

EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE
Monday, 6 July 2020

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held at
remotely on Monday, 6 July 2020 at 11.30 am

Present

Members:

Graeme Doshi-Smith (Chairman)
Deputy Philip Woodhouse (Deputy Chairman)
Peter Bennett
Caroline Haines
Alderman Robert Howard
Alderman Robert Hughes-Penney
Sylvia Moys
Benjamin Murphy
Jeremy Simons
Oliver Sells QC (Ex-Officio Member)
Verderer Nicholas Munday
Verderer H.H William Kennedy

Officers:

Richard Holt	- Town Clerk's Department
Christopher Rumbles	- Town Clerk's Department
Mark Jarvis	- Chamberlain's Department
Alison Bunn	- City Surveyor's Department
Colin Buttery	- Director of Open Spaces
Paul Thomson	- Superintendent of Epping Forest
Andy Barnard	- Superintendent of The Commons
Martin Hartup	- Head Ranger, Open Spaces Department
Jeremy Dagley	- Head of Conservation, Epping Forest
Jo Hurst	- Business Manager, Epping Forest

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Verderer Michael Chapman, Verderer Paul Morris and Gregory Lawrence.

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

Alderman Robert Hughes-Penney made a declaration as a South Bucks District ratepayer.

3. MINUTES

The Committee considered the draft public minutes of the last meeting of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee held on the 20th of May 2020.

RESOLVED- That the public minutes and non-public summary of the Epping

Forest and Commons Committee held on the 20th of May 2020, subject the corrections specified, be approved as an accurate record.

4. **EPPING 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.

The Chairman commented that the committee visits listed were unlikely to take place due to the restrictions in place to tackle the COVID pandemic.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

5. **EPPING FOREST AND THE COMMONS RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces which provided an update on the management of risks undertaken by the Open Spaces Department and the Epping Forest and the Commons Divisions.

RESOLVED- That: -

- I. The Epping Forest Risk Register included at Appendix 2 be approved; and
- II. That the Commons Risk Register included at Appendix 3 be approved; and
- III. That the removal of one amber risk, TC 009 – Glider Operations – Kenley Airfield from The Commons Risk Register, which now falls under another existing risk heading, as explained in paragraph 20 be approved; and
- IV. That the addition of one red risk; TC 011 - Riddlesdown Quarry to The Commons Risk Register, as explained in paragraph 21 be approved; and
- V. That the addition of one amber risk; TC 012 - Farthing Downs Cattle Grid to The Commons Risk Register, as explained in paragraph 22 be approved.

6. **OPEN SPACES DEPARTMENTAL BUSINESS PLAN 2019/20 - YEAR END PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Spaces Department's delivery of its 2019/20 Business Plan. The Director of Open Spaces explained that some detailed information was to be included once it had been finalised.

A Committee Member commented that there should be a reference to the diversity concerns and highlighted the contribution of volunteers to the management of the City of London Corporation managed open spaces. The Director of Open Spaces emphasised the contribution of volunteers during the COVID pandemic and recognised there more could be done to publicise this contribution. The Chairman thanked volunteers for their contribution and agreed that a report be produced to look at promotion of the work of volunteers across all of the City of London Corporation managed open spaces.

Replying to a query from a Committee Member the Director of Open Spaces explained that funds from the sale of surplus properties was held centrally but noted that these funds were reflected in the capital bids process. In addition, it was confirmed that the sale of any properties considered surplus would be subject to Committee approval.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

7. CYCLICAL WORKS PROGRAMME BID - 2021/22

The Committee received a report of the City Surveyor which explained the provisional list of cyclical projects being considered for properties under the management of Epping Forest and Commons Committee in the “cyclical works programme”.

Replying to a Member’s query the Director of Open Spaces confirmed that the Epping Forest Consultative Committee had received the report and their comments had been noted accordingly.

A Member commented on the budget underspend and highlighted the large number of works which were awaiting approval to progress. The Director of Open Spaces explained that the primary challenge in resolving this would be the capacity to complete these works and noted the importance of prioritisation in this process. It was noted that the Corporate Asset Sub-Committee Chairman would be exploring options for increased funding for the cyclical works programme. The Deputy Chairman suggested that the Chairman send a note to the Corporate Asset Sub-Committee Chairman explaining the Committee’s view that increased expenditure on the Epping Forest and Commons Committee cyclical works programme should be considered. The Chairman agreed and commented that this should be considered across all the City of London Corporation managed open spaces.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

8. REVENUE OUTTURN 2019/20 - EPPING FOREST AND COMMONS

The Committee received a joint report of the Chamberlain and Director of Open Spaces which compared the revenue outturn for the services overseen by the Epping Forest and Commons Committee in 2019/20 with the final agreed budget for the year. It was highlighted that in total, there was a favourable budget position of £1,206,000 for the services overseen by the Committee compared with the final agreed budget for the year.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

9. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

The Committee received a report of the Superintendent of the Epping Forest on the Division’s activities across May and June 2020. The Director of Open Spaces explained that COVID-19 remained the biggest issue effecting the management of Epping Forest with an estimated 122% increase in visitor numbers. In addition, the Director of Open Spaces provided a summary of the activities which were returning to Epping Forest with the lifting of some

lockdown restrictions including catering facilities, lake boating and some golf courses.

