

EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE **Monday, 12 March 2018**

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held at
Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 12 March 2018 at
11.30 am

Present

Members:

Deputy Philip Woodhouse (Chairman)
Peter Bennett
Alderman Sir Roger Gifford
Caroline Haines
Gregory Lawrence
Alderman Gregory Jones QC
Sylvia Moys
Graeme Smith (Deputy Chairman)
Verderer Michael Chapman DL
Verderer Rd. Joanna Thomas
Jeremy Simons

Officers:

Colin Buttery	-	Director of Open Spaces
Andy Barnard	-	Superintendent, The Commons
Paul Thomson	-	Superintendent of Epping Forest
Hadyn Robson	-	Open Spaces Department
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Natasha Dogra	-	Town Clerk's Department
Geoff Sinclair	-	Open Spaces Department
Andy Thwaites	-	Open Spaces Department
Jo Hurst	-	Open Spaces Department
Alison Elam	-	Chamberlain's Department
Jacqueline Egglestone	-	Open Spaces Department
Roger Adams	-	City Surveyor's Department
Jeremy Dagley	-	Open Spaces Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Barbara Newman and Verderer Peter Adams.

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

There were no declarations.

3. MINUTES

The Committee considered the minutes of the previous meeting. It was noted that the Trees Outside Woods project was being progressed with involvement from One Epping Forest. Members agreed to progress the Pedestrian Crossing at Gilberts Slade on agreement from the London Borough of Waltham

Forest to reduce the approaching speed limit to 30mph. Members also stated a preference for compensatory land to be drawn from the Leyton Flats Tramway rather than the Mallinson Park Wood. Members also agreed the safety improvement of the Thornwood Flood Alleviation Scheme by the Environment Agency following the Superintendent's undertaking that the works would all take place inside the existing licenced area.

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

4. **APPOINTMENT OF VERDERER MARCH 2018**

Following the resignation of Richard Morris OBE who served as a Verderer of Epping Forest since 1998, and in accordance with the Epping Forest Act (1878) the Epping Forest and Commons Committee appointed a working party to recruit to this position. The recruitment process is now complete, and the working party are able to recommend one candidate as a unanimous decision.

A Member queried whether the appointment required approval from the Court of Common Council, as Section 31 of the Epping Forest Act 1878 appeared to provide Committee with authority to appoint. Officers suggested that the Court of Common Council appointed the full Committee as a body in accordance with Standing Orders. The City Solicitor confirmed that established custom and practice and also section 31(4) of the Act requires that the appointment be treated like any other Grand Committee of the Court. The matter will be considered by the Court of Common Council at the meeting on 19th April 2018.

The Chairman thanked all those involved with the appointment.

Resolved – that Members endorse the selection of Melissa Murphy as Epping Forest Verderer (North) for onward approval by the Court of Common Council,.

5. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

Members noted that the purpose of the report is to summarise the Epping Forest Division's activities across November 2017 to January 2018. Of particular note was the significant progress with the final passage of the City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Bill; a major response to the Epping Forest District Council on the soundness of the proposed Local Plan, a report on the main modifications to the London Borough of Redbridge's Local Plan recognising comments by the City Corporation and a successful Christmas Event at The View.

A Member enquired whether concealed CCTV could be installed at known disposal points. The Superintendent advised that the random nature of fly tipping was challenging for fixed CCTV installations. Moreover, previous CCTV installations had been vandalised or stolen. Trials of new camouflaged CCTV units are underway. A Member challenged the accuracy of the map shown for newly designated High-Risk reservoirs, suggesting that the map showed the extent of surface water flooding instead. The Superintendent was confident that the map was correct, but agreed to review the data displayed. A Member

sought an indication of the possible cost of works needed to reduce the risk of flooding. The Superintendent indicated that Officers within DBE have estimated £5-10 Million over 3 years. A Member raised concerns regarding liability associated with hosting children's play areas. The Superintendent reassured members that the relevant licence clearly identified the local authority responsible for undertaking daily, weekly and annual safety checks.

Resolved – that the update be received.

6. EPPING FOREST OPERATIONS PROGRAMME FOR 2018/2019

Members were informed that the main theme for the habitats conservation work continues to be the grant-funded operations aimed at managing the Favourable Condition of the Site of Special Scientific Interest. The area to be worked remains at an increased hectareage of around 38 hectares during 2018-19, across 17 of the 38 compartments to ensure that the 10-year commitments under the Environmental Stewardship Agreement with Natural England are met. In introducing this section of the report (paragraph 10) to Members, the Head of Conservation highlighted two key areas of listed work for special mention as each were exceptions to the usual work programme approach. Firstly, at Lords Bushes a larger acreage of work would have to be undertaken than would normally be considered for the annual programme due to poor ground conditions preventing work in the two previous winters. Secondly, the work on protecting soils and trees at High Beach may need to involve a higher degree of intervention than usual both mulching around the ancient trees and the erection of fencing to protect the trees more effectively.

