

EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE
Monday, 20 November 2017

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held at
Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 20 November 2017
at 11.30 am

Members:

Deputy Philip Woodhouse (Chairman)
Peter Bennett
Alderman Sir Roger Gifford
Caroline Haines
Gregory Lawrence
Sylvia Moys
Graeme Smith (Deputy Chairman)
Verderer Peter Adams
Verderer Dr. Joanna Thomas
Jeremy Simons

Officers:

Natasha Dogra – Town Clerk's Office
Colin Buttery – Director, Open Spaces
Andy Barnard – Superintendent of The Commons
Alison Elam – Chamberlain's Department
Michael Radcliffe – City Surveyor's Department
Edward Wood – Comptroller's and City Solicitor's Department
Paul Thomson – Superintendent of Epping Forest
Geoff Sinclair – Open Spaces Department
Jo Hurst – Open Spaces Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Alderman Greg Jones, Verderer Michael Chapman and Barbara Newman.

The Committee noted that Mr Richard Morris had resigned as a Verderer of Epping Forest after 19 years of service. Members thanked Mr Morris for his hard work, and noted that a report regarding the process of appointing a Verderer would be submitted to the January committee meeting.

Members also noted that the Open Spaces Business Manager, Esther Sumner, would be leaving the City Corporation in December 2017. Members placed on record their thanks to Esther for her work over the years.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

Resolved – that the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed.

4. **DRAFT DEPARTMENTAL BUSINESS PLAN 2018/19 - OPEN SPACES**

The Committee noted the draft high-level business plan for the Open Spaces Department for 2018/19. It was presented alongside the departmental estimate report to enable the draft ambitions and objectives to be discussed in conjunction with the draft budget for the forthcoming year.

In response to a query it was noted that the current draft summary plan maintains the themes previously approved by Members but there has been some alteration in emphasis to better align with the corporate plan. As previously, this plan reflects the complete breadth of the department – our open spaces sites in the City of London and the 14 beyond its borders, the Cemetery & Crematorium and Tower Bridge & Monument.

Resolved – that the plan be received.

5. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

Resolved – that the update be received.

6. **REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGETS - 'THE COMMONS' 2017/18 & 2018/19**

Resolved – that the report be received.

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

Members were informed that in May 2016 your Committee considered reports and approved a proposal by Transport for London (TfL) to install a signalised pedestrian crossing on the A232 Croydon Road at West Wickham Common on the understanding that the crossing will improve pedestrian/road safety at the junction of Hartfield Crescent and the A232, whilst minimising its impact upon the Open Space as far as is reasonably practicable.

The Committee further 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 to move their infrastructure further on to West Wickham Common, to make way for the construction of the crossing, at no cost to the City.

Members noted that all necessary, agreements, licenses and deeds of dedication had been completed and that the start of full construction by TfL was imminent.

Resolved – that the report be received.

8. **THE COMMONS - CONSULTATION GROUPS - RENEWED TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Committee approved the merger of the West Wickham and Spring Park Consultative Committee with the Coulsdon Commons Consultative Committee and other changes to the Consultation Groups of the Commons Division in March 2016.

The Superintendent has since reviewed the existing Terms of Reference for the three Consultation Groups that guide the management of the Commons. They have been updated to:

- ☐ Reflect the Terms of Reference for the Epping Forest and Commons Committee
- ☐ Ensure that they are consistent across the Division
- ☐ Provide close links to the aims of the approved management plans for each of the Commons

Resolved – that Members:

- ☐ Approve the proposed Terms of Reference for Coulsdon Commons, West Wickham and Spring Park Consultation Group.
- ☐ Approve their use as a template for the Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common Consultation Group and the Ashted Common Consultation Group.
- ☐ Receive feedback on the Terms of Reference from the three Consultation Groups in early 2018 should that be required.

9. STOKE COMMON MANAGEMENT PLAN, PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND GRANT APPLICATION

Members noted that the transfer of Stoke Common from South Bucks District Council to the City of London Corporation was completed on 31st October 2007. At that time the Superintendent consulted a wide audience to guide the development of a 10 year management plan for the site. That plan was approved by this committee in July 2008.

