

EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE
Monday, 13 January 2020

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held at
Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 13 January 2020 at
11.30 am

Present

Members:

Graeme Doshi-Smith (Chairman)
Peter Bennett
Jeremy Simons
Oliver Sells QC (Ex-Officio Member)
Alderman Robert Howard
Verderer Nicholas Munday
Verderer Michael Chapman DL
Verderer Melissa Murphy
Verderer Dr. Joanna Thomas

Officers:

Richard Holt	- Town Clerk's Department
Kristina Drake	- Media Officer, Town Clerk's Department
Alison Elam	- Group Accountant, Chamberlain's Department
Derek Cobbing	- Finance Manager, Chamberlain's Department
Colin Buttery	- Director of Open Spaces
Paul Thomson	- Superintendent, Epping Forest
Andy Barnard	- Superintendent, The Commons
Jacqueline Eggleston	- Head of Visitor Services, Epping Forest
Benjamin Rosendale	- Visitor Experience Manager, Epping Forest
Jo Hurst	- Business Manager, Epping Forest
Gerry Kiefer	- Open Spaces Business Manager, Open Spaces Department
Dr Helen Read	- Conservation Officer, The Commons

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Caroline Haines, Gregory Lawrence, Sylvia Moys, Deputy Chairman Deputy Phillip Woodhouse and Alderman Robert Hughes-Penney.

Following a question from a Member of the Committee the Town Clerk confirmed that the meeting was quorate as five Common Councillors were present. It was explained that a quorum of any five Committee members was

required for items of business relating to Epping Forest and five members of the Court of Common Council for all other business.

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

There were no declarations received.

3. **MINUTES**

The Committee considered the public minutes and non-public summary of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee held on 18 November 2019.

RESOLVED- That the public minutes of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee meeting on 18 November 2019 were approved as an accurate record.

4. **EPHING FOREST AND COMMONS COMMITTEE 2020 DATES**

The Committee received a report of the Town Clerk which detailed the various dates of Committee and Group meetings related to the Epping Forest and Commons Committee to be held in 2020.

Members requested that visits to the Commons be included in the schedule in order that Members, particularly any new Verderers elected in February, are able to experience all the sites under the responsibility of the Committee. The Director of Open Spaces explained that the consultative group visits would be added to the schedule of visits and that opportunities for further committee visits would be explored.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

5. **DEPARTMENTAL AND SERVICE COMMITTEE BUDGET ESTIMATES AND HIGH-LEVEL SUMMARY BUSINESS PLAN 2020/21 - OPEN SPACES DEPARTMENT**

The Committee considered a joint report of the Chamberlain and Director of Open Spaces on the Committee Budget Estimates and high-level summary Business Plan 2020/21 for the Open Spaces Department. The Chamberlain and Director of Open Spaces introduced the report explaining that the Open Spaces & City Gardens Committee had previously agreed the report.

Following a query from a Member of the Committee the Director of Open Spaces explained that the risk ratings were not based primarily on financial factors but included elements such as reputational risk and health & safety concerns.

Members requested that budgets for the previous five be added to the relevant section of the report to provide comparable historic data.

RESOLVED- That: -

- I. The Epping Forest proposed revenue budget for 2020/21 be approved for submission to the Finance Committee; and

- II. That the Commons proposed revenue budgets for 2020/21 be approved for submission to the Finance Committee; and
- III. That the Epping Forest capital and supplementary revenue project budgets for 2020/21 be approved for submission to the Finance Committee; and
- IV. That the Commons capital and supplementary revenue project budgets for 2020/21 be approved for submission to Finance Committee; and
- V. That the Chamberlain be authorised, in consultation with the Director of Open Spaces to revise these budgets to allow for any further implications arising from the Fundamental Review, Corporate Projects, other reviews and changes to the Cyclical Works Programme; and
- VI. That minor amendments for 2019/20 and 2020/21 budgets arising during budget setting be delegated to the Chamberlain; and
- VII. That the final draft high-level summary Department Business Plan for 2020/21 be noted.

6. DEPARTMENTAL BUSINESS PLAN 2019/20 - SIX MONTH PERFORMANCE UPDATE: APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2019

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Departmental Business Plan 2019/20 Six-month performance update: April to September 2019. The report provided Members with an update on progress and performance against the 2019/20 Business Plan by the services which report to the various Open Spaces Committees.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

7. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces which provided an update on issues across the nine sites within 'The Commons' division.

