

EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE
Monday, 11 September 2017

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held at
Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 11 September 2017
at 11.30 am

Members:

Deputy Philip Woodhouse (Chairman)
Peter Bennett
Alderman Sir Roger Gifford
Caroline Haines
Gregory Lawrence
Graeme Smith (Deputy Chairman)
Verderer Peter Adams
Verderer Michael Chapman DL
Verderer Richard Morris
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
Juliane Heinecke – Open Spaces 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.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **MINUTES**

The Committee considered the minutes of the previous meeting. It was agreed that Members would receive an annual update on the progress of works included in the Cyclical Works Programme.

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

4. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

Members noted a summary of the Epping Forest Division’s activities across April to May 2017.

The Superintendent apologised for the need to make a series of amendments to the report:

Item 7 should read managed rather than manged and should refer to the installation of timers rather than the installation of fires.

The item on fly tipping was un-numbered.

Item 12 delete is after LBR

Item 48 was erroneously repeated.

The tables at 74 were incorrectly totalled.

Following the election of 9 June both Houses agreed on 19 July to revive the City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Bill in Session 2017-19.. A Third Reading in the House of Commons will still need to be completed before the Bill is considered by the House of Lords.

The first of the visitor orientation panels was installed in time for the Lord Mayor to unveil at Chairman's Lunch on 7 July 2017. The sign was well received and the remaining orientation, interpretation, waymarked trail and fingerpost signage was underway with installation being completed by contractors by the end of August.

Electricity consumption across the Division had been halved by a number of energy conservation measures ahead of the grid connection of Photo Voltaic panels at harrow Road. The number of fly tips continued to fall, with some element of tipping displacement between locked and unlocked car parks. Thirteen prosecutions were heard by magistrates resulting in fines totalling £7,059. Interventions with Rough Sleepers had continued to grow in line with national statistics..

In response to a query it was noted that the Epping Forest Consultative Committee would consist of individuals nominated by constituted organisations. The final membership proposals would be discussed by the Grand Committee at a meeting later in the year.

Members noted that support and counselling was made available to members of staff who had been involved in the recent recovery of a body in Epping Forest. It was also noted that an Unexplained Deaths Policy was currently being developed by Officers to help manage a range of responsibilities associated such occurrences.

The Committee agreed that future volunteer group events should be held in suitable venues to ensure that all groups were catered for. The Superintendent agreed to ensure this was the case for future events.

RESOLVED – that the update be received.

5. **WANSTEAD PARK BRIEFING NOTE**

The Committee noted that the City of London is the primary landowner for the Wanstead Park Grade II* Registered Park and Garden. In 2009 Historic England placed the Park on the Heritage at Risk Register. Working with the three co-owners of the Registered Park and Garden a Parkland Master Plan is

being developed by consultants to help with securing the removal of the park from the 'at risk' register.

Members noted the update on the Parkland Plan development progress at Wanstead Park since last reporting to your committee on the 15 September 2015 and the proposed process to continue to progress the Parkland Plan. It was recommended that an outline (Gateway 1/2) project proposal be submitted to the Project Sub Committee for autumn 2017

In response to a query it was noted that Officers would be producing a plan to deal with the additional maintenance costs associated with the renovation of Park features. Members noted that the significant amount of resources being dedicated to this part of the forest reflected the large number of visitors to this area as revealed by the 5 year Visitor Survey. The Director emphasised to Members that Wanstead Park represented a challenging and complex project where in addition to restoration there was a clear need to satisfy certain statutory requirements around flood and water management.

RESOLVED – that Members:

- Agreed that Gateway 1 and 2 reports be submitted to the Corporate Projects Board and Project Sub-Committee with outline project proposals seeking to achieve the removal of Wanstead Park from the Heritage at Risk Register.

6. REVIEW OF RAMORUM DISEASE CONTROL IN EPPING FOREST

Members noted that Sudden Oak Death, *Phytophthora ramorum*, or more appropriately "Ramorum disease", was discovered in Epping Forest in September 2016 as part of the annual tree health monitoring regime that has been conducted by the Conservation Section for nearly a decade. This disease can kill beech trees and so is considered a severe threat to the internationally-important beech population of Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

In November 2016 a policy of complete removal of rhododendron and larch from Forest and buffer land sites was approved because of the severe risk posed by these Ramorum disease-hosting plants. The highest priority was given to removal work at the infected site at The Warren Plantation, and two nearby sites at Conybury Wood and Oak Hill where the rhododendron was extensive and close to ancient beech trees. The main clearances of rhododendrons at The Warren Plantation, Oak Hill and Conybury Wood were completed, apart from small patches, by March 2017.

