

EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE **Monday, 13 January 2014**

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held at
Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 13 January 2014 at
11.00 am

Present

Members:

Alderman Gordon Haines (Chairman)
Deputy Stanley Ginsburg (Deputy Chairman)
Deputy John Barker
Deputy Alex Deane
Alderman Jeffrey Evans
Sylvia Moys
Barbara Newman
Virginia Rounding
Ian Seaton
Verderer Peter Adams
Verderer Michael Chapman DL
Verderer Richard Morris

In Attendance:

Adrian Liddle
Denise Dillon

Officers:

Natasha Dogra	- Town Clerk's Department
Sue Ireland	- Director of Open Spaces
Paul Thomson	- Superintendent, Epping Forest
Bob Warnock	- Superintendent, City Commons
Alison Elam	- Group Accountant, Chamberlain's Department
Roger Adams	- Senior Principal Surveyor, City Surveyor's Department
Paul Monaghan	- City Surveyor's Department
Julian Kverndal	- City Surveyor's Department
Jo Hurst	- Open Spaces

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Deputy McGuinness and Verderer Thomas.

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

There were none.

3. MINUTES

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as an accurate record, subject to items 12 and 13 being agreed by Members via email.

Matters arising:

The Town Clerk informed Members that the figures listed under item 4 in the minutes should be altered as follows:

Original budget 2014/15 = £4,788,000

Expenditure increase = £326,000

Increase in City Surveyor's Additional Works Programme of £337,000 for Epping Forest and £253,000 for Burnham Beeches, Stoke Common and City Commons.

It was noted that 2014/15 Open Spaces Work Programme would be circulated to Members and Verderers in March 2014.

In response to a query regarding bovine TB, Officers informed Members that regular tests were carried out with no issue yet.

4. **WEST WICKHAM AND COMMONS CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING DRAFT MINUTES**

The minutes were noted.

5. **BURNHAM BEECHES CONSULTATION GROUP MINUTES OF 11TH DECEMBER 2013**

Members asked Officers to list attendance at the meeting in the minutes in the future.

6. **TERMS OF REFERENCE UPDATE**

The Committee received the report of the Town Clerk which informed Members that as part of the post-implementation review of the changes made to the governance arrangements in 2011 it was agreed that all Committees should review their terms of reference annually. This would enable any proposed changes to be considered in time for the reappointment of Committees by the Court of Common Council.

Members noted the Terms of Reference with one change made to clarify the quorum of the Committee with the following sentence being added to:

"For the purpose of non-Epping Forest related business the quorum must consist of five Committee Members who must be Members of the Court of Common Council."

Resolved: That Members agreed the Terms of Reference for the Committee, with one vote against the recommendation to approve the Terms of Reference.

7. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

The Committee received an update from the Superintendent of Epping Forest and noted the following points:

Staff changes

Football Development Officer has left to head up a public health initiative in a North London Borough. Visitor Services have successfully appointed a six month Internship with funding from (TBA while a new Volunteer Assistant Publications Officer is working at The Warren.

Anti-Social Behaviour, Policing and Bill - Changes in Dog Sentencing

Following the consultation last summer, new laws will be introduced in England and Wales raising the maximum jail sentence for the owner of a dog that kills someone from two to 14 years. In the consultation Epping Forest sought this parity with current sentencing guidance on motoring offences.

Environment Agency Flood Maps

On 12th December, the Environment Agency published new Flood Maps covering properties at risk from sea, river and surface water flooding.

Department of Environment, Farming & Rural Affairs - CAP Modulation

DEFRA have announced a 12% transfer from Pillar 1 (direct payments to farmers that previously replaced price supports) to Pillar 2 (rural development). DEFRA had previously argued for the full EU figure of 15%, but have responded to a NFU campaign for 9%. 87% Of payments will be through Natural England/RPA Agri-Environment Schemes with a review of schemes in 2016.

Local Government Information Unit Research on the Green Belt

National Trust sponsored research by the Local Government Information Unit shows 51% of LPAs likely or very likely to allocate GB for development purposes. Recent proposals in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement may encourage the release of Green Belt Land.

