

<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>
Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common Consultation Group Coulsdon Commons Consultative Committee West Wickham and Spring Park Consultative Committee	18 November 2015 13 January 2016 27 January 2016
<b>Subject:</b> Proposed alterations to Consultative Committee meetings and site visits	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Superintendent of 'The Commons'	<b>For Discussion</b>

### Summary

The merger of the City Commons with Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common to form a single Division has united the management of four Consultative Committees under one Superintendent. Each Consultative Committee is currently aligned to one of the four charities within the new division.

This report examines the impact of the merger upon the frequency and nature of consultative meetings/site visits and seeks to reduce demand on the Members and Officers involved whilst ensuring that effective governance and community engagement is maintained.

Following discussions with each Consultative Committee it is proposed to take final proposals to the Epping Forest and Commons Committee for decision in March 2016.

**Recommendations.** Members are asked to consider and provide feedback as far as their involvement in each of the following committees is concerned:

- i. **West Wickham and Spring Park Consultative Committee (WW&SP) and Coulsdon Commons Consultative Committee.** Approval 'in principle' of a re-merger of the West Wickham and Spring Park Consultative Committee (WW&SP) and the Coulsdon Commons Consultative Committee (CCCC) with the proviso that a further meeting or site visit may be arranged each year should circumstances require.
- ii. **Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common Consultation Group (BBCG).** Approval 'in principle' of a reduction of the frequency of meetings of the Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common Consultation Group from three to two per annum with the proviso that a further meeting or site visit may be arranged each year should circumstances require.
- iii. **Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common Consultation Group.** Note the Town Clerk's role to administer the Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common Consultation Group (BBCG) thereby bringing it in line with other Consultative Committees within the Division.

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. The Consultative Committees for Ashtead Common, West Wickham, Spring Park, Coulsdon Commons, and Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common (known as the Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common Consultation Group) were separately formed between 1991 and 2006.
2. In 2013 the Superintendent of the City Commons split the 'West Wickham, Spring Park & Coulsdon Commons Consultative Committee' to form two separate Consultative Committees, i.e. The 'West Wickham and Spring Park Consultative Committee' and the 'Coulsdon Commons Consultative Committee'.
3. This ensured that each charity in the City Commons Division had its own Consultative Committee and that each of his Head Rangers had their own Consultative Committee to manage.
4. The City Commons and Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common Divisions were formally merged to form 'The Commons' on the appointment of the current Superintendent in December 2014.
5. This merger concluded with a staffing restructure which reduced the number of Head Rangers from four to three thereby removing much of the management logic that differentiated between the 'West Wickham and Spring Park' and 'Coulsdon Commons' Consultative Committees.
6. The Town Clerk currently administers three of the consultative committees the exception being at Burnham Beeches.

### **Current Position**

7. Experience and feedback from Members and Officers over the last two years indicates that the current meeting and site visit frequency of the four Consultative Committees may not be necessary to assure the good governance of the charities nor is it considered to be particularly resource efficient. Agendas can be highly repetitive as there is a need to present the same issues and messages to each of the four Committees.
8. Further, the frequency of site visits caused by the four committees can lead to the subject matter of some visits being more of 'general interest' than of immediate priorities to the management of the Commons.
9. Each consultative site meeting and visit requires significant input from Members of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee and Consultative Committees as well as Officers from the Open Spaces and Town Clerk's Department. Hospitality, transport and room hire costs also apply in some instances.
10. The current meeting and site visit frequency is set out in Table 1 below:

**Table 1.**

Charity	Consultative Committee meetings	Consultative Committee site visits
Ashtead Common	1	1
Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common	2	1
Coulsdon Commons	1	1
West Wickham and Spring Park	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Total per annum</b>	<b>9</b>	

11. From the figures presented in Table 1 above, it is estimated that there is an administrative commitment to the City across the year of 56 days i.e. EFCC Members (20 days) and Officers (34 days) plus hospitality, room hire and transport costs. (NB. Excludes local committee member time/costs).

### Options

- Option 1. Do nothing. Maintain the current situation and associated commitment of Member, Officer and local risk resource.
- Option 2. Seek alterations to the frequency of site meetings and visits across the Division whilst ensuring appropriate levels of governance and community engagement and maintaining an appropriate balance between cost and benefit. See Table 2.

Should circumstances dictate, additional meetings and site visits may be arranged at the instigation of Members or as may be suggested by the Superintendent.

**Table 2.**

Charity	Consultative Committee meetings	Consultative Committee site visits
Ashtead Common	1	1
Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common	1	1
CC, WW & SP	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Total per annum</b>	<b>6</b>	

12. From the figures presented in Table 2 above, it is estimated that the proposed position requires a commitment across the year of 36 days i.e. EFCC Members (12 days) and Officers (24 days) plus catering, rental and transport costs. This suggests that an overall saving to the City of London Corporation of twenty working days plus other costs is possible over the current position.
13. The Open Spaces Department must deliver savings of £2.18 million by 2018. These proposals reduce costs and release Officer and Member time, thereby contributing to the implicit aim of providing a more efficient service.

## **Proposals**

14. The following approach seeks to achieve a more balanced set of governance and consultative visits and meetings across the Division:

- i. **Consultative Committees.**

Should members approve 'in principle', I propose to reduce the number of annual consultative site meetings and visits by:

- a. Re-merging the West Wickham & Spring Park and Coulsdon Commons Consultative Committees. This would reduce the number of site meetings and visits by one per annum respectively.
    - b. Reducing the number of annual meetings of the Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common Consultation Group from three to two. This will bring this Consultative Committee in line with the others in the Division.
    - c. Seeking support from the Town Clerk to administer the Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common Consultation Group. This will bring it in line with the others in the Division.
15. Agenda's will be re-evaluated to reduce repetitiveness and to provide a greater focus on local issues and priorities.
16. So as to ensure that these proposals do not reduce the effective governance of the Division it is also proposed that additional 'issue based' meetings and visits may be organised should Members, Officers or circumstances require.
17. It is estimated that the proposals will provide financial savings of approximately £3,000 per annum and efficiency savings in terms of freeing up Officer and Member time.

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

18. The proposals support the Strategic aims of the City and Open Spaces Department by:

**Inclusion.** Involving communities and partners in developing a sense of place through the care and management of our sites.

## **Implications**

19. These proposals will produce significant savings in terms of Member and Officer time and modest cash savings at a time when resources are under substantial stress.
20. The four consultative committees are not decision making. The terms of reference of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee state that it may appoint 'such consultative committees as are considered necessary for the better performance of its duties'.
21. Given the above it will be necessary to provide the Epping Forest and Commons Committee (EFCC) with a report 'for decision' that summarises the feedback provided by each of the four Consultative Committees. That report would be presented during the March 2016 Committee cycle.
22. The Superintendent appreciates that members of each Committee must remain confident that the effectiveness of their governance and community engagement is retained.

## **Conclusion**

23. The creation of 'The Commons' Division and associated staffing structure provides an opportunity to review, re-balance and re-focus the work of the four Consultative Committees without losing integrity of governance.
24. This report also seeks to reflect the current resource challenges faced by the Open Spaces Department.
25. Finally it seeks to ensure that the administration of the various Consultative Committees is delivered in a consistent fashion through the Town Clerk's Office.
26. Members are asked to consider the two options provided by this report and provide feedback.

## **Appendices**

None

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