

## **EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE**

**Monday, 9 May 2016**

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held at Committee Room 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall, Monday, 9 May 2016 at 11.00 am

### **Present**

#### **Members:**

Alderman Gordon Haines  
Deputy Stanley Ginsburg  
Deputy Catherine McGuinness  
Sylvia Moys  
Barbara Newman  
Virginia Rounding  
Philip Woodhouse  
Verderer Peter Adams  
Verderer Michael Chapman DL  
Verderer Richard Morris  
Verderer Dr. Joanna Thomas  
Graeme Smith  
Jeremy Simons

#### **In Attendance:**

Mr & Mrs Dillon

#### **Officers:**

Natasha Dogra	- Town Clerk's Department
David Arnold	- Town Clerk's Department
Julie Mayer	- Town Clerk's Department
Sue Ireland	- Director of Open Spaces
Deborah Cluett	- Comptroller's and City Solicitor's
Paul Thomson	- Superintendent, Epping Forest
Andy Barnard	- Superintendent, the Commons
Gerry Kiefer	- Open Spaces Business Manager
Jo Hurst	- Epping Forest Business Manager
Jacqueline Eggleston	- Head of Visitor Services, Epping Forest
Alison Elam	- Group Accountant, Chamberlain's Department

### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies had been received from Alderman Paul Judge.

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

Catherine McGuinness declared an interest in the Epping Forest Centenary Trust.

### **3. ORDER OF THE COURT OF COMMON COUNCIL**

Resolved – the Committee received the Order of the Court of Common Council dated 21 April 2016.

**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 Philip Woodhouse 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.

The Chairman welcomed Members of the Committee and expressed his sincere thanks to the outgoing chairman, Alderman Gordon Haines. Mr Woodhouse thanked Alderman Haines for his constant support and commitment to the work of the Committee.

Resolved – that Philip Woodhouse be elected as Chairman of the 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. The Committee were also reminded that the outgoing Chairman, Alderman Haines, had relinquished his right to serve as deputy chairman for one year when his tenure as Chairman was extended by one year, which was agreed by the Court of Common Council. A list of Members eligible to stand was read by the Town Clerk; Sylvia Moys, Graeme Smith and Verderer Peter Adams all expressed an interest in serving as Deputy Chairman.

The Town Clerk advised that a ballot would be required however, under Standing Order 30(9) only elected Members of the City Corporation would be eligible to vote. This point was challenged by the Verderers of Epping Forest who informed the Committee that they had always been able to exercise a vote in election of Chairman and Deputy Chairman and other Members supported this point. The Comptroller and City Solicitor offered to review the matter immediately and seek procedural advice. When this was received, the Town Clerk informed Members that the Verderers are full members of the Committee for Epping Forest business and were therefore entitled to vote. The Town Clerk apologised for this error and proceeded to conduct a ballot for Deputy Chairmanship.

After one round of voting, the result was as follows:

Graeme Smith	6 votes
Sylvia Moys	4 votes
Verderer Peter Adams	3 votes

As no candidate had secured a majority, or 50% of the votes, a second round of voting was required between the two candidates with the highest number of votes; Graeme Smith and Sylvia Moys.

The result was as follows:

Graeme Smith	7 votes
Sylvia Moys	6 votes

Graeme Smith was therefore elected to serve as Deputy Chairman of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee for the ensuing year. The Deputy Chairman thanked the Committee for their support and expressed his thanks to the outgoing Chairman, Alderman Gordon Haines.

Resolved – that Graeme Smith be appointed as Deputy Chairman of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee for the ensuing year.

Barbara Newman was invited to deliver a vote of thanks to the outgoing Chairman and stated that the Epping Forest and Commons Committee resolved unanimously that at the conclusion of his term of office as their Chairman, the Members of this Committee wish to extend to Alderman Gordon Haines their sincere thanks for the extremely able and courteous manner in which he has presided over their deliberations and the detailed care and interest he has shown in all aspects of the work of this Committee.

Gordon has overseen admirably the high level workload of the Committee and that of its sub Committees and panels, holding many representative positions on behalf of the Committee. Significant progress has been made in the liaison with contiguous Local Authorities and other representative bodies

During his tenure, the Chairman has overseen the successful introduction of Dog Control Orders at Burnham Beeches and supervised the City's victorious Heritage Lottery Fund bid for the Kenley Revival Project.

One of the most significant achievements during Gordon's chairmanship was the successful implementation of the Branching Out projects, elements of which included landscaping of Jubilee Pond and Connaught Waters and the installation of four cattle grids. Landmark improvements also include; the Visitor Hub, accessibility, grazing and keystone trees project, forest-wide signage, education and sport.