St Jude's Day Storm

A team of 12 staff have worked for four weeks to remove more than 250 trees and branches which have fallen close to roads, homes and paths. Costs are estimated at £45,000 and rising.

Christmas Storms

Continued stormy weather with winds gusting over 60mph has brought down further trees and branches, with four further road closures on Christmas Eve alone. Wind-driven rain has also damaged the western elevation of the Hunting Lodge removing the lime 'paint' and render. Epping Forest also received over twice the average rainfall in December and the trend is continuing for January. Sections of the Forest have been again flooding onto the local roads system. It was reported that the localised flooding at Pillow Mounds has been solved by the installation of drains.

Fisheries Management

Cuts at the Environment Agency have led to a loss of £10,000 funding to support our work with free public fishing on 25 ponds and lakes in Epping Forest.

Joint patrols with Fishery Enforcement Officers

Forest Keepers have jointly patrolled with Fisheries Enforcement Officers to address deliberate fishing without licenses and removing fish that were being caught. Five anglers were prosecuted across 2013 with fines totalling £2,600.

Horse fatality at Rangers Road

Forest Keepers and Operations staff worked closely with the Emergency Services following an incident involving a runaway horse which collided with a vehicle on Rangers Road. After sedation, the injured horse was successfully retrieved from a roadside ditch, but had to be destroyed due to the extent of its injuries.

Quad Bike Incident

8 Keepers were involved with the arrest of a Quad Bike rider who assaulted 2 Forest Keepers in early January. Essex Police provided timely and welcome support and both rider and passenger were arrested.

Fly tipping

Total fly tipping incidents were down 24.8% or 181 incidents from 731 in 2012 to 550 for the whole of 2013. This welcome return to pre-2005 fly tipping levels shows a 39.3% overall fall from the record 2011 figure of 907 incidents. The impact of the economic downturn seems to continue with less household waste and an increasing element of commercial waste. National coverage of fly tipping issues at Epping Forest was achieved on the back of a Tweet involving an image of a dumped 'big cat' soft toy.

Rough Sleepers

Forest Keepers attended a record 51 rough sleeper camps across the year, largely in the south of the Forest. For the first time Keepers were asked to participate in the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) rough sleeper count which informs the national estimate. The official figure will be released in Spring, but early indications suggest levels in local boroughs close to the Forest are high for Outer London borough, a trend which is particularly reflected at Wanstead Flats.

Year of the Dog Initiative

The London Borough of Waltham Forest Dog Control Orders (DCOs) were advertised 16th December and came into force on 6th January 2014. In light of the new DCOs at Epping District and Waltham Forest and the increase in dog incidents, Epping Forest will be launching 10 public talks with a Forest Keeper and Animal Behaviourist to help dog walkers, two 'Paws' dog fun days at Wanstead Park and The View in addition to training with LBWF and hopefully the London Borough of Redbridge on DCO Fixed Penalty Notices.

Great Gregories Outwintering Facility

Cattle were taken off the Forest on TBA. Following planning and procurement delays the project is now running behind schedule. Adverse weather has delayed the temporary straw bale housing which will be used to accommodate the cattle during the winter.

The Grotto, Wanstead Park

Further damage to the Grade II Listed Building by self-seeded trees within the fenced area has changed the previous policy of 'camouflaging' The Grotto with scrub. As discussed on the November Committee visit clearance of the building has been initiated with dramatic results.

Cattle Grids – Meeting with Horse Riding interests

A series of meetings have been held including Natural England and British Horse Society in which help suggestions were made on surfaces and gate locations. Similar meetings were held with the Epping Forest Riders Association regarding both grids and fencing gates.

Staff Conference

Staff from Epping Forest and Cemetery and Crematorium jointly organised a very successful Departmental staff conference in December for TBA staff.

Gifford Wood

Forest Keepers from the North Team supported a community planting event for a series of local schools, ahead of a well-attended public planting event on 14th December with over 120 planters planting some TBA trees.

Family Learning Events

600 children visited Father Christmas at the Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge over the weekend of 14/15th December complete with a craft fair and reindeer.