A new 10 year Management Plan is now required for Stoke Common commencing 1st January 2019 to guide the City Corporation's work on the site. Once again, this will involve consultation with a wide range of stakeholders which must be undertaken prior to a final draft management plan being submitted to your Committee in November 2018.

The management plan, associated public consultation exercise and grant application must run hand in hand during 2018 and each will inform the other. Members must decide how they wish to be consulted during the development of the management plan.

Resolved – that Members:

- i. Approve the necessary actions outlined in the provisional timetable for the management plan, grant application and public consultation process.
- ii. Agree that drafts of the management plan are brought to this Committee for comment and final approval according to that same timetable.

10. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

The Committee received the update of the Superintendent and of particular note was the progress of the City of London (Open Spaces) Bill; a record 16,000 cow grazing days across Epping Forest; extensive wood pasture restoration work across the Forest; agreement through the Local Plans working

group on mitigation protocols for the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation; the commencement of a Parkland Management Plan for Copped Hall Park; a four day study visit by the British Lichen Society; and a powerful demonstration of Social Media 'reach' associated with a Forest Arson attack.

In response to a query regarding fly tipping, the Superintendent advised that on average the clearance of each fly tipping incident cost £8,000. Members agreed that successful prosecutions of fly tippers should be publicised in the press to act as a deterrent to others. The Superintendent agreed to provide Members with further information regarding the number of hours spent on clearing fly tipping and prosecuting offenders. The Director advised the Committee that Officers had been working closely with Keep Britain Tidy to tackle this issue.

In response to a query regarding deer culling, the Superintendent agreed to provide Members with further information regarding the resources spent on the culling of deer in the forest.

Resolved – that the update be received.

11. REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGETS - EPPING FOREST 2017/18 & 2018/19

Resolved – that the report be received.

12. EPPING FOREST LICENCE, PRODUCE AND SPORTS CHARGES

The Committee noted an update on the performance of charges levied for licenced activities, produce sales and formal sports in the last full financial year 2016/17.

In 2016/17 the licensing of activity on Forest land raised a total of £119,563 of which £43,640 (37%) was from fairs and circuses and £38,888 from photography and filming (34%). The sale of produce raised a total £19,161 (17%) while the licensing of Horse riding raised £14,321 (12%). Charges for formal sports across 2016/17 raised a total of £325,641 with Association Football income in 2016/17 totalling £63,789 (20%) and earnings from Golf reaching £261,852 (80%).

In response to a query it was noted that a review of charges and clarification of charging is presented for future licencing of activity, with proposals for an 2018/19 prices increase of 2.3%* in line either with the Consumer Price Index predictions for 2018 or due to benchmarking and reviewing in line with market competition.

Resolved – that Members approve the proposed charges for 2018/19.

13. EPPING FOREST CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE - SELECTION OF ORGANISATIONS

The Committee noted that agreement to establish an Epping Forest Consultative Committee was given in March 2016, with further agreement on the Terms of Reference in July 2017. Open invitations to express interest, under those terms have now closed.

Members noted the details of those expressions of interest and agreed the final composition of the Consultative Committee for the next three years. Members agreed that only large national organisations who are active locally should be included on the committee. Members noted that the composition and attendance at meetings would be reviewed after three years.

Resolved – that Members agreed to select 16 organisations by applying criteria as laid out in the terms of reference.

14. PROPOSED INTRODUCTION OF AN EPPING FOREST LAND BANKING POLICY

The Committee noted the report which was necessary to address continued requests from the four Local Highway Authorities, whose jurisdictions coincide with Epping Forest, for the further dedication of protected Epping Forest Land for Highway purposes to implement highway improvement; public safety; road widening and public realm schemes.

Members raised concerns over the increasing demand for Forest Land both in terms of the aggregate loss and consequent „creeping urbanisation“ of the Forest boundaries. A new policy approach of formal land banking is proposed challenging Local Authorities to each identify discrete parcels of compensatory land adjacent to Epping Forest. These parcels could be transferred in advance or held while future agreed highway dedications are banked by the Local Authority on Trust until the equivalent of the full parcel size is attained, prompting the transfer of the full parcel to the City of London Corporation to hold in trust as compensatory Forest Land.

