

EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE **Monday, 12 May 2014**

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held at
Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 12 May 2014 at
11.00 am

Present

Members:

Alderman Gordon Haines (Chairman)
George Abrahams (Deputy Chairman)
Deputy John Barker
Alderman Jeffrey Evans
Alderman Ian Luder
Deputy Catherine McGuinness
Barbara Newman
Virginia Rounding
Verderer Peter Adams
Verderer Michael Chapman DL
Verderer Richard Morris
Verderer Dr. Joanna Thomas
Sylvia Moys

Officers:

Natasha Dogra	- Town Clerk's Department
Sue Ireland	- Director, Open Spaces
Paul Thomson	- Superintendent, Epping Forest
Andy Barnard	- Superintendent, Burnham Beeches, Stoke Common & City Commons
Jo Hurst	- Business Manager, Epping Forest
Sam Cook	- Remembrancer's Department
Bob Meldrum	- Assistant Director, Surveyors
Alison Hurley	- Assistant Director, Surveyors
Roger Adams	- Senior Principal Surveyor
Julian Kverndal	- Senior Historic Building Surveyor

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Deputy Ginsburg and Ian Seaton.

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

There were no declarations.

3. ORDER OF COURT OF COMMON COUNCIL

Received.

4. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

The Committee proceeded to elect a Chairman in accordance with Standing Order No. 29. A list of Members eligible to stand was read and Alderman Gordon Haines being the only Member expressing a willingness to serve was declared to have been elected as Chairman of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee for the ensuing year.

5. **ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN**

The Committee proceeded to elect a Deputy Chairman in accordance with Standing Order No. 30. A list of Members eligible to stand was read and George Abrahams being the only Member expressing a willingness to serve was declared to have been elected as Deputy Chairman of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee for the ensuing year.

The Committee extended their thanks to Deputy Ginsburg for the work he undertook during his year as Deputy Chairman.

6. **EPPING FOREST AND COMMONS COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS 2014/15**

The Committee received the report of the Town Clerk and were asked to consider its appointments for the next twelve months. Members were reminded of the current membership of the various Sub Committees, Consultative Committees, Steering Groups and Management Project.

RESOLVED – That the Membership of Sub Committees be agreed as follows:

Epping Forest Reference Sub Committee

Alderman Haines
George Abrahams
Deputy Barker
Deputy McGuinness
Alderman Evans
Sylvia Moys
Barbara Newman
Virginia Rounding
Two Verderers

Ashted Commons Consultative Committee

Alderman Haines
George Abrahams
Sylvia Moys
Barbara Newman
1 Vacancy

Burnham Beeches Consultative Committee

Alderman Haines
George Abrahams
Sylvia Moys
Barbara Newman

Couldson Common Consultative Committee

Alderman Haines

George Abrahams
Verderer Adams
Sylvia Moys
Barbara Newman

West Wickham Commons Consultative Committee

Alderman Haines
George Abrahams
Verderer Adams
Sylvia Moys
Barbara Newman

Epping Forest Centre Joint Consultative Committee

Alderman Haines
George Abrahams
Verderer Adams
Verderer Morris
Deputy McGuinness

Epping Forest Management Plan Steering Group

Alderman Haines
George Abrahams
Verderer Adams
Sylvia Moys
Deputy McGuinness
Verderer Thomas
Verderer Chapman
1 Vacancy

Wanstead Flats Playing Fields Committee

Alderman Haines
George Abrahams
Verderer Thomas
Verderer Adams

Opens Spaces & City Gardens Committee representative

Verderer Adams

7. MINUTES

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record with the following revision.

A Member enquired why the Horse Riding Licence had not been increased since its introduction in 2003. Officers indicated that the charge would be considered for increase following forthcoming public consultation in the Epping Forest Management Plan.

The action at item 6 – Enforcement of Epping Forest Byelaws regarding additional information between ordinary conversations with the public and advisory conversations would be addressed in the next report on the subject.

8. **BURNHAM BEECHES CONSULTATION GROUP MINUTES OF 2ND APRIL 2014**

Received.

9. **ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR, CRIME AND POLICING ACT 2014**

The Committee received the report of the Remembrancer which informed the Committee of a legislative change which would allow the Common Council to exercise new powers to tackle anti-social behaviour (including powers relating to the control of dogs) in the City Corporation's open spaces.

The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 created the Public Spaces Protection Order, which could be used by local authorities to curtail activities which have a detrimental effect on public spaces in their areas. As a result of discussions with the Government, provision was included in the Act to enable the Secretary of State to designate the Common Council and other custodians of open spaces as bodies additionally entitled to make these Orders.