The Green Flag and Heritage Awards achieved by the City Corporation during Gordon's chairmanship are a testament to his tenacity in keeping the work of Epping Forest and the Commons at the forefront of his work. Gordon successfully supervised the securing of the Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme for The View and The Temple.

In recognising his efforts to secure this additional investment in the financial sphere, Members also wish to recognise his welcome emphasis on the work of Volunteers across the Department, and his support in drawing their efforts and contributions to the attention of the Court of Common Council.

Gordon has been unstinting in his time and efforts, and his colleagues wish to record their appreciation for the sound judgement and strong leadership that he has demonstrated in the face of often complex issues. Members of the Committee are especially proud that under Gordon's leadership Epping Forest

was chosen to represent England under the Queen's Commonwealth Canopy – a true testament to Gordon's commitment and support to the work of the forest.

FINALLY, the Committee wishes to place on record its recognition of Gordon's distinguished contribution to the Committee and, in thanking him for his generous hospitality, his colleagues convey to him their good wishes for the future, with many happy memories of a job well done.

6. **MINUTES**

The Committee considered the minutes of the previous meeting. One Member advised of some typographical amendments which she would liaise with the Town Clerk over after the meeting.

Resolved – that, subject to the amendments being made, the minutes be agreed as an accurate record.

7. **2016/17 COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS**

The Committee considered a report of the Town Clerk, inviting Members to appoint their sub committees for 2016/17.

Resolved – that the following memberships be agreed:

**Epping Forest Reference Sub Committee**

Philip Woodhouse  
Graeme Smith  
Deputy McGuinness  
Sylvia Moys  
Barbara Newman  
Jeremy Simons  
Stanley Ginsburg  
+ Any Two Verderers

**Ashted Commons Consultative Committee**

Philip Woodhouse  
Graeme Smith  
Sylvia Moys  
Barbara Newman  
Jeremy Simons

**Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common Consultative Committee**

Philip Woodhouse  
Graeme Smith  
Sylvia Moys  
Barbara Newman

**West Wickham and Coulsdon Common Consultative Committee**

Philip Woodhouse  
Graeme Smith  
Jeremy Simons  
Sylvia Moys

Barbara Newman

**Epping Forest Centre Joint Consultative Committee**

Philip Woodhouse  
Graeme Smith  
Verderer Adams  
Verderer Chapman  
Deputy McGuinness  
Sylvia Moys  
Jeremy Simons  
Stanley Ginsburg

**Epping Forest Management Plan Steering Group**

Philip Woodhouse  
Graeme Smith  
Sylvia Moys  
Barbara Newman  
Deputy McGuinness  
+ All Four Verderers

**Wanstead Flats Playing Fields Committee**

Philip Woodhouse  
Graeme Smith  
Alderman Haines  
Sylvia Moys  
Verderer Thomas  
Verderer Adams

**Opens Spaces & City Gardens Committee representative**

Verderer Adams

**8. 2016 TO 2019 OPEN SPACES BUSINESS PLAN**

The Committee received the departmental Business Plan which detailed fifteen key actions over a five year period that would deliver these departmental and charitable objectives. In order to manage performance, twenty four 'SMART' performance indicators had been proposed. This would enable the department to show, over a three year period that it was working towards continuous improvement.

Members noted that the Department's vision was to "*Preserve and protect our world class green spaces for the benefit of our local communities and the environment*". The Committee were informed that following consideration by the Open Spaces and City Gardens & West Ham Park committee meetings, some minor amendments had been made to the plan.

In response to a query regarding a performance indicator related to the increase of Learning Programme participants from BME groups, the Director informed the Member that the language used when referring to under-represented groups was standardised across the City Corporation. Officers also clarified that for the purpose of the Business Plan, volunteers were referred to

as staff. Members noted that volunteers underwent a number of health and safety checks prior to volunteering in any of the City Corporation's open spaces.

Resolved – that the business plan and risk register be received.

**9. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

The Committee received the report of the Superintendent of the Commons which updated Members on activities in and around Burnham Beeches and the Commons.

Resolved – that the update be received.

**10. PROPOSED PEDESTRIAN CROSSING AT WEST WICKHAM COMMON**

Members were informed that in March 2015 the Committee considered and approved 'in principle' a proposal to install a signalled pedestrian crossing on the A232 Croydon Road at West Wickham Common. Members had authorised the Superintendent of The Commons to liaise with Transport for London (TfL) on the proposal to minimise its impact on the Open Space as far as is reasonably practicable. Finally, Members had instructed the Superintendent to report back on the outcome of TfL's public consultation with more detailed proposals to clarify any subsequent requirement to dedicate land for highway use.