Resolved – that Members:

- ☐ Provide authority to explore opportunities with local authorities for the introduction of a land-banking scheme for current and future requests for the dedication of Forest Land to public highway, seeking further authority from your Committee once the feasibility of initiating such a scheme has been established.
- ☐ Instruct the Comptroller and City Solicitor to support the drafting of an appropriate agreement to enable the potential transfer of land parcels to the City.

15. REQUEST FOR HIGHWAY DEDICATION ON FOREST LAND AT GILBERT'S SLADE, WOODFORD NEW ROAD

The Committee noted that the London Borough of Waltham Forest (LBWF) intends to replace the existing uncontrolled crossing on Woodford New Road (A104) with a signalised pedestrian and cyclist crossing, known as a Toucan crossing. This crossing will improve connections between two areas of Forest Land Walthamstow Forest and Canada Plain to the West and Gilberts Slade to the East meeting one of the Forest Transport Strategies five ambitions for safe crossing points across the public highway.

In order to make best use of the new crossing, it is proposed to relocate a nearby bus-stop and construct a new footway on Forest Land to connect the

new signalized crossing with the bus-stop, the existing Forest path into Gilbert's Slade, and St Peters Path on the Walthamstow Forest side of the Woodford New Road.

The Committee was asked to consider a request by the LBWF to dedicate for highway purposes approximately 66m² of Forest Land in order to relocate an existing bus stop also on Forest Land at Woodford New Road and to provide a new footway on Forest Land from the bus-stop to connect to the new signalised pedestrian and cyclist crossing. The relocation of the bus-stop permits the return to Forest land of a previously licenced area of 32m² resulting in a net loss of 34m². The Committee expressed concerns over the need for this crossing and asked Officers to investigate the matter further.

Resolved – Members agreed to delegate authority to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman.

16. GEORGE GREEN - PROPOSALS TO VARY THE CARE AND MAINTENANCE AGREEMENT WITH THE LONDON BOROUGH OF REDBRIDGE

The Committee noted that George Green, Wanstead is a remnant village green, that was once part of Wanstead Park and now forms an important amenity space to the South of Wanstead Village and the A12. Forest Land at the Green has been managed by the Local Authority under a care and maintenance agreement since 1953 which has provided an enhanced level of grass maintenance traditionally thought to be more appropriate to public open space in urban areas.

Local community groups have made proposals for a series of wildflower meadows at George Green which will add greater ecological diversity and visual amenity to the area. Vision Redbridge would be keen to implement this project for both the environmental benefits and the potential long-term efficiencies on grounds maintenance cutting regimes. Committee approval is sought for a pilot project with the current grounds maintenance provider - Vision Redbridge - to examine the feasibility of such a scheme, alongside a public education initiative to explain the relaxation of grass cutting arrangements. Members asked Officers to consider this proposal carefully, taking into consideration the necessary maintenance of the meadows.

Resolved – that Members approve a temporary variation of the Care and Maintenance Agreement for George Green to pilot a wildflower meadow area, subject to public consultation with the local community.

17. REPORT OF ACTION TAKEN BETWEEN MEETINGS

Members noted that the introduction of a Residents Parking Zone in Forest Gate North displaced a range of resident and commuter parking to Centre and Lake House Roads, Wanstead Flats. The consequent introduction of parking restrictions on these roads has further displaced this parking to residential roads in Aldersbrook and Lake House Estates.

In response to increased demand for on-street parking in the Aldersbrook and

Lake House areas, the London Borough of Redbridge launched a public consultation on proposals to restrict parking times or introduce a fully charged for Parking Permit Controls.

Both proposals will have a direct impact on parking provision on residential streets which are utilised by visitors to Epping Forest. To meet the consultation deadline of 27 October it is proposed that a response by the Chairman favouring limited time restrictions is sent to the London Borough of Redbridge.

Urgent authority was sought as the consultation closed on 27 October 2017 and the Epping Forest and Commons Committee was not scheduled to meet next until 20 November 2017.

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

There were no questions.

19. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

There was no urgent business.

The meeting ended at 1:15pm.

Chairman

Contact Officer: Natasha Dogra
Natasha.Dogra@cityoflondon.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank