

<b>Committee(s)</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Epping Forest and Commons Committee	03 07 2017
<b>Subject:</b> Epping Forest Consultative Committee SEF 15/17	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Open Spaces	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Jo Hurst – Business Manager, Epping Forest	

### Summary

This report proposes draft Terms of Reference for a Consultative Committee and seeks your Committees approval to commence a process to encourage participation in the Committee by a wide range of Epping Forest User Groups.

### Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Approve the Terms of Reference for a representative Epping Forest Consultative Committee
- Approve the commencement of a selection procedure for the creation of Epping Forest Consultative Committee meetings as outlined herein.

### Main Report

#### Background

1. The Epping Forest and Commons Committee is informed with regard to local community aspirations by a variety of public feedback mechanisms including:
  - i. **Elected Committee Members including Verderers** – Twelve elected Aldermen and Common Councilmen, together with four Verderers form your Committee as the representatives of the Trustees. In particular, the Verderers are locally elected by Epping Forest commoners every 7 years. The Verderers demonstrate detailed knowledge regarding the Forest, and no longer confine themselves to the traditional responsibilities of the Vert and Venison, but also consider the feedback from the Forest's many Visitors.
  - ii. **Publically published agendas and minutes** - covering all the Committee's proceedings
  - iii. **Public Consultations:** the City Corporation has conducted public consultation on significant areas of its work such as Conservation Grazing; Wanstead Park
  - iv. **Local Authority Liaison Groups** – Three Biannual Liaison Groups are held with Epping Forest District Council; The London Borough of Waltham Forest and the London Boroughs of Newham and Redbridge (shared) to provide a forum for Local Councillors to comment on the City Corporations management of Epping Forest.

- v. **INOVEM Inclusionware™**: - a web-based software system designed to facilitate public consultation
  - vi. **Visitor Surveys** – between 2009-14 annual Visitor Surveys were conducted using staff and volunteers with the surveys including components which provided for customer feedback on a range of issues.
  - vii. **Call & Visitor centres** – The Epping Forest administration team manages over 12,000 calls/year from the public seeking information, in addition to personal enquiries made visitor centres at The View and The Temple (weekends only) and the High Beach centre run by the Friends of Epping Forest.
2. Public consultation of the Epping Forest management Plan indicated a clear interest from a number of groups on the creation of a Consultative Forum to express views and aspirations on a wide range of Epping Forest management issues.
  3. To expand this already considerable commitment to public engagement, your Committee agreed in March 2016 to begin work on establishing an Epping Forest Consultative Committee, to provide a formal platform for public consultation by Forest User groups on the management of the Forest.
  4. The City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Bill which is currently waiting to be revived, ahead of a Report and Third Reading in the House of Commons includes new requirements to consult publically on its events policy.

### **Current Position**

5. Initial consultation on the creation of an Epping Forest Consultative Committee, including schedule, terms of reference, location has involved consultation with a range of leading Epping Forest organisations. There was a clear preference for progress with the creation of a Committee with a subsequent review, rather than further public consultation of first principles.
6. It is planned to schedule the first meeting according to terms below as soon as is possible.

### **Options**

7. **OPTION 1.** Schedule the first meeting of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee with terms laid out herein, to commence in autumn 2017, with the Consultative Committee itself to review terms and make recommendations after its third meeting. **This option is recommended**
8. **OPTION 2.** Consult further on the terms and make-up of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee. This will add further delay and risk possible negative reaction from vocal groups seeking tangible progress. **This option is not recommended.**

## **Proposals**

The terms for the Consultative Committee are proposed as follows (see Appendix 1):

9. Expressions of interest to be invited as soon as possible, with the first meeting of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee to be organised for Autumn 2017.
10. The Epping Forest Consultative Committee is to meet half yearly initially. After the first three sessions the Consultative Committee will review these existing terms and may put forward proposals for amendments to this Committee for consideration.
11. The Consultative Committee will comprise of 22 members and will include representation from Chairman, Deputy Chairman and four Verderers all drawn from the Epping Forest and Commons Committee. The Committee will be supported by the Town Clerks Department and will consider reports provided by the Superintendent and his Senior Managers. Other Committee members will also be welcomed.
12. The remaining 16 attendants must be nominated members of groups holding a specific interest in the Forest, either with large membership, a broad geographical spread across the whole Forest and with knowledge or interest in the themes of heritage, environment, conservation, recreation/sport or voluntary and friends groups. Groups should be formal, constituted organisations, or, with discretion, working to achieve a constitution within a fixed time frame..
13. Invitations to express interest and to nominate representatives will be advertised through print media, social media, and email and directly to the 84 organisations currently on the Epping Forest Statement of Community Involvement.. Your Committee should be able to appoint further members if it wished.
14. If too many nominations are received then selection will be conducted by representatives of your Committee based on membership numbers, geographic coverage and the need to strike a balance between a range of interests.
15. Tenants, business partners or other organisations with commercial interest will not be invited to serve as other more appropriate forums exist for such input.
16. The first three sessions will be non-public to allow the initial Committee to develop the introduction of public session and a methodology under which public questions will be enabled will be a subject for consideration by the review.
17. Agendas will be based on areas of current concern or debate at Epping Forest, particularly around the formation of management policy, strategy and works schedules. Minutes will be recorded by Officers from the Town Clerks Department for consideration at the next Epping Forest and Commons Committee to help inform decision making. Wherever relevant discussions and outcomes will be reflected in reports tabled at your Committee.

18. The Epping Forest Consultative Committee is not a formal decision making body, but views will be considered and noted in Reports to inform your Committee.
19. The first three sessions will be held on a weekday evening, at a location organised by the Superintendent with the aim of maximising opportunities for the attendance of selected members. The. Timing and location of subsequent sessions to be considered in the subsequent review.
20. As well as appointments, scheduling, location and public session considerations, the review will also include items such as fixed terms and election of representatives, the ability to co-opt external persons on an ad-hoc basis as well as any other matters of order that may need to be decided as the Committee becomes established.

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

### **Implications**

21. **Financial:** The costs of providing the Consultative Committee in terms of Room Hire and Officer time for the publication of reports and meeting attendance will be met by the Epping Forest Local Risk Budgets. The resources required for the publication of agendas; reports and minutes will be provided by the Town Clerk's Department.
22. **Legal:** section 7(3) of the City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Bill relates to the need for a policy concerning the exercise of the powers prepared by the Corporation in consultation with such persons or bodies as it thinks appropriate.

### **Conclusion**

23. The creation of a Consultative Committee focused on the aspirations of User Groups local to Epping Forest builds on a long standing tradition of local community involvement which stretches back to the creation of the original City Corporation Epping Forest Committee. The new Consultative Committee will build on this tradition of service providing a new mechanism by which the aspirations of a broad range of Epping Forest groups can be communicated to your Committee.

### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – List of known organisations to be invited to nominate.
- Appendix 2 – Terms and exclusion criteria for nominees

### **Background Papers**

Epping Forest Consultative Committee, Report of the Remembrancer, March 2016.

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