

EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE
Monday, 12 September 2016

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held at
Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 12 September 2016
at 11.00 am

Present

Members:

Philip Woodhouse (Chairman)
Alderman Gordon Haines
Deputy Stanley Ginsburg
Alderman Sir Paul Judge
Deputy Catherine McGuinness
Sylvia Moys
Barbara Newman
Verderer Peter Adams
Verderer Michael Chapman DL
Verderer Richard Morris
Verderer Dr. Joanna Thomas
Jeremy Simons

Officers:

Natasha Dogra	-	Town Clerk's Office
Sue Ireland	-	Director of Open Spaces
Paul Thomson	-	Superintendent, Epping Forest
Andy Barnard	-	Superintendent, the Commons
Esther Sumner	-	Open Spaces Department
Martin Newnham	-	Open Spaces Department
Jacqueline Eggleston	-	Open Spaces Department
Jo Hurst	-	Open Spaces Department
Peter Young	-	City Surveyor's Department
Paul Nagle	-	Chamberlain's Department
Alison Elam	-	Chamberlain's Department
Susanna Lascelles	-	Town Clerk's Office

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Alderman Ian Luder, Graeme Smith and Virginia Rounding.

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

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

3. MINUTES

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

Matters Arising:

Ms Moys had circulated typographical changes to the Town Clerk prior to the meeting. In response to a query regarding the membership, the Town Clerk explained that due to a transient IS fault the incorrect membership had been automatically pulled through on the minute document. The Committee were assured that this had now been amended and the correct Members were listed on the minutes.

4. OPEN SPACES DEPARTMENT, EPPING FOREST AND THE COMMONS RISK MANAGEMENT

Members noted the update on the management of risks faced by the Open Spaces Department. Risks are reviewed regularly by the Department's Senior Leadership Team as part of the on-going management of the Department's operations.

The Open Spaces Department had one corporate risk and upon review, had five departmental risks. The Epping Forest and Commons Committee oversees five registered charities:

- Epping Forest (charity number 232990)
- Asstead Common (charity number 1051510)
- Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common (charity number 232987)
- Coulsdon Commons and Other Commons (charity number 232989)
- West Wickham Common & Spring Park (charity number 232988)

There were and fourteen additional risks for Epping Forest and eight risks for the four charities associated with The Commons.

In accordance with the Charity Commission's Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP), Trustees are required to describe in the charity's annual report the principle risks to which the charity is exposed and summarise the strategies and plans for managing and mitigating those risks. Using the corporate risk register guidance, the management of these risks would be expected to meet the requirements of the Charity Commission.

In response to a query, Officers suggested that in future Members may benefit from receiving the risk reports relating to Epping Forest and the Commons only. The Open Spaces risk report, which is considered by the Open Spaces Committee, could be circulated to Members for their information separately from the agenda. In response to question about Health and Safety Incidents at Epping Forest, Members were informed that in reference to two outstanding licence checks at EF001(f) one licensee has subsequently had their licence withdrawn and the other had reassigned their lease, which will be rechecked .

Resolved – that Members of the Epping Forest and City Commons Committee:

- Agreed the Epping Forest risk register.
- Agreed The Commons risk register.
- Agreed the removal of the green risks from future risk reports to this Committee as proposed.
- Noted the Departmental risk register outlined.

5. 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. Of particular note to Members was the unfortunate robbery which took place at Burnham Beeches Café. No members of staff were hurt in the incident and Police were carrying out an investigation. Members were also made aware of a suicide at Kenley Common. The Committee noted that the City Corporation offered counselling services to members of staff who had been affected by an incident whilst at work.

The Committee congratulated Officers on their many achievements and awards. The Superintendent agreed to liaise with the Chairman regarding sending a letter to various schools and volunteer groups to thank them for their time and effort.

Resolved – that the update be received.

6. 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. Of particular note was that Epping Forest has received the Green Flag and Green Heritage Awards for a 14th consecutive year. The management of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) also featured prominently in this period. The arrival of Ash Dieback in the Forest had been confirmed conclusively, alongside a containment order for the Oriental Chestnut Gall Wasp identified at Wanstead Park, Bush Wood and George Green.