However, with the discovery of a second infected site at Wanstead Park it seemed likely that Ramorum disease was more widespread in the environment, rather than being introduced through a single source of infection as had been thought previously. In the light of this new information, a consideration of the significance of the historic plantings at Wanstead Park and an assessment of the level of risk reduction that might be achieved by further clearance work a modified policy is proposed in this report.

Members agreed that the situation remained very serious and that this change in approach did not reflect a change in direction. It was agreed that Option 2 would best deal with the challenging situation. Therefore, instead of continuing with complete removal at all sites by the end of 2018, it is now proposed to continue removal at key sites close to the beech SAC populations in the northern half of the Forest, whilst monitoring the two historic sites in the centre and south of the Forest, at Wanstead Park and Knighton Woods.

RESOLVED – that Members:

- approved a modified policy of partial removal (Option 2), which involves the complete clearance of Rhododendron from three key sites over the next 2 -3 years and the retention, for the time-being and with at least annual monitoring, of two historic sites in the Forest;
- approved the annual review of this policy in the light of the Ramorum disease and tree health monitoring results and any new information about the disease.

7. EPPING FOREST WORK PROGRAMME OUT-TURN REPORT 2016/17

Members noted a summary of the work completed as part of the access and habitat Work programme for Epping Forest from April 2016 to March 2017 inclusive. Amongst the highlights were:

- a total of £287,201 of agri-environment income supported the essential habitat conservation work in the Forest;
- over 25 hectares of wood-pasture restoration work was achieved by in-house teams and contractors, one of the highest acreages achieved in any year;–.
- volunteers also played a significant role in restoring the Forest's internationally-important wood-pasture as well as tackling the threat of non-native species;
- 40 tonnes of invasive Floating Pennywort were removed from Perch Pond;
- 15 hectares of rhododendron was removed to prevent the establishment of Ramorum disease in the Forest;
- Trueloves fencing was completed allowing the site to be grazed for the first time in 2017;
- major improvements to Hill Wood Car park's capacity, safety and amenity.

The Chairman asked the Head of Operation to convey the Committee's thanks for the extensive work completed over the previous year.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

8. 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.

It was noted that the Sky Heroes event which took place on 10th September had been a huge success with over 5,000 people attending the event. Members agreed that if a date for the visit to Kenley could not be fixed before October the visit should be added to the schedule of visits for 2018.

Members enquired as to the situation with the missing person in the Ashted Common area. The Superintendent resolved to enquire. *Post meeting note, neither the person nor the motorised wheelchair have been found to date.*

Members requested that the Superintendent kept a tally of unplanned activities such as eviction of Travellers, OPM etc to support any case presented that might be presented to the Chamberlain.

Resolved – that the report be received.

9. PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDERS AT BURNHAM BEECHES

Members were informed that the Dog Control Orders at Burnham Beeches will automatically be treated as Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) from 20th October 2017.

Proposals to extend the PSPOs at Burnham Beeches for a further three years from 1st December 2017 were approved by this Committee in July 2017. This report introduces, for approval, the updated Dog Management Strategy and Enforcement Protocol to be used to guide the enforcement, administration and monitoring of PSPOs.

The Committee were asked to give delegated authority to the Director so that nominated officers may be authorised to issue Fixed Penalty Notices in relation to PSPOs. The amount of the fixed penalty for breach of a PSPO also needs to be agreed. Members also requested that annualised PSPO figures are presented to this Committee.

RESOLVED – that Members:

1. Approved the updated Dog Management Strategy and Enforcement Protocol for Burnham Beeches with effect from 20th October 2017.
2. Delegated authority to the Director of Open Spaces to authorise officers at Burnham Beeches for the purpose of issuing Fixed Penalty Notices in relation to Public Spaces Protection Orders.
3. Set the fixed penalty for breach of a Public Spaces Protection Order at Burnham Beeches at £80 with a reduction to £50 if paid within 10 days.
4. Approved the site signage arrangements.

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

In response to a query regarding the Epping Forest Management Plan Steering Group Members were informed that a date would be circulated as soon as possible.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

The Chairman thanked Verderer Adams for his work in supporting the Epping Forest Heritage Trust. The Committee agreed that it was a successful result and thanked Verderer and Mrs Adams.

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.