Members received a brief presentation from colleagues from TfL. A Member raised a query regarding the future requirement of the land. Officers informed Members that the City is required to enter into deeds of dedication with TfL and the London Borough of Bromley, as the two relevant highway authorities, in order to formally dedicate the land in question as highway maintainable at public expense. If in the future the land to be dedicated is no longer required for highway purposes then, under the proposed terms of those agreements, the highway authority shall use all reasonable endeavours to secure the stopping up of that land as soon as practicable and return it to the City for use as open space.

A Member queried whether compensatory land of a suitable quality and location would be offered by TfL, however Officers confirmed that it had not been offered. Discussions ensued regarding the speed limit on the road, and whether it would be beneficial to reduce the speed limit from 40mph to 30mph. Members agreed that it would be helpful to request TfL to consider reducing the speed limit on the A232.

The Committee requested that the Superintendent of the Commons worked closely with the Superintendent of Epping Forest when considering the future of a very busy road through Waltham Abbey.

**Resolved – that Members:**

- i. Approved, in principle, TfL's plan to install a signalled pedestrian crossing on the A232 Croydon Road at West Wickham Common and agree to dedicate land at West Wickham Common as public highway based on the details provided.
- ii. Delegate authority to the Superintendent to agree the relocation of the existing Thames Water main on the Common, in consultation with the City Surveyor and Comptroller & City Solicitor.
- iii. Authorised the Comptroller & City Solicitor to complete all necessary agreements including deeds of dedication with TfL and the London Borough of Bromley and a licence with Thames Water.

**11. OPERATIONAL PROPERTY REVIEW FARTHING DOWNS OFFICE - THE COMMONS**

The Committee received the Operational Property Review which was taking a more strategic view of the operational assets of the City of London Corporation. Members noted that its aim was to identify opportunities to rationalise the Corporation's operational property portfolio and reduce the high and rising cost of property.

In response to a query regarding the selling or renting of property, Members were informed that Standing Orders required Committees to declare surplus any facilities not required for operational use. Farthing Downs Office had been highlighted as underutilised or surplus to requirement and sets out options and recommendations for its long-term use or disposal.

**Resolved – that Members agreed:**

1. The Farthing Downs Office be declared surplus to the Open Spaces Department's requirements and be presented to Corporate Asset Sub Committee. Further, it was agreed that the Corporate Asset Sub Committee be requested to declare Farthing Downs Office as surplus to the City of London Corporation's requirements.

**12. THE COMMONS MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES FOR 2016-17**

The Committee received the Commons Management Priorities which would guide the annual work programme during the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

Resolved – that the Commons Management Priorities be approved.

**13. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

The Committee received an update from the Superintendent of Epping Forest informing Members of activities which had taken place in and around the Forest. Members noted that the end-of-year figures for volunteers for 2015 /16 totals 15,328 hours. With regards to the Open Spaced Act, Members noted that Officers were awaiting details of the next phase of the Parliamentary process where the text of the Bill would be open to scrutiny by the select committee, particularly in light of the two petitions received. A further clause was being considered to reflect new powers made available to waste collection authorities by The Unauthorised Deposit of Waste (Fixed Penalties) Regulations 2016.

Fly tips for the current period being reported in 2016 were 53 compared to 86

in the same period in 2015, giving an approximate 45% decrease. This reduction may have been due to the very wet weather in February and increased night time closure of car parks. Members commended the work undertaken by Officers to ensure the car parks were closed at night; however, it was noted that information in the form of signs at the car parks advising members of the public of the reasoning behind the night-time closures would have been very useful. The Superintendent agreed to investigate the placement of signs in the car parks detailing the reasons behind the closure of the car parks at night.

In response to a query regarding BBQs in the forest, Officers informed Members that BBQs were not permitted on land owned by the City, however it would be useful to ensure that a joined up approach was taken across all of our open spaces. The Superintendent informed Members that a change in the policy regarding BBQs would require an amendment to the byelaws. The Superintendent of Epping Forest clarified that Bushcraft Sessions were conducted to promote the message of responsible fire use connected to the recent arson attempt, which were not related to BBQs in the forest.

The figures for rough sleepers found on the Forest for this period in 2016 were 7, compared to 4 in 2015, an increase of over 75%. This trend was reflected across nearby local authorities, and Officers would continue to work with their colleagues in neighbouring boroughs.

