invisible Fence**

Members of the Ashted and Coulsdon Commons Consultative Committees visited Burnham Beeches on the 5<sup>th</sup> September to view the invisible fence. This was an extremely helpful visit and our thanks go to the Superintendent and the Head Ranger for providing such a thorough explanation of the system.

##### **Travellers**

Since reporting to the July committee there had been two further incursions on Coulsdon Commons. Byelaw enforcement was implemented immediately to protect the Common. The Superintendent was launching a project to improve the security around Coulsdon Common.

##### **Events**



The Kenley Fun Day was a great success with over 3000 people attending the event. A series of cross county runs, cycling and walking events have been licensed for September across the Commons. The villa project on Ashted Common was currently underway and this forms the last year of site excavations. Six guided walks were taking place over the weekend of the 14<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup> September.

**11. KENLEY REVIVAL PROJECT - GATEWAY 3/4 REPORT**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Open Spaces and were informed that on the 13th January 2013 the Committee agreed to submit a grant application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for Round 1 funding for the Kenley Revival Project, which aims to conserve historic airfield structures associated with the Kenley Airfield. On the 11th September the HLF were expected to announce the result of the application.

Members were informed that to avoid delay in proceeding to the next stage of this project, it was proposed that the Kenley Revival Project could be submitted to the Projects Sub-Committee for Gateway 3-4 Options Appraisal approval on 26th September. The Project Sub-Committee would determine whether to accept the offer of grant funding and proceed with the development phase of the project.

RESOLVED: - That Members:

- Note the forthcoming HLF decision on funding for the Kenley Revival Project.
- That delegated authority be granted to the Director of Open Spaces, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, to approve the Options Appraisal report for presentation at the Project Sub-committee subject to the decision of the HLF.

**12. CITY COMMONS TRUSTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2013**

The Committee considered the report of the Chamberlain and the Trustee's Annual Report and Financial Statements. The draft accounts were circulated to the Chairman and Deputy Chairman. Subsequently the accounts had been signed on behalf of the Trust by the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Finance Committee and had been audited.

**13. PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

Members queried when the Land Registration Working Party would be convening, and were informed that Officers were currently undertaking further research on some outstanding issues, after which the group would be assembled.

The Chairman of the Committee thanked Alderman Hall for his contribution to the work of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee over the years and

said he would be dearly missed by the Members. Members agreed that Alderman Hall's dedication and advice had been very helpful.

The Chairman also thanked Esther Sumner, Policy Officer, for her hard work whilst working with the Committee and welcomed her replacement Ignacio Falcon.

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

There was no urgent business.

**15. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED - It was agreed that under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business.

**Item No.**

**Paragraph(s)**

15 – 18

3

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

The Superintendent of Epping Forest informed the Committee of three urgent items of business.

**17. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

RESOLVED: - That Members agreed that the non-public minutes of the previous items 18 – 27 were an accurate record.

**Matters Arising:**

The Director of Open Spaces said she would follow up an action from the previous meeting regarding the circulation of further briefing notes and information concerning the draft Warren House Conservation Management Plan.

*Verderer Michael Chapman was invited to retire from the meeting, and was excluded for the remainder of the business considered by the Committee.*

RESOLVED: - That Members agreed that the non-public minutes of the previous items 28 – 31 were an accurate record.

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

There were no questions.

**The meeting ended at 1.00 pm**

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Chairman

**Contact Officer: Natasha Dogra**  
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