Contractors, as in the last two years, will be involved in key areas of wood pasture and grassland management. The grazing programme will continue to expand with the key aim being to unite the Bury Wood and Chingford grazing areas with an expanded perimeter of invisible fencing. This will ensure more extensive, less intensive grazing through the wood-pasture and onto Chingford Plain over a longer season and will match the longer-standing, extensive area at Fairmead.

In response to a query, Members noted that the work programme also addresses key areas of risk, particularly those related to woody vegetation along highway verges, fly-tipping, rough sleeping and tree safety.

Members noted that an issue for the coming year will be the continuing response to and resources required in relation to the increased risk posed by tree pests and diseases. There will also be attention focused on aquatic Non-Native Invasive Species (INNS) principally New Zealand Pygmyweed. A Member noted the work on removal of this species at Speakman's Pond and asked whether there would be a programme of works for other ponds. In response, the Head of Conservation confirmed that INNS currently determined the priorities for pond work at the moment due to limitations on resources. Alexandra and Butler's Retreat Ponds would be considered for work in relation to the New Zealand Pygmy-weed in the next year. Members were informed that a programme of pond work would be considered as part of the forthcoming

management plan and grant-aid from sources such as the Stewardship programme would be taken into account in determining the scope of the works.

Access along the ride network is to be addressed through tackling over-growing vegetation through systematic survey and remedial work. A new improved design of bridge is to be installed at Whitehall Plain to improve north-south visitor access connecting with the Chingford Visitor “hub”.

Officers informed Members that following a successful contract tendering process in 2015 and 2016, the programme will continue to improve the value for money we achieve using bulk contracts where possible. These contracts are proposed for retendering in 2018/19.

Resolved – that Members approve the annual work programme.

7. EPPING FOREST BUFFER LANDS - ANNUAL AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS REVIEW

Members noted that the Buffer Lands provide essential operational underpinning of the approved Grazing Strategy, which is crucial to maintaining the *Favourable Condition* of the Epping Forest Site of Special Scientific Interest. The grazing of the Buffer Lands is also required for maintenance of their important parkland landscapes and it is proposed to continue with both in-house and licensee grazing, the latter raising additional income to that provided from the agri-environment grants.

Based on external land agency advice and existing agreements, Breach Barns Farm Business Tenancy (FBT) needs to be completed and notice may be served for a 2019-20 renewal of the FBT at Netherhouse. The agricultural rental income next year from agricultural tenancies will be slightly above the 2017-18 figures, following the renewal of the FBT at Copped Hall Park (North). This report provides a summary of the main agricultural land management activities completed in 2017 – 18. It also previews proposed management and wildlife conservation operations, which will be in-line with national cross-compliance regulations.

A Member raised the question of deer farming to control deer damage on the Buffer Lands and suggested infrastructure be considered. In response the Superintendent confirmed that a report on deer management would be put before Committee in the near future. Adding to this the Head of Conservation emphasised that reduction of deer damage to the woodlands and their under-stories on the Buffer Lands may require methods of excluding deer from the woods as well as control of their numbers and these would need to be considered in woodland management in the future.

Officers highlighted to Members that the Forest’s conservation management objectives, as well as the Buffer Lands management, were directly supported by the Buffer Land Estate’s generation of a combined grant income expected to be over £165,000.

Resolved – that Members approved:

- ☐ the procurement of land agency advice for the continuation and completion of negotiations at Breach Barns, for a review of Netherhouse, Obelisk Field and Woodredon Estate (south) agreements and on a case-by-case basis as required, adhering to City Procurement guidelines;
- ☐ the procurement of contract services for the carrying out of agricultural management, including fencing and weed control, as required, following City Procurement procedures;
- ☐ a renewal of the 3-yr lease to the Upshire Millennium Trust on similar terms;
- ☐ revision of the boundary between the Woodredon North Farm Tenancy business and No 2 Green Lane Bungalow to facilitate surplus property disposal.

8. **EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN**

Members noted an update on The Conservators' response to the Epping Forest District Council ('the Council') Regulation 19 Submission Local Plan. The Council has confirmed that it will be submitting its Plan to the Planning Inspectorate by its 31 March deadline. Discussions are underway in relation to mitigating adverse impacts as part of a mitigation strategy as required under the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the protection of the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC), to which The Conservators' are co-signatories.

