

EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE
Monday, 9 March 2015

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held at
Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 9 March 2015 at
11.00 am

Present

Members:

Alderman Gordon Haines (Chairman)
Deputy Stanley Ginsburg
Alderman Ian Luder
Deputy Catherine McGuinness
Sylvia Moys
Barbara Newman
Virginia Rounding
Verderer Peter Adams
Verderer Michael Chapman DL
Verderer Richard Morris
Verderer Dr. Joanna Thomas

Officers:

Lorraine Brook	Town Clerk's Department
Natasha Dogra	Town Clerk's Department
Sue Ireland	Director, Open Spaces
Paul Thomson	Superintendent, Epping Forest
Andy Barnard	Superintendent, Burnham Beeches, Stoke Common and City Commons
Allan Cameron	Open Spaces Department
Jeremy Dagley	Open Spaces Department
Geoff Sinclair	Open Spaces Department
Caroline Brown	Open Spaces Department
Jacqueline Eggleston	Open Spaces Department
Laura Lawson	Open Spaces Department
Jo Hurst	Open Spaces Department
Sam Cook	Remembrancer's Department
Alison Elam	Chamberlain's Department
Paul Monaghan	Department of the Built Environment
Will Wright	City Surveyor

In Attendance:

Chris Bowers	London Borough of Waltham Forest
Mark Bland	London Borough of Waltham Forest
Denise Dillon	

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from George Abrahams, Deputy John Barker, Deputy Alex Deane, Alderman Jeffrey Evans and Ian Seaton.

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

Deputy Catherine McGuinness declared an interest as a Trustee of Epping Forest Centenary Trust.

3. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as an accurate record.

Matters Arising: A query was raised regarding the restrictions imposed on cycling related matters at Pole Hill. Officers confirmed that Pole Hill is not subject to cycling restrictions and that they were not aware of members of the public currently disturbing the land by creating bike jumps. In response to members continued concerns, the Superintendent of Epping Forest agreed to visit the area and to report back to Committee with a short report in May.

4. **DRAFT MINUTES OF THE WEST WICKHAM COMMONS CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

The Chairman thanked Members of the Committee for their commitment and support to the West Wickham Consultative Committee meetings. The draft minutes were received by the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the draft minutes be received

5. **DRAFT MINUTES OF THE ASHTEAD COMMONS CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

The Chairman thanked Members of the Committee for their commitment and support to the Ashtead Commons Consultative Committee meetings. The draft minutes were received by the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the draft minutes be received

6. **DRAFT MINUTES OF THE COULSDON COMMONS CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

The Chairman thanked Members of the Committee for their commitment and support to the Coulsdon Commons Consultative Committee meetings. The draft minutes were received by the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the draft minutes be received

7. **INFRASTRUCTURE BILL**

The Committee received a report of the Remembrancer informing Members of the relevant provisions of the Infrastructure Bill (now passed into law as the Infrastructure Act) which would introduce a new regime to facilitate the control of non-native invasive species. Under this regime, Government bodies would be able to enter into voluntary agreements with landowners, setting out what measures were to be taken in order to eradicate or control an invasive species.

Where the voluntary process was unsuccessful, it would be possible to make binding orders requiring the landowner to take action or to pay the costs of doing so.

Discussions ensued regarding the inspection rota and the possible impact of additional inspection or compliance costs under the new regime. Officers clarified that there would be no requirement for a schedule of inspections. Additional duties or costs would only arise in the event that the new powers were invoked by the relevant Government body in relation to the City of London's Open Spaces. Officers were confident that the Department was already operating in a satisfactory manner which will avoid the need for further action... In response to a query; Officers confirmed that Spanish Bluebells (*Hyacinthoides hispanica*) were classed as an invasive non-native species (INNS) and its distribution was monitored by Officers.