Highams Park Lake Large Raised Reservoir

The City Surveyor has appointed Royal Haskoning DHV as design contractors for the dam project. A construction contractor will be appointed shortly. Walthamstow Scouts have been asked to sign a Tenancy-at-Will covering their occupation to the start of works. Pre-Application meetings with the Local Planning Authority (LPA) have indicated that an Environmental Impact Assessment will not be required. The LPA have yet to determine the development status of the project.

City of London Contract Partner – MITIE – Moratorium on Works

The City Surveyor has announced a 4 month moratorium in December on all but Health and Safety critical works.

GLA 'Mini-Holland' Proposals

The London Boroughs of Newham and Waltham Forest have both been short-listed for the final round of the GLA's cycling awards. Both Boroughs have been informed that they cannot rely on Forest Land for Mini-Holland schemes without the approval of your Committee.

Friends of Bush Wood

Forest Keepers have worked closely with the Bush Wood Area Residents Association (BARA) to develop a series of conservation tasks delivered by a new Friends Group which has cleared Bush Wood's only pond and improved a series of woodland paths.

Outreach – Rokeby School and Kids Company

The Community Outreach Officer, Forest Keepers and Kids Company have supported practical conservation tasks for children from Rokeby School during November and December.

Gifford and Rowan Trails

Two new waymarked trails have been completed at Epping Forest, the Gifford Trail in Upsire and the Rowan Trail at Lords Bushes and Knighton Wood. This brings the number of waymarked trails at Epping Forest to nine.

Epping Forest Visitor Survey

Staff and volunteers have completed 1083 completed visitor questionnaires. The contract with Alison Millward Associates is now complete and Epping Forest is now fully responsible for the survey. Survey data has recently been cross-matched with the Hazardous Tree Review to ensure areas of high visitor density coincide with the most regular survey thresholds.

Landscaping at Jubilee Pond

The landscaping works at Jubilee Pond are now complete following the resurfacing of the car park which opened on 9th December. Two planting tasks have been completed ahead of the main spring planting together with adjustments to the natural play area.

Volunteer Conservation Tasks

Volunteers have been clearing paths at Wanstead Park and clearing holly and associated scrub at Leyton Flats. Since April we have recruited 20 new volunteers working in five different roles.

Cloister - T E Lawrence Hut

The death of Peter O'Toole, famous for his portrayal of T E Lawrence, has renewed interest in the Cloister, the hut on Pole Hill shared by T E Lawrence and Viv Richards which is now located in The Warren Yard. The Superintendent is working with Lawrence's biographer to research the history of the hut. The City Surveyor is awaiting the outcome of this research before potentially commissioning a Conservation Management Plan for the building.

A Verderer asked if we could allocate resources to ditch clearing to improve flooding onto roads. Officer said City Surveyors were assessing ditches, culverts and bridges to clarify condition and responsibility. Officers were also working closely with Local Authorities in problem areas being included into works programme. Bridges were the responsibility of City Surveyors, ditches, however the responsibility of Epping Forest culverts was yet to be undecided.

In response to a query regarding the 'mini Holland' scheme Officers informed Members that it was a series of cycle ways with extension of public rental bikes. The London Borough of Newham had been shortlisted but City Corporation Officers had made it clear that Forest land was not available without the full consent of this Committee.

A query was raised regarding how Highams Park Lake was coping with the recent rain. Officers said the rain had been prolonged and continuous but not heavy. The dams had all coped as they should

In response to a query regarding the limewash on Hunting Lodge Officers said decisions were made and agreed on the limewash previously by this Committee as the most authentic and beneficial treatment for the exterior. Officers would be re-rendering where the rain has caused damage.

A Verderer raised a query regarding whether there would be further pressure throughout the Forest if this cycle scheme went ahead. Officers said the Management Plan was addressing this issue.

8. PROGRESS REPORT - BRANCHING OUT (HERITAGE LOTTERY PROJECT) UPDATE NUMBER 10

The Committee received the report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest informing Members that the Branching Out projects were broadly on track, with capital elements largely complete: Jubilee Pond landscaping and car park works were finished and all four cattle grids had been installed with minor snags being addressed by Essex County Council.

