

<b>mCommittee(s)</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
<b>Epping Forest &amp; Commons Committee</b>	<b>7 March 2016</b>
<b>Subject:</b> Proposed Epping Forest Consultative Committee	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> City Remembrancer and the Director of Open Spaces	<b>For Decision</b>

### **Summary**

This report sets out a proposal for the establishment of an Epping Forest consultative committee, on the lines of the current consultative committees for Hampstead Heath and the various Commons. The committee would provide an additional mechanism for consulting local interests about the management of the Forest.

### **Recommendations**

Members are asked to:

- Approve the principle of establishing a consultative committee for Epping Forest.
- Agree the proposals set out in this Report for the constitution and procedure of the consultative committee as the basis for consultation.
- Instruct officers to undertake local consultation and produce proposals on the membership of the consultative committee for this Committee's consideration, with a view to setting up the consultative committee later this year.

### **Main Report**

#### **Background**

1. The Committee agreed at its meeting on 11 May last year to the introduction of a Bill on Open Spaces. Following approval given by the Court of Common Council in October last year, the Bill was introduced on 21 January this year in the House of Commons. Second Reading took place unopposed on 2 February.
2. Members will recall that the Bill deals with the clarification of general management powers, the framework for events (consistent with the overriding duty to maintain and conserve the open spaces), the control of commercial activities and the strengthening of enforcement powers.

## **Current Position**

3. Public consultation on the proposed provisions in the Bill took place before its introduction in Parliament and has continued since. One of the concerns which has been raised in relation to Epping Forest relates to the process for consultation with relevant interest groups in respect of the exercise of the Conservators' proposed new powers under the Bill and their general powers of management. A particular concern has emerged through the public petition against car parking charges which was also directed at securing greater public consultation.
4. In practice, there are a number of long-standing arrangements under which the views of local people, interest groups and elected representatives are sought on matters affecting the Forest. Under the Epping Forest Act 1878, the four Epping Forest Verderers are elected locally by the Commoners to sit on this Committee. There has been extensive public consultation on particular projects, more recently carried out through a dedicated internet page. Liaison groups with Redbridge and Waltham Forest borough councils are well established and a similar mechanism is being developed with Epping Forest District Council. The establishment of an Epping Forest consultative committee is a natural progression and aligns with the approach taken in the City's other Open Spaces.

## **Proposal for new consultative mechanism**

5. At its last meeting the Committee agreed that the time was now right to introduce a further means of consulting with local interest groups and other users of the Forest similar to those developed in other open spaces. The consultative committees for Hampstead Heath and the various Commons for which the City is custodian provide a useful means of discussing proposals, reviewing progress and exchanging information about key matters of concern.
6. It is proposed that this Committee should now establish an Epping Forest consultative committee for the purpose of consultation about the management of Epping Forest. The consultative committee would be able to make representations to this Committee about any matter which affected or was likely to affect the Forest. This Committee would take account of representations by the consultative committee when exercising its functions in relation to the Forest.
7. It is proposed that the following arrangements would apply:
  - a. The consultative committee would have a wide membership representing as many local interests as possible, similar to the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee.
  - b. It would be chaired by the Chairman of this Committee.
  - c. Other members would include the four Verderers, one other member of this Committee, and not less than 16 individuals appointed to represent particular interests.
  - d. Of the 16 (or such other greater number as the Committee determines), two would represent local interests for the whole Forest, four would

- represent local interests in the northern Forest parishes and four would represent local interests in the southern Forest parishes.
- e. Two members would be appointed to represent environmental or ecological interests.
  - f. Two members would be appointed to represent recreational or sporting interests.
  - g. Two members would be appointed to represent heritage or amenity interests.
  - h. The consultative committee would meet at least three times a year.
8. Before appointing any member of the consultative committee, consultation would be necessary with people or bodies appearing to represent the relevant interest locally to see which groups should be included; including all groups would be impracticable given that there are some 76 such groups. This Committee would be able to appoint further members if it wished, and the consultative committee would be able to co-opt external persons on an ad hoc basis to contribute its discussions if it considered that a given interest was not adequately represented among its membership or in relation to a particular project or initiative.

### **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

9. The proposed consultative committee will provide additional means of consulting local interests and will assist the City in achieving its aim, as set out in the Open Spaces Department Business Plan 2014-17 of “preserving and protecting our world class open spaces for the benefit of our local communities and the environment”.
10. Administrative support will be required to enable the effective operation of the consultative committee. As with the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee, this will be provided through the Town Clerk’s and Open Spaces departments.

### **Conclusion**

11. The establishment of a consultative committee similar to arrangements made in respect of other Open Spaces managed by the City appears to offer a practical and effective way of extending the current consultative arrangements.

### **Background Papers**

Report of the Remembrancer on the promotion of a City of London (Open Spaces) Bill, 11<sup>th</sup> May 2015.

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