

Committee(s)	Dated:
Epping Forest & Commons Committee	04 July 2016
Subject: Epping Forest Consultative Committee	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Epping Forest SEF 27/16	For Discussion
Report author: Jo Hurst – Business Manager	

Summary

Further to your Committee's agreement of March 2016 to create a Consultative Committee, this report sets out issues and options for consultation on arrangements.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Agree the proposed options to be included in the public consultation to inform the establishment of an Epping Forest Consultative Committee

Main Report

Background

1. 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 and received an unopposed Second Reading on 2 February. The next stage will be an opposed Bill committee to hear the sole petition against the Bill by the Kennel Club.
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.
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. It is for this reason your Committee approved the principle of establishing an Epping Forest Consultative Committee on 7th March 2016 and instructed Officers to produce proposals for such.

4. Details of frequency, attendance and format of the group are not yet decided upon. It is proposed to consult on these areas (as detailed below) using the Inovem electronic consultation tool, with invitations to respond to be sent to all contacts currently held on the database. Propositions will also be discussed at existing meetings with key stakeholders where appropriate.

Issue 1 - Frequency

5. An appropriate balance must be struck between meaningful and timely consultation and potentially onerous time demands on both CoL representatives and consultative members.
6. A schedule to 'slot in' to the current Committee cycle of six meetings per annum would be useful but not essential
7. Two meetings are proposed in the Committee' first year. It is proposed that eventual options of two, three or four meetings per year are considered for consultation, with the ability for respondents to add other comments if they wish.

Issue 2 – Timing and Location

8. It is highly likely that many attendees will work full time and allowance must be made for attendance outside of normal working hours. Locations will need to be of suitable size and ideally adequately served by public transport.
9. It is proposed that options for within office hours, weekday evenings or weekend day time are offered for consultation. Location options are to be Loughton (as the approximate geographical centre of the Forest) or peripatetic within the Forest boundaries, moving between Manor Park, Wanstead, Walthamstow, Chingford, Loughton and Epping.

Issue 3 – Attendance

10. It is considered that a group size of up to 16 is the most manageable and effective arrangement for such a Consultative Committee. Given that there are over 74 organised groups who have expressed an interest in the Forest through the Statement of Community Involvement, some mechanism for selection and assurance of representation must be established.
11. The Chairman and Verderers will be proposed as core members of the Committee and will be supported by nominated Epping Forest Officers. Therefore

a maximum of 16 places are to be offered to external groups and organisations.

12. It is suggested that the following categories of representation are put forward, with respondees asked to prioritise in order of perceived importance. This can then be mapped to the agreed attendance numbers to give the required balance.

- a. Conservation - *Conservation groups in Forest, or with wider remit.*
- b. Friends/Voluntary - *Formal working groups eg litter pickers groups, 'Friends of' etc*
- c. Heritage – *Historical societies, rural preservation etc*
- d. Informal or general users - *Schools, Youth groups, families associations, local forums and interest bodies.*
- e. Recreation - *Specific recreational user groups – eg walkers, riders, cyclists.*
- f. Sports - *Formal organised sports on Forest eg Golf, Football, cricket running etc.*
- g. Other – *as suggested by respondees*

13. When consulting on this aspect it may need to be made clear that other forums or communication routes exist for local Councillors, City of London tenants, contractors etc and this Consultation Committee is separate from such arrangements.

14. Your Committee should be able to appoint further members if it wished (subject to numbers and selection points below), and the consultative committee would be able to co-opt external persons on an ad hoc basis subject to the approval of the EFCC.

15. Meetings will be Public Open Session – i.e. members of the public will be able to attend and listen to proceedings but not contribute. It is possible to arrange that members of the public have the opportunity to register beforehand to speak for three minutes at the appropriate point in the agenda, with Chairman to decide how the meeting will run subsequently. This would be offered as a consultation option.

Issue 4 – Selection

16. Given the large number of organised groups expressing an interest in the Forest it is suggested that places are limited to their nominees.

17. In order to ensure that organisations and their representatives represent the best interests and views of their members, it will be required that those organisations have formal constitutions and that declarations are made obliging attendance and suitable and timely communication and consultation with their own membership.

18. Advertisements asking for nomination to be made through email, Forest Focus and social media platforms etc. Candidates must be nominated representatives of constituted organisations with a connection to the Forest and be seconded by

another member of the governing Committee of that organisation

19. Exclusion criteria will be similar to standing orders for Councillors and will preclude CoL officers, or individuals or groups/organisations paid to provide services in the Forest. Minimum age can be consulted upon with options of 18 or 16 to allow interested school groups to apply.
20. In the event of more nominations being made for a category than there is space to accommodate then selection criteria will be necessary. This may also form part of the set-up consultation with options such as membership numbers and further application by interview.
21. Consultative Committee members with poor attendance (suggest below 50%) or otherwise lack of involvement will default their place and nominations will be readvertised for that position.

Terms of reference

22. Terms of reference to include the following:-

- a. The Consultative Committee is a consultative group – not a decision making forum. However Epping Forest & Commons Committee will take into account their views in reaching decisions and can defer decisions where deemed appropriate.
- b. To be chaired by the Chairman of Epping Forest & Commons Committee
- c. The group represents the whole of the Forest and is not split North and South. Agendas will be planned to ensure a good balance of interest between areas.
- d. Agenda are to be based on issues being considered currently or in the near future by Epping Forest and Commons Committee and other pertinent topics.
- e. Minutes are taken to Epping Forest & Commons Committee for adoption and to inform decision making.
- f. Meetings will be administered by City of London Town Clerks department
- g. Representation to be reviewed by the group every three years. Members or organisations with poor attendance or participation may default future involvement.
- h. Individuals to serve for a fixed term – suggested at three years.
- i. Residency in the 12 Forest Parishes

23. These Terms of Reference to be offered for discussion or comment during consultation.

Timescales

24. Consultation should run for approximately six weeks. Results and recommendations will return to your Committee in November 2016.

25. Nominations according to agreed format to take place early in 2017. Sufficient time to be allocated to allow new or changing groups to draw up constitutions, although this requirement will be made known through summer 2016 consultation process.

26. It is suggested the Consultation Committee review their own membership and terms at least every four years.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

27. 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”.

28. Administrative support will be required to enable the effective operation of the consultative committee. As with similar Consultative Committees, this will be provided through the Town Clerk’s department.

Implications

29. The commitment to form an Epping Forest Consultative Committee has been made. Failure to do so in good time may not be received well by concerned members of the public, and may expose the Open Spaces Bill to formal petition.

30. Establishing this Consultative Committee will have a financial impact on local risk in terms of venue hire and basic catering costs as well as officer time.

Conclusion

31. The establishment of this Consultative Committee was agreed in principle on 7th March 2016. Proposals contained herein reflect discussions at that meeting and

at Local Meeting on 29th February 2016. The options discussed through this report will form the basis of public consultation during summer 2016.

Appendices

- None

Background Papers

Proposed Epping Forest Consultative Committee – Report of City Remembrancer and Director of Open Spaces 7 March 2016.

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