In addition the Head of Conservation confirmed that 3 of the species listed in the report, namely Himalayan Balsam, Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed were already subject to annual eradication/control programmes. The distribution of the 4th species listed Swamp Stonecrop *Crassula helmsii*, has been fully mapped at Epping Forest and is subject to regular monitoring. This latter species was however very difficult to control and as yet there is no fully effective method of eradicating it from a site only controlling its cover, as at Dungeness RSPB reserve where they have succeeded in reducing its coverage by 70% and maintaining this reduction by annual work.

RESOLVED: That the report be received

8. **EPPING FOREST - SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

The Superintendent of Epping Forest provided the Committee with a verbal update and Members noted that the Head of Visitor Services Jacqueline Eggleston commenced work today. The Chairman welcomed Jacqueline to the meeting and wished her well in her new role. Officers explained that 2,121 volunteer hours had been accrued over the last two months, which was a 34% rise compared to the same time last year.

Members noted that floodwall construction, drawdown installation and landing stage repairs were now complete at Highams Park Lake. The new footbridge was in position and the spillway had been re-profiled with imported clay. Members noted that work on the Great Gregories overwintering facility was also nearing completion with the completion of buildings, concrete pads, the construction of a screening bund and the attenuation pond.

The Committee noted that the new 2015 diary of events had now been distributed along with the Spring Forest Focus and copies were available to Members after the meeting.

The Committee noted that there had been a 60% football pitch utilisation across the winter with continued low arrears. In response to a query as to whether there was scope to supply rugby pitches for the public. Officers said they would investigate this possibility and the potential cost implications.

In response to a query regarding the Various Powers Bill, the Director of Open Spaces confirmed that informal local consultations would run until the end of April 2015 and the Epping Forest and Commons Committee would consider a report on the findings. Following similar reports to the other management Committees and then the Court of Common Council, subject to the Committees views, a draft Bill would be presented in the autumn. Formal consultation would then follow.

Members queried whether Officers had sought legal advice regarding the expansion of Theydon Bois car park on a former allotment site. Officers confirmed that advice had been reviewed and they had recently met with local campaigners to discuss the matter and decided that they would collectively investigate the matter with the District Council as the Local Planning Authority.

RESOLVED: That the update be received

9. **EPPING FOREST OPERATIONS PROGRAMME FOR 2015-2016**

The Committee considered the report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest and noted that a dominant theme of the 2015/16 Work Programme was the need to increase the area of land under wood-pasture restoration from 16.5 ha to approximately 40 ha each year. Members noted that the programme also sought to consolidate works initiated in 2013-14, such as those undertaken through the Wanstead Park Liaison Group and at Highams Park to continue with the vegetation management works visited by the Committee in November 2014.

Officers explained that tree safety would continue to be a significant aspect of the Operations Teams work in 2015. The Forest built structures survey, completed by surveyors appointed by the Built Environment team in 2014, would be developed in 2015 to create a comprehensive structures database for Epping Forest. The grassland mowing programme would be extended to include additional cutting of previously cleared wood-pasture restoration areas. Cattle grazing would be extended into new areas, such as Honey Lane Quarters, with the help of the new infrastructure including the nine new loops of the invisible fence network.

Members agreed that volunteers would be instrumental in delivering both the Highams Park works and to improve access at Swaines Green, as well as working on key areas of wood-pasture restoration elsewhere in the Forest.

Discussions ensued regarding the long term financial viability of wood-pasture restoration. Officers agreed to submit a future out-turn report assessing and itemising the costs of this work and the future maintenance of the restored areas in relation to the income and grants for this activity.. The Chairman thanked all of the staff involved with delivering the Operations Programme.

RESOLVED: That: - The Epping Forest Operations Programme for 2015/16 be approved

10. **EPPING FOREST ENFORCEMENT OF ACTIVITY: 1 JANUARY 2014 TO 31 DECEMBER 2014**

The Committee considered a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest and noted with dismay the level of recent fines for fly tipping offences issued out by local Magistrates Courts. Officers informed Members that it was their continued intention to invite local Magistrates to visit the Forest to witness the misuse of the Forest.