The Superintendent explained that further to paragraph 13 of the report expert advice had been procured and that was supportive of the City's case. . In addition, it was clarified that the staff shortages had been resolved but not with permanent solutions noting that the Fundamental Review outcome would affect the situation. A Member of the Committee suggested that apprentices could be used to mitigate staffing issues and provide valuable experience to prospective permanent staff.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

8. BURNHAM BEECHES MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Burnham Beeches Management Plan. The report explained that the 'draft' management plan had been carefully matched to the City's commitments under Natural England's ten-year Countryside Stewardship Scheme that provides significant funding to support conservation activities throughout the draft plan and that extensive consultation had been undertaken with a wide range of stakeholders prior to the production of the final draft version. Members

commended Officers on the report and commented on the quality of the Burnham Beeches Management Plan.

Replying to a query from a Member of the Committee the Director of Open Spaces clarified that the Management Plan had received predominately positive feedback in the public consultations conducted.

A Member of the Committee questioned how the success of the Management Plan would be determined with particular importance on the link with the Departmental Budget. The Director of Open Spaces confirmed the review of the previous plan, including whether the aims within it had been achieved, is a central component of the production of each Management Plan. In addition, it was explained that there were still some outstanding issues regarding the future budgeting of the Burnham Beeches management costs but that clarity was expected in the Fundamental Review process.

RESOLVED- That the final draft plan be approved so that it can be submitted to Natural England to grant consent prior to 31st March 2020.

9. **INFRASTRUCTURE - CAR PARK CHARGES AT FARTHING DOWNS, RIDDLEDOWN AND BURNHAM BEECHES**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Farthing Downs, Riddlesdown and Burnham Beeches car park charges. The report explained that a data collection exercise had been completed to inform future income expectations. In addition, it explained that a soft market test exercise was also undertaken to identify options, clarify technical challenges such as connectivity, software and hardware, explore administration and enforcement options and to provide indicative capital and revenue costs.

Following a query from a Member of the Committee the Director of Open Spaces confirmed that a communication plan relating to the Car Parks would be developed.

A Member questioned whether the required flexibility was built into the car park system. The Director of Open Spaces confirmed that the technological component of the car park charges system allows for a greater level of flexibility. In addition, it was explained that the terrain at the site of the car parks in question could potentially cause a mixed adoption of the technological options.

RESOLVED- That the progress made leading to the current competitive tender process and the steps that will be taken to ensure delivery by late summer 2020 be noted.

10. **ASHTEAD COMMON AND WEST WICKHAM AND COULSDON COMMONS TIMETABLE**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces on ten-year management plans for the Ashted Common & West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons.

A Member questioned if the staffing issues mentioned within the report could be mitigated by procuring the services of consultants as required. The Director of Open Spaces explained that the departmental preference was for in-house staff to work on projects and confirmed that, following prioritisation, staffing provision would be sufficient for the proceeding eighteen months.

RESOLVED- That: -

- I. The necessary actions outlined in the provisional timetable for the various management plans and public consultations be approved; and
- II. That the necessary actions outlined in the provisional timetable for the submission of Woodland Plans and CSSG applications be approved.

11. ASHTEAD COMMON TRUSTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2019

The Committee received a report of the Chamberlain on the Trustees Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2019 for Ashtead Common.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

12. BURNHAM BEECHES AND STOKE COMMON TRUSTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2019

The Committee received a report of the Chamberlain on the Trustee's Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2019 for Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

13. WEST WICKHAM COMMON AND SPRING PARK WOOD COULSDON AND OTHER COMMONS TRUSTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2019

The Committee received a report of the Chamberlain on the Trustee's Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2019 for West Wickham Common and Spring Park Wood, Coulsdon and Other Commons.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

14. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

The Committee received a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest which summarised the Epping Forest Division's activities across October to November 2019.

A Member of the Committee noted the work of Officers on the response to the Epping Forest District Plan, particularly highlighting issues regarding air quality and traffic. The Director of Open Spaces commented on the City of London Corporations concerns regarding the lack of engagement from the Epping Forest District Council and explained that the City would be following up with the Chief Executive of the Council regarding these issues.

Replying to a Member's question the Director of Open Spaces explained that an update on air quality would be provided once the statistics had been received noting that these would need to be supplied from Natural England as the City had not received them.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

15. **EPPING FOREST TRUSTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2019**

The Committee received a report of the Chamberlain on the Trustee's Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2019 for Epping Forest.

A Member of the Committee noted the lack of legacy donations received by the Epping Forest and commented that there was issue of perception between the City of London Corporation as a wealthy institution and the Charity which fund the management of Epping Forest. The Director of Open Spaces explained that the City of London Corporation was undertaking a review of its charitable functions which would include a review of how the funding of the open spaces related charities are publicised.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

16. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

There were no questions considered in the public session.

17. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

There was no further business considered.

18. **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.

19. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

The Committee considered the non-public minutes of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee on 18 November 2019.

RESOLVED-That the non-public minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee held on 18 November 2019 be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee.

20. **NON-PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

There were no questions considered in the non-public session.

**21. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT
AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED
WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED**

There was one urgent item received in the non-public session.

The meeting ended at 12.34 pm

Chairman

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