Three new apprentice arborists had been recruited for the final year of the scheme. The spend profile matches the programme. The focus for the next six months was on the design of Gateways and a standard approach to Forest furniture, now that the Open Spaces branding exercise was nearing completion.

The Director informed Members that the report had been considered by the Finance Committee, where the Chairman had asked for the following information to be added to the report for clarity:

“Budget variances reflect a contingency claim from HLF to cover a £22,747 increase in the arborist salary and training budget. Apprentices were older with higher salaries than estimated due in part to the requirement for them to have a driving licence. The City and Guilds Land Based Services Assessments are now paid by the Corporation, rather than the training college, as originally planned.

Other changes are minimal or reflect transfers of miscoded items from revenue to capital, which balance out. They include £1,200 for the vehicle crossover to access the rear of Butler’s Retreat adjusted from fees to works; the transfer of £4,000 from works to fees for a Highways Deed of Easement at High Beach, and; virement of £1,400 to balance the budget lines for the project manager’s salary, which is split between two projects. There is no change to the overall budget allocation, which includes a contingency sum.”

Members noted that new volunteer roles comprised cattle warden and publication assistant, alongside a renewed recruitment drive for the Forest Centres. A drop-in volunteering day was held in October specifically for young people.

Members were informed that three new apprentices have been appointed. Two of the apprentices completed the full programme in 2012/13 but one was asked to leave, although he may complete the Capel Manor course.

An additional page that included VAT charges was circulated to Members with clarification on financial data by request of Chamberlain.

Officers informed Members that the Lottery had been very understanding in delays to Keystone Tree work due to conditions and had permitted carry-over of targets to after project end.

A Verderer raised the point in relation to the Gateways and Signage. These were to be completed by spring 2014 but Members had not yet seen designs. Officers said Member approval would be sought for the gateway design before commissioning.

Members also noted that the Heritage Lottery Fund had a very clear formula on calculation on how to express volunteer stats for matched funding and Officers reported volunteer stats according to that.

Resolved: That Members approved the overall budget total, subject to Heritage Lottery approval.

9. **EPPING FOREST VISITOR SERVICES ACTIVITIES**

The Committee received the report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest informing Members of Visitor Services' objectives and operational priorities for the coming financial year.

Members were informed that there were seven areas the Visitor Services Department focus on and they were as follows:

i) Delivering an information service to Epping Forest visitors primarily through the flagship Visitor Centre at The View and Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge and also at The Temple and High Beach Visitor Centre.

ii) Providing memorable visits and income through complimentary retail activity.

iii) Delivering Life Long Learning sessions concentrating on Tudor History and provide support to three external Learning Partners that provide ecological learning sessions.

iv) Entertaining visitors to Epping Forest through the management and hosting of Forest Events.

v) Interpreting the significance of Epping Forest through exhibitions and publications such as Forest Focus and the Events Diary.

vi) Developing a communications presence for Epping Forest through publications, the City of London Website, Press statements and social networking platforms such as Twitter.

vii) Developing wider public participation in formal sport, especially football at Wanstead Flats and golf at Chingford.

Visitor Services Priorities were set out as follows:

- i) Health and Safety of all
- ii) Visitor Experience
- iii) Heritage, Education and Learning
- iv) High Quality Events
- v) Positive P.R. (both internal and external)
- vi) Income Generation
- vii) Sustainability

A point was raised by a Verderer regarding the income generated by High Beech Visitor Centre and the high level of visits Centre, making it clear that High Beach was an essential site and must be retained.

Officers said the Centre remained an attraction, but there was a sure and steady increase on visits and sales at The View. Officers were still searching for volunteers and partners suitable for High Beach and wished to retain all three.

Verderers said it would be useful to have High Beech Visitor Centre run by volunteers and queried whether this was the case at the Temple and whether we increase corporate and private hire there.

Officers said they were trying to improve volunteer involvement at all sites. The Temple was manned by two staff during opening hours and these were supported by volunteers. Illyria income was included in these budgets. Corporate hospitality was also increasing at the Hunting Lodge and The View

Officers agreed to present Members with a broken down summary of income and expenditure in Visitor Services to the next meeting.

The reference to works to be carried out to the Capel Road changing rooms during 2014 was removed.