The Committee approved, in March 2014, an increase in the level of Court costs and charges for the disposal of fly tips, in line with the three year Retail Price Index (RPI) of 10.01%. It was proposed to increase charges again using the RPI of 1.4%.

Officers clarified that in the case of Byelaw 3(21) erecting or building on Forest Land, a fine had been issued by Barkingside Court for £200.00, however the costs of removing and storing the display amounted to £3,141.50.0. Costs of £2,561.50 were awarded as this lower figure was considered to be proportional to the level of the fine. Members further enquired about the level of fines that remain unpaid by the guilty parties. It was noted that it was the responsibility of the Courts to recover these monies and pass them on to the City of London Corporation, and that payments to the City currently broadly reflected the national average collection rate of 62%.

Officers agreed to the recommendation of a member serving as a Magistrate to utilise higher comparator Police Officer costs in future cases. In response to a query from Members regarding the level of penalties, Officers confirmed that staff in the Forest represented themselves during court cases and always sought the maximum penalty.

RESOLVED: That:- an increase on the current figures for 2015/16 of 1.4% for court costs (in line with Retail Price Index increase of 1.4%) and 8% for disposal costs (in line with the Government Landfill Tax escalator) be approved.

11. **LBWF MINI HOLLAND PROJECT - WHIPPS CROSS ROUNDABOUT/LEA BRIDGE ROAD REMODELLING WORKS**

The Chairman welcomed Project Development Team Leader Mr Chris Bowers and Mini-Holland Programme Manager Mark Bland from the London Borough of Waltham Forest. Mr Bowers informed Members that the project was one of three schemes in the London Boroughs of Enfield, Kingston and Waltham Forest who had each received £30M of funding to develop improvements to cycling. The City of London Corporation and the London Borough of Hackney had been included in the consultation for this scheme. The intention of the programme is to provide a cycle superhighway along the Lea Bridge Road with a suitable gateway to the Borough at Whipps Cross roundabout, whilst balancing the needs of public and road users. The new T-junction replacement for the roundabout will both return land to the Forest and create additional public realm space.

Members noted that the provision for cyclists to use the roads safely and the accessibility for cyclists would be included in the programme. It was further

noted that the provision for bus stands was accounted for, along with raised kerbs and the need for safe crossing points close to bus stands. Officers also confirmed that they were in talks with Transport for London to ensure that the programme suited the needs of buses including the new service to Queen Elizabeth Park. Officers confirmed that these provisions would be delivered within the £3.5million programme budget. In response to a concern raised by a Member Officers confirmed that a stand of trees would be replaced with suitable tree species confirmed with the City. In response to a query, Officers confirmed that any lost trees would be replaced but the tree species had not yet been determined.

Officers confirmed that although Forest School was situated outside of the London Borough of Waltham Forest, they would still be included in the consultation programme. The School had also recently hosted a Road Safety Programme run by the London Borough of Waltham Forest.

The Chairman informed Members that he regularly met with Councillors from the London Borough of Waltham Forest which provided a good opportunity to hear about planned projects and proposals.

RESOLVED: That delegated authority be granted to the Superintendent in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman to agree any formal responses to public consultation and to enter into any agreements required to implement the remodelling, subject to the terms being in the best interests of the Forest.

12. **MUSEUM ACCREDITATION FOR THE VIEW**

The Committee considered the report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest and noted that the Arts Council England museum accreditation would provide a wide range of benefits for Epping Forest's museum collection. As well as opening up a number of funding channels, accreditation would ensure that the material heritage of the Forest was well cared for within a nationally recognised heritage industry framework, raise the profile of the collection and the history of the Forest, provide opportunities for workforce development and partnership working, formalise the management of the collection; and provide opportunities for inter-museum loans.

Members noted that although significant progress had been made towards achieving accreditation in the last 12 months, The View's "*working towards accreditation*" status was due to expire on 31 March 2015. Applying for an extension until 31 March 2016 would enable work to be completed in areas where the management of the collection did not currently meet the required standard.