Use of this provision would enable the Common Council to make Public Spaces Protection Orders in the open spaces outside the City. Infringements of the Orders will be criminal offences punishable by a fixed penalty notice of £100, or a fine of £1,000 on summary conviction. The Common Council's power to make Dog Control Orders would cease after the changes come into effect, although existing Dog Control Orders would continue in force for a period of three years.

10. **OPEN SPACES DEPARTMENT BUSINESS PLAN 2014-2017**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Open Spaces. The plan outlined the departmental priorities for the forthcoming year, outlined longer term projects and specified how Officers would measure our performance using a range of performance indicators.

The Director advised the Committee that in future the Open Spaces Business Plan report would be considered by the Open Spaces Committee only.

Members expressed concern over the high staff turnover figure quoted in the report and were informed that the figure included seasonal staff. In future, the figure will be disaggregated between planned and unplanned turnover.

Resolved: That Members approved the Open Spaces Department Business Plan for 2014-17

11. **PROVISIONAL ADDITIONAL WORKS PROGRAMME - 2015/16**

The Committee considered the report of the City Surveyor which set out a provisional list of cyclical projects being considered for properties under the management of Epping Forest and Commons Committee under the umbrella of the "additional works programme".

The draft cyclical project list for 2015/16 totalled approximately £0.72m and would continue the ongoing programme in the maintenance of the property and infrastructure assets.

Resolved: That Members endorsed the provisional list of works for 2015/16.

12. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

The Committee received the following update from the Superintendent of Epping Forest:

Staff changes

The Community Liaison Officer completed his temporary contract term. An Interim Sports Development Coordinator had been appointed to work on current and future season's bookings, together with four casual Information Assistants for 'The View'.

Weather

With an unseasonably warm and dry March and April, the Fire Severity Index for the south of the Forest rose to 4 (Very High) and 3 (high) for the North of the Forest for the last few weeks of April.

Riders Forum – 9th March

A very positive meeting was held on 9th March, with praise for information being disseminated on events and work to open up 7 km of horse rides. Concerns continued to be raised around grid bypass gates; cattle fencing and mounting blocks.

Skylark Initiative

A series of events and new signposting had been delivered in partnership with Wren Conservation and an Animal Behaviourist to draw attention to the problem of disturbance by dogs of ground nesting birds, especially skylarks.

Reservoir Inspection – 17th April

Dr Andy Hughes completed his first inspection of the year. Dr Hughes was again complimentary over the further improvements in dam vegetation maintenance and again emphasised the need for hard landscaping improvements to Baldwins Pond and Birch Hall Park Pond.

Le Tour de France – le Grand Départ – Stage Three

Further meetings were being held with the organisers and Local authorities regarding the stage through Epping Forest, including road closures and viewing opportunities.

Knighton Wood

The recent temporary measures to address Anti-Social Behaviour by restricting public access to the Knighton Wood car park attracted some criticism in the local press. The new car park gate had improved the situation.

Trespass Incidents – Wanstead and Leyton Flats

Fifteen caravans and associated vehicles tried to occupy The Dell on 23rd March and the Old Lido Site on 16th April. On both occasions staff in partnership with the Police and Emergency Planning Officers cleared the site within 3 and 6 hours respectively.

Body Found at Tarzy Wood, Wanstead

A body was discovered by children at Tarzy Wood on 27th April. The individual was thought to have been a Rough Sleeper. A post mortem had been inconclusive.

Break In at The Warren

A series of items including powered machinery were taken during a break in at The Warren yard.

Fly tipping

Fly tipping incidents had risen by 30% (51 incidents) from 170 to 221 for the first 4 months of 2014.

Land Fill Escalator

The Landfill Tax had risen by a further £8 per metric tonne to £80 per metric tonne from April as part of the continuing 'escalator' arrangements. Fly tipping levels appear to be more closely linked with the fortunes of the economy rather than the escalator.

Litter

Littering had proved to be a major talking point over the past 2 months with conversations on Twitter, coverage of Eagle Pond in the local press; and new Forest Keeper/Community initiatives including tidyourflats and a clear up at Davies Lane.

Byelaw Enforcement

Chelmsford Magistrates Court supported 4 cases on fungi picking.

DEFRA Ash-dieback Research

DEFRA had published their most recent assessment of the impact of Ash 'dieback' fungus which suggests around half of all the trees in Essex are expected to be infected by 2018.

Ban on the sale of selected non-native plants

Ahead of a more wide ranging EU regulation on Invasive Alien Species (IAS), DEFRA had banned the sale of five highly invasive water plants from April 2014 including Australian Swamp Stonecrop (also known as New Zealand Pygmy weed) which has extensively damaged over 20 Epping Forest Ponds)

Oxford University Report on extreme rainfall events

A new report indicates that extreme rainfall events expected only once in a century are now likely to be witnessed every eighty years.

Campaign to Protect Rural England report on threats to the Green Belt

CPRE echoed research by the National Trust reported to your Committee on 13th January that Local Planning Authorities were set to undermine the Green Belt in the search for housing allocations.