10. **PROPOSED EPPING FOREST LICENCE AND PRODUCE CHARGES 2014**

The Committee received the report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest updating Members on the charges levied for the management of various Forest licences and produce sales at Epping Forest and sought approval for the proposed charges for 2014/15.

The licencing of activity on Forest Land had raised a total so far in 2013/14 of £9,898. Produce sales had generated £1,132 and Horse Riding Licences a further £10,524. Charges for licences had been raised by a figure of 3% with the exception of Horse Licences charges, which remained fixed since their introduction in 2003.

The additional byelaws for the regulation of Horse Riding were introduced at Epping Forest on 20 June 2003. The fees that could be charged for horse rising licences are set out in the byelaws, and were the only charges that have remained static since introduction. Prices for licences were set having regard to matters set out in the byelaws, could be reviewed from time to time, and can

only rise by the Retail Price Index from the period that the prices were last reviewed. Based on the Bank of England inflation calculator a full year Riding School licence would now cost in the £54.73 £56.32 range (based on the precise RPI indexation).

In response to a query from Members it was noted that the charges levied under Horse Riding licence scheme were designed to realise 50% of the costs of maintaining surfaced and posted rides which were the only available access for horses during the closed riding season.

Officers informed the Committee that Horse licences had not changed and neither had model aircraft – although the latter were fixed under the byelaws. Officers wanted to have a wider conversation with users on fishing, football, golf, horse riding and other activities widely subsidised by us, to foster a greater understanding of this issue. A formula did exist for the calculation of horse licence fees, directly related to the maintenance costs of the rides, but this was drawn up on estimates of thousands of riders rather than hundreds.

A Verderer raised the point that the amount of VAT had risen since these charges were first set so practical income had decreased. There had been rumours that riders may not be paying until they are made to pay. Officers responded saying that they did have 'stop days' for Golf, riding etc where they check licences and had made two prosecutions recently. Most riders do have licences and Officers also double check when holders cancel or fail to renew.

In response to a Verderer query regarding livery yards Officers said a change was made to the scheme regarding schools as they effectively rent out horses to different students for lessons. However, this was not the case at livery yards so licencing was still the responsibility of the owner. Officers would like to make it easy for yards to collect fees on our behalf (not currently possible) particularly as the reduced opening at High Beach has made it more difficult for some riders to pay.

Officers informed Members that the record income for horse-riding licences was three years ago, and the lowest was only £1000 lower so the amounts are reasonably constant.

Officers informed Members that fees for filming in the forest would be dealt with under a separate report to be considered by Committee in the future.

In response to a query regarding fitness training in the forest there had been a noticeable growth of this style of organisation. Officers agreed that using the area around the war memorial for fitness training was not an appropriate activity and agreed to investigate the matter further.

Resolved: That Members:

- Approved the proposed charges for 2014/15
- Approved the delegation to the Superintendent of discretionary powers to set terms and conditions and impose deposit arrangements for licences, and to set charges in the case of unusual licence requests.

11. **EPPING FOREST DOG INCIDENTS 2013**

The Committee received the report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest informing Members of the level of dog-related incidents, which occurred on Epping Forest and the Buffer lands that had been reported to the Conservators from January to November 2013 and the number of prosecutions for dog related offences. The report showed that there was a varied degree of increase or decline in the figures shown for the five types of incidents monitored and that further monitoring was necessary to pick up any trends.

There had been 482 reported incidents from 1 January 2013 to 31 November 2013 compared with 396 for the same period in 2012, an overall increase of 21.7%.

Members noted that the report indicated the estimated dog visits per year; the percentage of reported incidents which included fouling was very low and not a major discussion point for the Committee.

12. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

The Committee received an update from the Director of Open Spaces on behalf of the Superintendent of Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common, and Members noted the following:

Christmas Storms

- The Burnham Beeches site was closed fully for 1 day (Christmas eve) and partially on two further occasions. No major damage was done in the area but some clearance was required on each occasion. The Christmas period saw limited staff on duty which made this a particularly challenging period for those on rota.