Officers informed the Committee that to achieve museum accreditation, the Conservators were required to have access to appropriate professional advice. Consequently, a qualified Museum Mentor, who would not charge for professional advice, had been identified.

Members noted that there were minor property maintenance updates to be made at the Saw Mill to accommodate the proposals and that these would be met from the local budget; however there were no long term expenses or implications to be incurred from this work. Members were assured that the property would be suitable for storing documents and artefacts.

In response to a query from Members, Officers clarified that there was currently a backlog of items which were due to be added to the catalogue management system, eHive©. Officers were working towards updating the catalogue available online. With regards to new acquisitions, Officers explained that a majority of the items received were gifts. The Collection Development Policy would clearly state the relevant and suitable documents which would be collected.

Officers informed Members that the London Metropolitan Archive (LMA) and Keats House had been consulted and supported the proposal for The View to seek museum accreditation. Officers had a good relationship with colleagues at the LMA and continued to liaise with them regarding acquisitions and the storage of items. Members noted that achieving full accreditation would open up additional funding streams, raise the profile of the museum collection and help to secure the future of The View.

RESOLVED: That:-

- The Superintendent be authorised to apply for an extension to “*working towards accreditation*” status and undertake the work necessary to meet the accreditation standard;
- The appointment of Helen Giles as the Museum Mentor for The View and Epping Forest Collection be approved; and
- The Chairman be authorised to sign the Museum Mentor agreement on behalf of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee.

13. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

The Committee received a verbal update from the Superintendent of Burnham Beeches, Stoke Common and City Commons. Members noted that North London Open Spaces staff visited Burnham Beeches in early February to work with the local team on reduction work on some of the ancient pollards and staff from the two divisions were able to share knowledge and expertise. Volunteers and staff had cleared fence lines and holly for the further expansion of the invisible fencing. This would ensure in 2015 that 160ha, or 73%, of the site would be available for grazing doubling the present grazed area.

Members were presented with some of the latest proposals for signage at Kenley Common as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund application. A meeting with HLF was being held this week and would enable Officers to gauge whether any further work was needed prior to the June submission deadline. Kenley Common Rangers also led a guided walk for members of the public talking about and looking at the history of Kenley Airfield, in particular its involvement in the Battle of Britain.

The new QR code nature trail at Farthing Downs received further media coverage with the Horticulture Week, Pro Landscaper and Primary Times Magazines running the story. Farthing Downs was also featured in Sport England's "This Girl Can" campaign which was inspiring women to participate in sport or activity.

In response to a query regarding the health of the Sussex herd of cattle moved from City Commons to Epping Forest, Officers said ringworm infections are a relatively common occurrence in cattle herds as it could be easily transferred between cattle. However, it was not a serious threat to cattle condition and the Sussex cows had received ringworm treatment during the summer. In addition, the Epping Forest Head of Conservation explained that prior to being transferred to Epping Forest the Sussex herd had undergone rigorous blood tests for 5 more serious or threatening diseases (such as TB) in line with a detailed Herd Health Plan for all 3 herds approved by the assigned vets.

RESOLVED: That the update be received.

14. PROPOSED PEDESTRIAN CROSSING AT WEST WICKHAM COMMON

The Committee received the report of the Superintendent of Burnham Beeches, Stoke Common and City Commons, and noted that Members had previously agreed a proposal by Transport for London (TfL) to locate a Pegasus crossing on the A232, subject to TfL gaining support from local residents for the scheme. The public consultation had been unfavourable, and TfL had recently provided a revised proposal to locate a Pelican crossing 20 metres further west along the Croydon Road that was more likely to gain local support. TfL sought the City's agreement, prior to the necessary further public consultation on the revised proposal.