Highams Park Lake

The London Borough of Waltham Forest provided planning consent for the dam strengthening works on 15th April. Main works were expected to commence in June. The City had now exceeded the 8th April commencement deadline and has kept the Environment Agency apprised of the situation. Site Investigation works started on 17th March. Survey work had revealed that the lake contains 14,000 M3 of silt and a desilting strategy was being developed.

Wanstead Park Hydrology Study

The detailed report by consultants JJA would be available next week. Significant deficits have been observed at Heronry Pond and Ornamental Water and the study would address a strategy for improving water collection and minimising leakage in the catchment

Ornamental Water, Wanstead Park – High Risk Designation

The Environment Agency had advised a provisional designation of High Risk Reservoir for Ornamental Water as part of the risk-based review under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

Goose Control

The Central Forest Keeper Team had completed goose control for the fifth successive year with eggs located declining from 95 in 2010 to 53 in 2014. Geese were inhibiting grassland restoration at Jubilee Pond and the use of a deterrent made from grape by-products was being considered for use to reduce grazing pressure.

M25 Hard Shoulder Scheme

The controversial scheme involving hard shoulder running and refuge bays had commenced construction on the unlit Epping Forest section.

Visitor Survey underway

The 2014 season survey had commenced.

High Beach Visitor Reopening – 5th April

Magnificent work by the Friends of Epping Forest has seen the training of over 20 volunteers who would staff the centre on Fridays and Saturdays. The Centre was declared open by the Chairman and Eleanor Laing MP.

London Borough of Waltham Forest Design Awards

The City of London received commended for the 'best refurbishment of a Heritage Building' category.

Family Learning Events

Over 220 attended each of the Family learning Events on the 19th and 21st February.

Thinkspace Teachers Conference

Epping Forest staff attended a conference designed to help teachers prepare for the new National Curriculum for history.

Orion Harriers Cross Country & Jack Fenn Trophy

The Chairman was guest of honour at the recent Orion Harriers race day.

GLA 'Mini-Holland' Proposals

The London Borough of Waltham Forest has secured a £30M award from the GLA. The centrepiece of the LBWF plan is a Cycle Superhighway Scheme for Lea Bridge Road and a 'Mini-Holland' roundabout on Forest Land at Whippys Cross.

Social Media

Thanks were extended to the hard work of five staff members who maintain Epping Forest's Twitter strategy with the number of followers having passed 2,000 to reach 2,254 at the end of April.

Deer Carving at Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge

Three 1.5x life size carvings by Gloucestershire carver Denius Parson had been installed in the grounds of the Hunting Lodge.

Chingford Golf Course

The Red Rule at the Golf Course was removed on Sport Relief Day, 22nd March. Since its removal play has increased by 28%. The introduction of a new Season Ticket scheme has increased public membership from 10 to 105 registrations. Play at the Course was up 8% across the year.

Outreach

The Community Liaison Officer and Forest Keepers secured involvement on conservation projects from Forest Gate Women's Institute to Newham Woodcraft Folk in the south of the Forest and St John's School in the north.

Volunteers

Recruitment was underway for 2014. Notable projects led by volunteers include clearance to improve bluebell habitat at Chalet Wood, clearance at Earl's Path Pond and scrub clearance at Top Pond, Knighton Wood. Overall 10,884 hours were completed by volunteers in 2013/14.

Epping Forest on Television

An episode – The Curse of the Bronze Lamp - from the detective series 'Jonathan Creek', filmed at Copped Hall, was aired on 14th March. A forthcoming commercial for folding doors was filmed at Rushey Plain on 29th April.

A member observed that the Tour de France passed through Epping Forest on the 7th July, the next Committee date, and requested that the Committee's timing be altered or the proceedings be relocated to The Warren. The Director

noted the travel restrictions in Epping Forest on the day of the race and agreed to review the timing in consultation with the Town Clerks Department.

A member enquired about the proposed changes to the National Curriculum and the implications for the City's Education Strategy. The change away from Tudors and Stuarts, the mainstay of teaching at the Hunting Lodge, was highlighted along with the pre-1066 opportunities, including Epping Forest's Iron Age Camps, presented by the New Curriculum,

13. OUTTURN REPORTS FOR BRANCHING OUT - BUTLERS RETREAT AND THE VIEW

The Committee received the report of the City Surveyor and Director of Open Spaces.

14. HIGHAMS PARK CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN - PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee considered the report of the City Surveyor. Members noted that a number of changes had been made to the Highams Park Conservation Management Plan, and a draft had been circulated to the Committee. Discussions ensued regarding the uncostered nature of the plan intervention and the proposals for a public consultation regarding the plan. The Committee were in agreement that a public consultation at this moment would not be very helpful.