Events – 1300 participants attended the following events:

- Christmas carols at the Café and lantern making - 100 people attended
- Hosted school 9 visits– 540 students attended
- Guided walks x 2 – 45 people attended
- Health walks x 4 – 40people attended

The total number of volunteer hours was 1331 (366 hours were accrued by under 18s)

Ongoing projects included:

- Heathland restoration
- Post storm clear up
- Ancient tree survey
- Office support work.

Stoke Common

- Continuation of heathland restoration works at SC – 1.5 Ha of Mulching – stumps and young birch
- Additional 0.5Ha of secondary woodland cleared on the north common.

Burnham Beeches

- Work on pollards with MEWP (Mobile elevated work platform) + tree safety following storms Joint work with NLOS to cable brace a pollard.
- Narrowing of Lord mayors drive undertaken – included the complete re-modelling of one side of the entrance apron, provision of a pedestrian access path, drainage and tarmac works.
- Additional Works Programme (City Surveyor) - 350sqm of tarmac repair were carried out on Lord Mayor's Drive

Staff Changes

The Assistant information Ranger/Conservation Officer was due to leave her post at the end of January and the recruitment process had begun.

13. INTRODUCTION OF DOG CONTROL ORDERS AT BURNHAM BEECHES

The Committee received the report of the Superintendent of Burnham Beeches, which sought Member approval to proceed to the statutory consultation phase for the introduction of Dog Control Orders at Burnham Beeches National Nature Reserve, using the powers provided under Secondary Authority status.

The Director of Open Spaces had recently received a lengthy response from the Kennel Club which required further investigation by Members. The Committee agreed that in order to make a decision on the matter Members must address the points raised in the Kennel Club response. The following Members agreed to attend a two hour meeting in the beginning of February with the Director, Superintendent and a Member of the Burnham Beeches Consultative Committee:

- Deputy Deane
- Ian Seaton
- Stanley Ginsburg
- Verderer Adams

The Chairman also suggested that George Abrahams may wish to take part in the meeting. It was noted that although the Verderers could take part in the discussions on this matter they would not be able to vote on the decision.

Resolved: Members agreed that the decision would be deferred until the March Committee meeting.

14. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

The Committee received an update from the Superintendent of City Commons, and Members noted the following points:

Storms

Christmas storms caused damage to trees across City Commons, consequently, the Rangers on duty were very busy making the sites safe and clearing fallen trees. The Ranger team should be congratulated for their commitment over this period having to do a series of zone 1 tree safety inspections each time the wind exceed 45MPH.

Byelaw Enforcement

A prosecution under the byelaws in relation to a dog not under effective control on Riddlesdown is progressing. The court hearing has been deferred and we are waiting for a new date to be announced.

Bridleway 38 – Ashtead Common

The surfacing of Bridleway 38 from Craddock's Avenue to Lady Howards Crossing has been successfully completed taking advantage of a very dry spell of weather in late November early December.

Holmefield Road – Coulsdon Common

Posts have been installed successfully alongside Holmefield Road, the intention of these posts is to prevent vehicles encroaching onto the Common.

Cattle

The last of our breeding cattle left Farthing Downs in December. Some were sold and 16 have moved to Epping Forest for over wintering. The 13 one-year old calves are grazing Lower Woodplace Farm Field on the west side of the Downs, having moved there from Kenley Common on New Year's Eve. The two-year old cows are in our barn at Merlewood and have been blood tested before being moved to Epping Forest in late January. This will allow space to house the one-year old calves in February & March.

Sheep

Some of our sheep are grazing Tollers Field on the east side of New Hill where they are likely to be joined by sheep from Kenley Common and Riddlesdown later in January.

Volunteer numbers

By the end of December volunteers have contributed 8019 hours this is 5% up on the same point last year.

Events

The Rangers organised 13 guided walks during November & December and I pleased to report a big increase in participation in the Health Walking Scheme in the first week of January.

Kenley Air show

The organisers of the Kenley Charity Air Show have postponed the event for 2014 and have indicated their intention to apply for a licence to hold an air show in September 2015.

Kenley Revival Project – Kenley Common

The part time, fixed term contract Project Development Officer has been appointed final arrangements are in hand and late January start date is expected. The first Project Board meeting has been booked for the 20th January 2014.