RESOLVED: That:-

- Option 3: to facilitate the installation of a Pelican crossing on West Wickham Common be approved;
- The Superintendent of the Burnham Beeches, Stoke & City Commons be authorised to liaise with Transport for London on the proposal, minimising the impact on the Open Space as far as was reasonably practicable; and
- The Superintendent of Burnham Beeches, Stoke and City Commons be instructed to report back to the Committee on the outcome of the public consultation and TFL's response, with more detailed proposals clarifying any subsequent requirement to dedicate land for highway use.

15. SPORTS AND MISCELLANEOUS CHARGES FOR BURNHAM BEECHES, STOKE COMMON AND THE CITY COMMONS

The Committee received a report of the Superintendent of Burnham Beeches, Stoke Common and City Commons regarding charges for sports facilities and miscellaneous items that were provided by the Burnham Beeches, Stoke Common and City Commons Division.

RESOLVED: That the proposed charges for 2015-16 be approved.

16. **BURNHAM BEECHES, STOKE COMMON AND CITY COMMONS MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES FOR 2015-16**

At this point Deputy McGuinness left the meeting.

The Committee received a report of the Superintendent of Burnham Beeches, Stoke Common and City Commons regarding the management priorities for the Burnham Beeches, Stoke Common and City Commons Division that would guide the annual work programme during the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.

RESOLVED: That the Management Priorities for 2015-16 be approved.

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

A question was raised regarding the information available to Members regarding the workload and visits associated with being a Member of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee. The Town Clerk agreed to circulate relevant information regarding the degree of involvement associated with being a Member of this Committee when appointments were due to be made to the Committee, along with the relevant dates of scheduled Open Spaces visits.

The Chairman informed Members that useful email information in the form of newsletters and leaflets are regularly circulated regarding the work undertaken at Epping Forest, Burnham Beeches and City Commons. Members were asked to request these publications from Officers if they did not already receive them.

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

There was one item of business which the Chairman agreed was urgent and must be considered at this Committee meeting due to the requirement for a decision to be made at the Court of Common Council meeting on 23rd April 2015.

The Chairman informed the Committee that he had spoken with Members regarding the chairmanship of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee for the next municipal year. Members were informed that the Chairman was minded to seek the necessary permissions to extend his tenure as Chairman for a fourth and final year.

Virginia Rounding moved that the Chairman be given the opportunity to seek the necessary permissions to stand for the Chairmanship of this Committee for a fourth and final year. Alderman Haines underlined that this was not intended, in any way, to set a precedent, but would offer continuity and stability to the work of the Committee. To allow a natural succession into the role of Chairman, Alderman Haines clarified that he would not seek to exercise his right to stand for the role of Deputy Chairman in the next municipal year, should the Committee agree this extension to his current chairmanship.

Barbara Newman seconded this motion.

The Committee voted unanimously in favour of the Motion with the exception of the Chairman who abstained.

The Town Clerk explained that this matter would now need to be considered by the Court of Common Council on 23rd April 2015.

RESOLVED: That the Committee requests that the Policy and Resources Committee consider recommending to the Court of Common Council that Alderman Haines be allowed to stand for election of the Chairman of Epping Forest and Commons Committee for a fourth and final year.

19. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

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 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**

The Committee received the non-public minutes.

21. **ISSUE REPORT: HIGHAMS PARK LAKE - PROJECT COST VARIATIONS**

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

22. **THE WARREN HOUSE - COMPLETION OF THE CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN**

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

23. **DEMOLITION OF POULTRY SHEDS, WOODREDON, EPPING FOREST**

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

24. **PREVIOUS ACTION ON RESTRICTIVE COVENANTS 724, 728 AND 782**

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

25. **REVIEW OF PROPERTY SUBJECT TO RESTRICTIVE COVENANT 724, 728 AND 782**

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

26. **THE URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL OF CHINGFORD TOWN PLANNING SCHEME 1928**

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

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

There were no questions.

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

There was no urgent business.

The meeting ended at 12.50 pm

Chairman

Contact Officer: Natasha Dogra
Natasha.Dogra@cityoflondon.gov.uk

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