Members noted that the proposed mitigation measures and any proposed Statement of Common Ground with the Council would be brought before the Committee later this year for approval. Members requested a briefing note regarding the key issues be circulated prior to both the Committee site visit and Committee meeting in May.

Resolved – that Members:

- note the response on behalf of The Conservators' to the Plan;
- note that Epping Forest District Council is seeking a Statement of Common Ground with The Conservators prior to the Plan's Examination-in-Public;
- and
- note the consequent range of mitigation issues that are under consideration, a final prioritised list of which will be brought before Committee for approval at the earliest opportunity.

9. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

Members noted a general update on issues across the nine sites within 'The Commons' division that may be of interest to members and is supplementary to the monthly email updates.

Members noted that the terms of reference documents for all consultative committees had been updated in bespoke ways. The Committee noted that the next agenda item was the terms of reference for the Ashtead Common Consultative Group.

Resolved – that the update be received.

10. **ASHTEAD COMMON CONSULTATIVE GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Committee received the updated terms of reference for the Consultative Group and noted the changes.

Resolved – that the Terms of Reference be agreed.

11. MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES THE COMMONS

Members received the report setting out the management priorities across for the Commons for 2018-19.

Resolved – that the priorities be agreed.

12. KENLEY AIRFIELD SAFETY FENCE

In January 2009 your committee received a report from the Superintendent of the City Commons, detailing the refusal by Croydon Council of a planning application submitted by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) for the erection of a 1.2m high wood and steel palisade style safety fence around Kenley Airfield. The purpose of the fence was to separate visitors to the Common from flying activities and thus minimise the associated health and safety risks.

Members noted that at that time Croydon Council recommended that the Airfield's 'Safety Working Group' (SWG) investigate and trial, alternative safety measures. Shortly thereafter a trial safety system of moveable metal crowd control barriers was introduced along with a Safe Operating Procedure (SOP). The City worked closely with the MOD as part of the SWG.

Resolved – that Members:

- i. Support the planning application submitted by the MOD as far as the application benefits the Health and Safety of visitors to Kenley Common and respects the balance required to protect the heritage landscape.
- ii. Authorise the Superintendent to respond as approved, to the planning application.

13. KENLEY REVIVAL PROJECT AT GATEWAY

The Committee noted that 90% of the funding for the Kenley Revival Project comes from the Heritage Lottery Fund. HLF require project budgets to make provision for contingency and expect it to be used subject to their approval.

There is now the opportunity to capitalise on this success and do more to broaden the range of people involved in the project by re-scoping the activity programme for the second half of the project.

A further £28,000 is needed to deliver the following:

- Community archaeology - engagement of Museum of London Archaeology to supervise the dig and Unexploded Ordnance experts to fulfil a watching brief.
- Learning Festival Year Two - engagement of arts practitioners to deliver sessions with schools and in public libraries. Delivery of a Learning Festival Roadshow in July with tours of local libraries with workshop and a Learning Month in November delivering workshops in schools on the theme of Remembrance
- Increased amount spent on education activities including equipment purchase

to do more object handling and loan box sessions, and to deliver more outreach workshops.

Resolved – that Members authorise the use of £28,000 of the contingency budget to fund changes to the activity programme.

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

A Member suggested that reports regarding Wanstead Park should be considered by the Committee prudently to avoid mixed messages being publicised. The Committee noted that there were several different issues to be considered at Wanstead Park and Members should be given ample time to address the concerns of residents and others involved with the Park.

The Director agreed that information needed to be circulated to the Committee to allow Members to debate the subject and to ensure that Members were fully briefed. Members noted that the timetable for the project was complicated due to funding bid reviews; Officers indicated that the timeline would be governed by the City's Gateway processes and agreed to recirculate an update briefing report to Members first placed before Committee on September 2017. The Committee suggested that an away day covering the topic may be helpful for Members.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

Resolved – that the Committee agreed to delegate authority to the Town Clerk, Director of Open Spaces in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman to respond to the DEFRA 'health and harmony' consultation by the deadline of 8th May 2018. Members requested a brief note regarding the document.

Members noted that the Epping Forest Consultative Committee had met, and the membership did not currently represent the golfing community. The Committee agreed that the offers received from the Golfing community to secure representation on the Consultative Committee be approved.

16. 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.

17. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

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

18. BUTLERS RETREAT CAFÉ - LEASE RENEWAL

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces.

19. GRANT OF LEASE - CYCLE HIRE

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces.

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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