Work undertaken to clear Floating Pennywort from Perch Pond at Wanstead Park, had made significant inroads in dealing with this problem vegetation. The report noted the resignation of the Grasslands Team Leader, a Forest Keeper and two litter pickers, together with the expiry of the temporary Sports Coordinator contract. Spend and income were on profile for the year and the Open Spaces Bill would be considered by an Opposed Bills Committee in November.

There were two significant incursions by travellers during this period which were dealt with successfully. Responses to Local Plans are the 'duty of cooperate' continue to exercise a lot of officer time and this work is set to increase as new consultations are now in train.

Fly-tips for the current period being reported in 2016 were 102 compared to 121 in the same period in 2015, a decrease of 15.7%. The nighttime closure of selected car parks has not accounted for the decrease in fly tips and there is currently no evidence which satisfactorily explains this trend. The only significant drop in gated car park fly tips occurred at the Wanstead Flats Centre Road car park, where 59 fly tips occurred last year and 24 this year. More data needs to be compiled before reliable trends can be ascertained.

In response to a query regarding the Rotary Club's proposal to plant crocuses on Theydon Green, as part of the 'End Polio Now' campaign, Officers noted that although the land was not part of the Site of Special Scientific Interest Members of the Committee were not in favour of this proposal and asked for this decision to be conveyed to both the Parish Council and the charity concerned.

Officers informed Members that they were working with local authorities and emergency services to remove an abandoned vehicle on Woodredon Hill. This was taking slightly longer than originally anticipated as the vehicle's chassis was badly damaged and therefore could not be safely moved without road closures being put in place.

The Chairman congratulated Officers on securing the Green Flag awards. In relation to festivals and events taking place in the forest, the Chairman queried whether a percentage of the profits could be made payable to a nominated charity. The Director informed Members that Epping Forest was a registered charity and should be the default beneficiary of such arrangements. The Superintendent confirmed that measures were already in place to secure contribution for events such as Music in the Park, however, a mismatch between staging costs and entry prices often reduced the potential for contributions, it was also noted that events such as the recent Donkey Derby helped raise money for the local Scout group. Members were informed that an Events Policy that would address this matter was currently being developed by Officers.

Resolved – that the update be received.

7. **REQUEST FOR THE DEDICATION OF FOREST LAND TO SUPPORT TRANSPORT FOR LONDON CYCLE IMPROVEMENTS**

The Mayor of London and Transport for London were working with the London Boroughs of Redbridge (LBR) and Newham (LBN) to install cycle Quietway 6 – between Mile End and Barkingside within financial year 2016/17.

The Quietway route will bring a range of benefits to the area including reduced carriageway widths; consequent traffic speed reductions; the removal of vehicle parking on the northern edge of Capel Road adjoining Wanstead Flats; improved signage and the installation of a 'Toucan' crossing improving connections between Wanstead Flats and the Cemetery and Crematorium.

The Superintendent updated the Committee that that the London Borough of Newham had requested that the Capel Road section be transferred onto Wanstead Flats immediately north of Capel Road. Members refused this request and sought to remain consistent with the allocation of existing Highways Land adjacent Wanstead Flats at Forest Drive.

Discussions ensued regarding the provision of cycling in the Forest and the development of a policy regarding the activity. Members agreed that while cycling should be encouraged it should also be carefully managed in the Forest.

Officers sought the Committee's approval to dedicate a total area of 77m² of Forest Land on the peri-urban edge of Wanstead Flats to LBN and LBR for nil consideration to enable these local highways authorities to undertake the installation of the section of Quietway 6, which would run adjacent to Forest Land. The cost of installation and future care and maintenance costs are to be met by the local authorities. Members felt that the Forest should not continue to agree to the piecemeal erosion of Forest land for Highway purposes and urged Officers to secure a viable land bank arrangement.