A total of 45 licences were issued during February and March, which yielded an income of £4,451.50 plus VAT. This represented an increase of 36% compared to the 33 licences which were issued during the same period in 2015 providing an income 2015 of £4,093.50. The Superintendent agreed to circulate a list of all licences issued to Members of the Committee. Members noted that, the 18 month licence had been issued for fee of £40,000 to Kier Construction for use of a Forest track Wayleave at Woodford Green to enable extension of Woodford County High School. The Superintendent confirmed that Kier would not be using other routes – only the wayleave route.

The Committee noted that a seven metre section of the eroded bank on the pond had been reinforced using large glacial boulders to form the revetment by the Estate works team. In response to a query, Members noted that this was a trial technique to test an approach to reinforcement where Officers are unable to use techniques involving posts in the ground. Officers agreed to monitor the repair over the coming months to test its effectiveness at preventing bank erosion. The Committee agreed that there were lessons to be learnt from the situation at Jubilee Pond.

Resolved – that the update be received.

#### 14. **EPPING FOREST ASSOCIATION FOOTBALL CHARGES 2016/17**

The Committee received the report reviewing the charges for the Association Football facilities that were provided at Epping Forest. The proposal, following a review of charges, was to increase the annual fees by 0.6 – 6% to bring prices further into line with comparison sites.



In response to a query regarding the increase in charges, Officers informed Members that although the percentage increase was less than neighbouring boroughs, it was anticipated that the lower rate would help to increase use of the pitches. The City had held Sunday prices for 5 years before increasing by 4% last season, while it had increased Saturday prices by 10% for 3 seasons until a 3.5% increase last season. The 2016/17 prices increases would bring Saturday/Sunday price differential closer to the optimum target of 1:1.3 balance.

A Member asked Officers to investigate the future possibility of offering a concession rate to young people to help encourage use of the pitches. One Member also said that the City should seek to offer provisions for other sports such as hockey, netball and rugby.

**Resolved – that Members agreed:**

- The proposed charges for sports facilities in Epping Forest for 2016/17
- That the Superintendent retained delegated powers to discount or waive charges for trial periods in order to develop both new pitch configurations and off-peak and out-of-season use.
- That the Superintendent retained delegated powers to revise the current sport charges terms and conditions and retain the deposit arrangement for clubs “block booking” pitches in advance that was introduced five years ago.

**15. REQUEST TO REPROVIDE THE WOODFORD WELLS DRINKING FOUNTAIN**

The Committee outlined the request by a newly formed amenity group who were seeking to re-provide the once distinctive Woodford Wells Drinking Fountain at its original location on Epping Forest Land at Woodford Wells.

Members noted that the amenity group fully appreciated that the City was unable to fund and care for such facility and intended to both privately raise the necessary capital to re-provide a reproduction of the original fountain and shelter and endow a fund to meet the on-going maintenance costs. Members agreed that this was acceptable in principle, and decisions regarding the final design, cost and on-going maintenance provision would be subject to a subsequent full licence agreement which would be placed before the Committee if the project gained sufficient momentum. Members advised that the drinking fountain should be fully insured and asked Officers to convey this comment to the amenity group.

**Resolved – that Members:**

- Approved in principle that Forest Land at Woodford Wells could be used to host a reproduction fountain and shelter, subject to further Committee approval of the final design and funding arrangements for both construction, operation, maintenance and if necessary decommissioning.

**16. REQUEST FOR HIGHWAY DEDICATION ON FOREST LAND AT BELL COMMON ADJACENT HEMNALL STREET**

The Committee considered the request by Essex County Council for the installation of a new footpath on Forest Land at Bell Common on the east side of Hemnall Street, and for the installation of two lamp columns on Forest Land on the west side of Hemnall Street to allow adequate lighting of the proposed footpath.

Members were informed that the progressive urbanisation of the Epping Forest land through the construction of additional highways infrastructure remained a challenge for the Committee. The overall assessment by Officers was that the proximity of existing residential development, roads and street lighting had already detrimentally affected Forest Land in this area and hence this additional 85 m<sup>2</sup> wayleave would have a low impact on natural aspect and tranquillity considerations.

The Committee were shown a number of photographs which showed the west side of Hemnall Street. The Committee agreed that the situation was very concerning as the proposal appeared to deliver child directly into an area without access to footpaths. Members were in agreement that the proposal could be better delivered and further thought was required, including an analysis of the flow of children to and from the school. Members agreed that the request required further discussion by the Highway Agency and that the Head Teacher of St Johns School should be fully consulted.