Staff Changes

On the 6th January 2014, the Superintendent of Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common took on responsibility for the seven Commons in Surrey and South London. Bob Warnock has started a two month period shadowing the Superintendent of Hampstead Heath and will take on responsibility for Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queens Park on the 1st March 2014.

A Ranger based in the Coulsdon Commons team left at the end of December to dedicate her time to her young family. In addition, a Ranger will leave at the end of January to take up a new position with the National Trust as an Area Ranger in the Lake District, based in Coniston.

Restructure

The Superintendents are consulting staff on the restructure at City Commons. This will conclude tomorrow and a final report will be presented to the Director of Open Spaces and the Human Resources Business Partner as the proposals fall within the Directors delegations.

The structure aligns and clarifies the roles and responsibilities for the three Head Rangers, together with a supporting Senior Ranger to the tree charities Ashted Common, Coulsdon Commons and West Wickham Commons.

The proposed structure creates four specialist Ranger posts the focus of these posts will be woodland, livestock, conservation and information to help ensure consistency across the Division.

The proposals include changing five job titles, updating job descriptions and person specifications across the Division and include the position of an Apprentice Ranger based in the Ashted team.

The proposals are cost neutral and the aim is to implement the new structure on the 1st April 2014.

Budget 2013/14

We have completed the budget monitoring for end of December based on 75% of the fiscal year lapsed. At this point the Ashted Budget shows 83.50% spent and the combined Coulsdon Commons and West Wickham Commons 77.50% spent.

Work Programmes

Work programmes for 2013/14 are on track.

The Management Priorities and work programmes for 2014/15 have been prepared and are being presented to the three Consultative Committees in January & February 2014. These will then be presented to the Epping Forest & Commons Committee in March 2014.

Green Flag and Green Heritage Applications for 2014 were being progressed and the deadline for submission was the end of January 2014.

On behalf of the Committee the Chairman thanked the staff at all of the sites for their hard work in such difficult conditions.

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

There were none.

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

There were three matters considered urgent by the Chairman:

1. Management and secondment arrangements following the resignation of the Superintendent of Hampstead Heath

Following the resignation of the Superintendent of Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queens Park, Members were informed on the details of the secondment arrangements, to ensure the effective management of North London Open Spaces is maintained and in particular, the "Ponds Project", continues to be delivered. Members thanked the Superintendents for all of their hard work and their readiness to add new areas to their remits. Members offered their continued support to the Officers.

2. Highams Park Conservation Management Plan – Progress Report

On 8 July 2013 in a joint report of the City Surveyor and the Superintendent of Epping Forest regarding the dam at Highams Park, there was reference to the need for a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for the park to support the Planning Permission process for the dam project. Members agreed that the draft consultation required more work and offered to email their comments to the City Surveyor to incorporate into the current draft and present at the Committee meeting in March.

The Superintendent agreed to send the City Surveyor notes of local meetings.

3. Schedule of Committee visits 2014

The Town Clerk presented the following schedule to Committee Members:

Epping Forest & Commons
8 March (Epping Forest)
10 May (Epping Forest)
14 June (City Commons)
5 July (Burnham Beeches)
11 June Ladies Day, EF
*6 September (Epping Forest)
<i>To Be Confirmed</i> October Dorneywood LM visit
1 November (Epping Forest)

Resolved: That Members agreed the Schedule of Visits.

17. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

MOTION: 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.

18. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

Resolved: That Members agreed the minutes as an accurate record of the previous meeting.

19. **'VERBAL UPDATE BY THE CITY SURVEYOR & SUPERINTENDENT OF EPPING FOREST ON HIGHAMS PARK LAKE DAM PROPOSALS FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

The Committee received the report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest and the City Surveyor.

20. **OPTIONS APPRAISAL - JUBILEE RETREAT**

The Committee received the report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest.

21. PROPOSED HIGHWAYS DEDICATION OF FOREST LAND (HAWKSMOUTH)

The Committee received the report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest.

22. NON PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

There were none.

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

The meeting ended at Time Not Specified

Chairman

Contact Officer: Natasha Dogra
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