Resolved – that Members:

- Approve the proposal to dedicate to public highway 37m² of Forest land to the London Borough of Newham to facilitate the installation of Quietway 6 - Mile End to Barkingside.
- Approve the proposal to dedicate to public highway 18m² of Forest land to the London Borough of Redbridge to facilitate the installation of Quietway 6 - Mile End to Barkingside.
- Approve the proposal to convert the existing wayleave agreements with London Borough of Redbridge covering 22m² to dedication as public highway.
- Approve the agreement to a formal 'land bank' arrangement with the Local authorities which will allow Epping Forest to periodically receive compensatory land from named land within the Acquisition Strategy.
- Authorise the Comptroller and City solicitor to undertake the necessary legal documentation to dedicate the necessary Forest Land and draw up a 'Land Bank' agreement.

8. CYCLE HIRE FACILITY AT CHINGFORD GOLF COURSE

Members noted Go Further Cycling was a well-established local cycle hire business which had previously operated from Debden campsite and was currently located at Wake Arms was seeking new operating premises. The company had approached Officers at Epping to discuss utilising the rear of the Caddy House building as a cycle store, workshop and hire office.

The location of the Caddy House with car parking capacity, toilets and a soon to be tendered Café, all close to a bus terminus and Overground rail station was thought to provide an ideal cycle hire location. Chingford Plain also offered good access to level surfaced and unsurfaced tracks providing an ideal introduction to off road cycling in Epping Forest. This arrangement would bring an existing operation which relied on Epping Forest for cycling access under a greater degree of control and cost recovery.

The Committee discussed the provision of cycling within the Forest and agreed that the activity needed to be managed responsibly. Members agreed that this initial 18 month arrangement could provide Members with information which could be useful when considering a formal cycling policy in the future. Officers agreed to submit a report at a future Committee meeting regarding cycling in the Forest.

Members agreed that whilst they were minded to approve this facility in principle, the base could act as an education tool to help provide members of the public with information regarding responsible cycling in the Forest.

Resolved – that Members approved in principle the licencing of a cycle hire facility based at the Caddie House at Chingford Golf Course, subject to a suitable financial agreement and compliance with any planning requirements.

9. PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON RIVER RODING FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Environment Agency would commence public consultation in September 2016 on proposals contained within its June 2015 Update to the River Roding Flood Risk Management Strategy, which was originally published in 2012. Members noted that firstly, the Environment Agency had indicated that it intended to withdraw maintenance support for the flood embankments which it constructed along the banks of the River Roding, most recently in the 1980s. The responsibility was intended to be transferred to riparian landowners including the City of London. It was expected that the City will be held to be responsible for 1.9 km of the river's western embankments adjacent to Wanstead Park and the contiguous Exchange Land.

Secondly, the public consultation would also seek public support for the construction of a proposed £5.2 Million Flood Alleviation Scheme at Shonks Mill, Chipping Ongar, designed to protect 900 properties in Loughton, Woodford, South Woodford and Wanstead. The scheme had been awarded Flood Defence Grant-in-Aid of £2.4million with Local Authorities and Riparian landowners expected to provide the balance of £2.8 Million. The Environment Agency has assessed the City of London's outline contribution at up to £500,000.

Resolved – that the report be received.

10. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

There were no questions.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

There was no urgent business.

12. 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.

13. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

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

14. GATEWAY TO BURNHAM BEECHES

The Committee considered the report of the Superintendent of the Commons.

15. **THEYDON BOIS GOLF CLUB LEASE**
The Committee considered the report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest.
16. **DECLARATION OF PROPERTY SURPLUS TO OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS**
The Committee considered the report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest.
17. **EPPING FOREST BUFFER LAND - DEER STALKING TENDER OUTTURN**
The Committee considered the report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest.
18. **WOODREDON FARM RIDING SCHOOL**
The Committee considered the report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest.
19. **RESIDENTIAL LODGES ON CITY ESTATE LAND AT THE WARREN ESTATE**
The Committee considered the report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest.
20. **NON PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**
There were no questions.
21. **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 1:00pm

Chairman

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