Members agreed that there was a need to strike an appropriate balance between requests by Highway Authorities where the safety of pedestrians had been identified and the duty to protect Epping Forest Land. While the progressive urbanisation of Epping Forest and the damage to tranquillity remained a concern the overall impact of highway infrastructure in this predominately suburban area would be minimal, especially if matched by compensatory land of a suitable quality and location.

**Resolved – that Members:**

- Approved the dedication to public highway of approximately 85m<sup>2</sup> of Forest Land at Bell Common adjacent Hemnall Street, Epping in favour of Essex County Council for the installation of a public footpath upon suitable terms to protect the City's interests to be agreed by the Superintendent of Epping Forest in conjunction with the City Surveyor and in exchange for adequate compensatory land.
- Authorised officers, to undertake all such documentation as necessary and upon such terms to protect the City Corporation's interests and the Forest

**17. EPPING FOREST: THE NEXT TEN YEARS CONSULTATION REPORT**

The Committee considered the new Management Plan which was needed to guide the future management of Epping Forest. A large consultation exercise 'Epping Forest – The Next 10 Years' was undertaken between June and October 2015, to seek the views of Epping Forest stakeholders and members of the public on numerous management issues.

Members of the Epping Forest Management Plan Steering Group met on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2016 to discuss the consultation document. One Member of the Committee asked Officers to seek to ensure that local meetings did not clash with meetings in Guildhall. A number of comments and changes were made to the document and one Member expressed concern that the minutes of the meeting had not yet been circulated to the Committee. The Superintendent apologised for this and informed Members that the meeting had been clerked locally in Epping; he agreed to circulate the minutes by the end of the week. Members said they were happy to consider the report now, and delegate authority for final sign off to the Director and Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman provided that the minutes would be circulated to the Committee by Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> May. Members of the Committee were invited to send any further comments they had regarding the consultation document to Officers by the end of the week.

A Member raised a query regarding the commitment to wood pastures in The Next 10 Years' Consultation 2015' report. The Superintendent agreed to amend the wording under this heading to clarify that this commitment remained under debate.

Resolved – that delegated authority be given to the Director and Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman to approve the Officers response statements contained in the Draft Summary Report 'Epping Forest - The Next 10 Years' Consultation 2015' for website publication.

**18. HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND 'OUR HERITAGE' APPLICATION BY THE FRIENDS OF WANSTEAD PARKLANDS**

The Committee considered a report informing Members that the Friends of Wanstead Parklands were a well-established voluntary group with a commitment to promoting the use, recreational opportunities, public awareness and benefits of improvement to Wanstead Park as part of Epping Forest. The Group were independently applying to the Heritage Lottery Fund – Our Heritage Programme - for an award towards £100,000 with the intention of interpreting the physical and natural environment of Wanstead Park.

Members agreed that the project was excellent and would be a valuable initiative by Friends of Wanstead Park. Members were also able to view their application and the City had a right to veto on the content in the application. With regards to the excavation of the Pyramidian, the Superintendent said the research was invaluable. The Committee noted that the bid required the approval of the Committee on behalf of the City of London as the Conservators of Epping Forest. There were no direct financial implications for the City of London in supporting the project other than Officer time associated with approving the interpretive content of the project. Members agreed that a robust plan would be required from the Friends of Wanstead Parklands with sustainability built in to it. The Committee asked Officers to convey to the group that this approval was subject to no financial support being provided by the City Corporation.

**Resolved – that Members:**

- Supported, in principle, the application by The Friends of Wanstead Parklands for an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund – Our Heritage Programme – to interpret the heritage of the Wanstead Park Grade II\* Listed Registered Park and Garden.

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

In response to a question regarding work undertaken at the Warren House, Members noted that an unprecedented amount of wood rot had been found and therefore work had taken longer than expected. It was due to be completed by the end of June 2016.

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

The Superintendent informed the Committee that in July 2015, Members considered a report of the Director of Epping Forest on Deer Management of the South West Essex Deer Herd on the Buffer Lands and Epping Forest. The Director of Open Spaces noted that the Fallow Cull target was 86 for 2015/16 and the Superintendent sought approval from the Committee to begin a tender process to out-source the Fallow cull.

Resolved – that Members gave approval for Officers to begin the deer management tendering exercise.

**21. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

Resolved - 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.

**22. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

Resolved – that the non-public minutes be agreed as an accurate record.

**23. ACCESS REPORT 1**

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

**24. ACCESS REPORT 2**

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

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

There were no non public questions.

**26. 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 1.00 pm**

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Chairman

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