The Committee discussed the issue of rough sleepers within the Epping Forest. It was noted that the Policy Chair was in discussions with the Mayor of London regarding possible policies for reducing rough sleeping across London and, therefore, should be kept informed of the issues relating to rough sleeping in Epping Forest.

Replying Member's question, the Director of Open Spaces explained that fly tipping instances in the Forest during the period were considerably in excess of pre-COVID-19 trends, noting that it was a significant long-term issue. The Chairman commented that this was a matter which he and the Chairman of the Open Spaces & City Gardens Committee were keen to tackle using a corporate approach across all the City of London Corporation managed open spaces. Following a request from the Deputy Chairman the Director of Open Spaces confirmed that the contacting of local Members of Parliament, to highlight the costs of fly tipping to the management of the open spaces, would be considered accordingly.

The Director of Open Spaces highlighted a petition from residents local to the Forest calling on the City of London Corporation to do more to prevent anti-social behaviour. Further to this it was noted that the City of London Corporation would be exploring options for increased engagement with schemes to mitigate issues caused by increased social gatherings in public open spaces. The Chairman commented that it was important to gauge the efficacy of these schemes before committing City of London Corporation funds. Furthermore, it was suggested that these costs be incorporated into any correspondence with local Members of Parliament.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

10. LOCAL PLANS UPDATE: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY CONSULTATION (SEF 18/20)

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the City of London Corporation's response to the Epping Forest District Council's Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy. The Director of Open Spaces highlighted that had been a discussion at length at the Epping Forest Consultative Committee on the 24th of June where Committee members discussed the issue and agreed that the letter, attached at appendix 4, be circulated to Consultative Committee. In addition the Director of Open Spaces provided a summary of the effects the Epping Forest District Council's Local Plan could cause on the ecology of the Forest, including the proposed methodology for mitigating these effects, and the consultation process that Officers were engaging in with the London Borough of Waltham Forest and Greater London Authority.

It was noted by a member of the Committee that it was vital the City of London Corporation had a fully developed SANGS strategy before the local authority housing is completed and commented that the strategy should be in an appropriately developed position before engaging with the relevant local

authorities. The Director of Open Spaces replied by explaining that a number of different options for the SANGS strategy were being discussed with consultants, with a report being presented for the Committee's approval in due course.

Replying to a query from Member the Director of Open Spaces explained that there was a lack of clarity regarding the governance of the Green Infrastructure Strategy from the Epping Forest District Council but it was confirmed that once this had been provided the appropriate method for Member involvement would be explored.

Responding to a Member's question on the financing of SANGS-related activities undertaken by the City of London Corporation the Director of Open Spaces confirmed a tariff system for developers will be required to fund these measures.

The Chairman requested that a timeline be produced to demonstrate progress on this process and stressed the importance of reaching a satisfactory conclusion.

RESOLVED- That: -

- I. The views expressed by representatives on the Consultative Committee about the EFDC GI Strategy and to decide whether these have been appropriately incorporated into the proposed written response (Appendix 4); and
- II. Authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, to complete the proposed response letter (Appendix 4) to the Epping Forest District Council's Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy consultation (incorporating SANGS) in line with previous representations and correspondence to the Council on these matters.

11. 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 Director of Open Spaces introduced the report and highlighted the key points to the Committee including: the successful implementation of the cashless car park payment system, increased visitor numbers and issues relating to engagement with local authorities caused by the dissolution of the District Councils on 31 March and creation of the unitary Buckinghamshire Council.

It was stated by the Deputy Chairman that lessons learnt from the introduction of car parking projects across 'the Commons' should be shared with the colleagues in the Epping Forest Department. The Director of Open Spaces confirmed that Epping Forest had liaised closely with Burnham Beeches, Hampstead Heath and the Square Mile regarding car parking schemes.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

12. EXTENSION OF EXISTING PSPOS AT BURNHAM BEECHES

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the extension of existing Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) at Burnham Beeches. The Director of Open Spaces introduced the report highlighting the context of the PSPOs and the extensive consultation process which had taken place.

Members agreed with the Officer recommendations, suggesting that the detrimental effects of dogs not properly controlled be highlighted to demonstrate to the public the importance of these PSPOs.

RESOLVED-That the Superintendent be authorised to carry out the necessary consultation, publicity and notification on the extension of the existing PSPOs at Burnham Beeches for a further three-year period from 1st December 2020.

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

A Committee Member highlighted a recent murder which was reported to take place in an Epping Forest car park and questioned if any lessons will be learnt from this instance. The Director of Open Spaces explained that Officers were aware of the background to this matter but, due to the ongoing criminal investigation, these cannot be discussed in the public session.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

There was no urgent business considered in the public session.

15. 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.

16. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

The Committee considered the draft non-public minutes of the last meeting of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee held on the 20th of May 2020.

RESOLVED- That the non-public minutes of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee held on the 20th of May 2020 be approved as an accurate record.

17. SEF 19-20 FARM BUSINESS TENANCY REVIEWS NON-PUBLIC

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces regarding the Farm Business Tenancy reviews at Netherhouse and Copped Hall North.

RESOLVED- That the report be agreed.

18. OFFERING OF OPEN SPACES AND HRA ASSETS FOR THE HOUSING OF MOBILE AND WIRELESS EQUIPMENT

The Committee noted that the report was withdrawn.

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

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

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

No urgent business was considered in the non-public session.

The meeting ended at 1.07 pm

Chairman

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