

Committee(s):	Date(s):
Epping Forest and Commons Committee	7 th March 2016
Subject: Proposed alterations to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultative Committee meetings and visits. • Epping Forest and Commons Committee site visits. 	Public
Report of: Superintendent of The Commons	For Decision

Summary

The merger of the City Commons with Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common to form 'The Commons' has united the management of four Consultative Committees under a single Superintendent. Each Consultative Committee is 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 Committee meetings and site visits and seeks to reduce their demands on the Members and Officers involved whilst ensuring that effective governance and community engagement is maintained.

The Burnham Beeches, Couldon Commons, and West Wickham Common Consultative Committees are affected by this report. Each of these has been consulted and are supportive of the recommendations set out below.

Finally, the views of Members of this Committee are sought with respect to a proposal to visit one rather than two of the open spaces within the Division each year.

Recommendations. Members are asked to:

- i. Approve the re-merger of the West Wickham and Spring Park Consultative Committee (WW&SP) with the Coulsdon Commons Consultative Committee (CC) with the proviso that a further meeting or site visit may be arranged each year should circumstances require.
- ii. Approve a reduction in the frequency of meetings of the Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common Consultation Group (BBCG) 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. Note the Town Clerk's role to administer the BBCG thereby bringing it in line with all other Consultative Committees within the Division.
- iv. Approve the reduction of Epping Forest and Commons Committee site visits to 'The Commons' from two to one per annum with the proviso that further meetings or site visits may be arranged each year should circumstances require.
- v. Note the need for a further report to this Committee in March 2018 to assess the impact of the approved changes.

Main Report

Background

1. The Consultative Committees for Ashtead Common, West Wickham, Spring Park, Coulsdon Commons, and Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common were separately formed between 1991 and 2006.
2. In 2013 Superintendent Warnock 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, each with its own Head Ranger as the local manager.
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 a staffing restructure which reduced the number of Head Rangers by one and removed much of the logic that differentiated between the 'West Wickham and Spring Park' and 'Coulsdon Commons' Consultative Committees.
6. The Town Clerk administers three of the consultative committees the exception being at Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common.

Current Position

7. Feedback from City 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.
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 relevance to the current priorities of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee and its Officers.
9. Each consultative site meeting and visit requires significant commitment from Members, the Division's Officers (and others from the Open Spaces and Town Clerk's Department) as well as hospitality, transport and in one instance room hire costs.
10. The current meeting and site visit frequency is set out below:

Table 1. Current State.

Charity	Consultative Committee meetings	Consultative Committee site visits	EFCC site visits	Lord Mayor's Visit*
Ashtead Common	1	1	1/3	-
Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common	2	1	1	1
Coulsdon Commons	1	1	1/3	-
West Wickham and Spring Park	1	1	1/3	-
Total per annum	5	4	2	1
Total	12			

*mentioned for the sake of completeness

11. Table 1 indicates a minimum commitment across the year of approximately 67 days i.e. EFCC Members (30 days) and Officers (37 days) plus hospitality, room hire and transport costs. NB, excludes local consultative committee member time/costs).

OPTIONS

Option 1. Do nothing. Maintain the current situation and associated commitments of Member, Officer and local risk resources.

Option 2. Achieve efficiencies and savings by:

- i. Merging 'West Wickham and Spring Park' with the 'Coulsdon Commons Consultative Committees.
- ii. Adjusting the frequency of Consultative Committee site meetings and visits across the Division to reflect i. above and Table 2.
- iii. Requiring the Town Clerk to oversee the administration of the Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common Consultation Group.
- iv. Reducing the number of site visits to The Commons by the Epping Forest and Commons Committee by one per annum (Table 2). **NB.**
 - Additional visits are assured for those Members representing EFCC on the various Consultative Committees.
 - Sites to be visited 'in rotation' unless site based issues have cause to re-prioritise.
 - Additional meetings and/or site visits may be arranged at the instigation of Members or as may be requested by the Superintendent.

Proposals – Option 2.

Table 2. Impact of Option 2 compared to the current state.

Charity	Consultative Committee meetings	Consultative Committee site visits	EFCC site visits	Lord Mayor's Visit*
Ashtead Common	1	1	1/3	-
Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common	1	1	1/3	1
CC, WW & SP	1	1	1/3	-
Total per annum	3	3	1	1
Total	8			

12. Table 2 indicates that the proposed position requires a minimum commitment across the year of 43 days i.e. EFCC Members (18 days) and Officers (25 days) plus catering, rental and transport costs. This suggests that Option 2 can provide an overall saving to the City of London Corporation of twenty four working days plus other costs.
13. Each of the Consultative Committees have supported the proposals set out in Option 2 and the recommendations set out in this report as far as they are affected, with the following caveats:
 - a. That any changes are reviewed after two years.
 - b. That a protocol is devised by the Superintendent by which additional meetings or site visits may be deemed necessary.
 - c. Agenda setting to be reviewed by Commons Division Staff in consultation with Consultative Committee Members so that they reflect the priorities of each Charity and related community issues.
14. An estimate of local risk efficiency and/or actual savings created by Option 2 is set out in Table 3 below:

Table 3.

Item	Indicative Savings per annum	
	Efficiency (Officer time only)*	Cash
Officer time	£3000	-
Transport		£100
Room hire		£200
Catering		£400
Total	£3,500 per annum	

* Based on Open Spaces Department's day rates

Corporate & Strategic Implications

15. 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

16. These proposals will produce significant savings in terms of Member and Officer time and cash savings at a time when resources are under substantial stress.
17. The Consultative Committees are not decision making. This Committee's terms of reference state that it may appoint 'such Consultative Committees as are considered necessary for the better performance of its duties'.
18. The Superintendent appreciates that Members of this committee may not wish to approve these proposals if they feel that to do so would lessen the effectiveness of their governance or the value of its community engagement.
19. Members may also appreciate that ongoing improvements to the monthly circulars and Enews may be seen to mitigate some of this risk.
20. The Superintendent recognised the importance of providing Consultative Committee members with an opportunity to consider and influence the recommendations in this report. Their feedback is reflected throughout this document.

Conclusion

21. The creation of 'The Commons' Division in 2014 provides an opportunity to streamline consultative arrangements without loss of integrity of governance.
22. This report seeks to ensure that the administration of the various Consultative Committees is delivered in a consistent fashion through the Town Clerk's Office and that Officer and Member time and resources committed to site meetings and visits are reduced without negatively impacting upon sound governance of the charities.
23. The recommendations are supported by the various Consultative Committees as far as they are affected.

Appendices

None

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