In response to a query from Members, Officers clarified that the document was currently on hold pending further discussion at a future date.

Resolved: That Members:

(a) Noted the content of this report and the amended draft Highams Park Conservation Management Plan.

(b) Took cognizance of the content in the report and while progressing the urgent strengthening work on the dam, elsewhere Officers should investigate the restoration of the heritage landscape and the surrounding areas where appropriate and affordable subject to the funding and staff resources available.

15. EPPING FOREST GATEWAY DESIGN

The Committee considered the report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest and noted the design and build of Epping Forest Gateways and associated standardisation of furniture such as signage and benches is part of the Branching Out project. It had been informed by the new graphic designs for Open Spaces.

- Approval is sought for a design concept and materials, which would then be worked up with detailed drawings for the gateways, signage and Forest furniture.

The budget for design and build of a series of Gateways and furniture is £250,000. The exact allocation will depend on the chosen design and materials. The

intention is to install signage within the Branching Out contract by the end of November 2014.

Discussions ensued regarding the inclusion of the City of London Corporation crest and the words "Epping Forest: Registered Charity" on all of the signs, and Officers agreed to investigate this further. Members agreed that all signs should include this wording

Members discussed the possibility of erecting signs along the Tour De France route which could be picked up by the media to advertise Epping Forest and the City Corporation. Whilst road surfaces could not be painted, nor arches erected across the road, Officers agreed to consult with colleagues in the Public Relations Officers regarding possible advertising opportunities.

Resolved: That Members:

- approved the design approach in order for officers to request the contractor to prepare detailed designs.
- agreed that that the decision on the final design be delegated to the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee.

16. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

The Committee received the following update from the Superintendent of Burnham Beeches, Stoke Common and City Commons:

New City Commons structure commenced 2nd April

- Two Ranger vacancies had been filled by internal candidates: Livestock Ranger at City Commons and Ranger at Ashted Common
- Personal Assistant post filled by internal candidate
- Recruitment had commenced for a 'City Commons wide' Information Ranger on a temporary contract
- Assistant Ranger post filled by external candidate
- Early retirement of Head Ranger of West Wickham and Spring Park: Support Service Manager post was being considered as direct replacement.
- Temp Admin Assist post contract extended for 6 months – Ashted Common
- Reviews of health and safety procedures, staff rotas and vehicle fleet were programmed for the coming months
- Two vacant posts at City Commons had been put on hold pending SBR decisions
- Assistant Information Ranger recruited at Burnham Beeches

Proposed road crossing A 232 - West Wickham Common.

- A long standing issue for residents with a recent 'near miss' bringing a new focus
- Issue previously brought to member's attention but the issue had not been resolved
- Meeting with TFL who have new proposals – these would require loss of Open Space. New proposals had requested.

- Residents Association AGM in June and would require sensitive handling

Dog Control Orders at Burnham Beeches

- Kennel Club sent another list of queries – response sent and notes would be circulated to Members
- Formal Consultation letters sent to Primary and Secondary Authorities
- Timetable for public, formal consultation had drawn up and would commence post LM visit and by mid-June

Burnham Beeches Local Development Plan

- Synthesis report bringing together all the soil, air, lichen, hydrology, recreation and dog research had concluded that: *Viewed together the combination of urban effects is currently impacting on the SAC interest of the site. New development will add to this impact, as such new development will have a likely significant effect on the site.*
- Now Officers must consider how best to mitigate further harm from future developments. The Synthesis report would be presented to Members in July.
- A proposal to create a Free School 1km from the boundary of the Burnham Beeches SAC and within the green belt had been received. Officers were concerned by loss of greenbelt and air quality and traffic concerns. Superintendent had objected on grounds of 'likely significant harm' to the SAC. .

Volunteering

- **1062** hours at Burnham Beeches including an administration volunteer and reptile survey volunteers
- **949** hours recorded at City Commons with new groups at Ashtead focussing on estate work and wildlife monitoring

Incidents

- City Commons - Nesting Peregrines disturbed by trespassers with pellet gun.
- Ashtead Common - Member of staff bitten by dog and one serious dogs on dog attack
- Burnham Beeches - 52 dog incidents reported since the March Committee date

17. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

There were no questions.

18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

The Committee reminded Members that the annual visit to Dorneywood would take place on 9th June and the Epping Forest Ladies day would be held on 11th June.

19. 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.

20. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

Resolved: That the non-public minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

21. **BUFFER LAND - ANNUAL AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS REVIEW**

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

22. **REFRESHMENT CONCESSIONS ON EPPING FOREST**

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

23. **RESTRUCTURE OF THE EPPING FOREST OPERATIONS TEAM**

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

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

There were no questions.

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

There was two items of urgent business.

The meeting ended at 12.30 pm

Chairman

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