



Epping Forest & Commons Committee

Date: THURSDAY, 15 JUNE 2023

Time: 11.00 am

Venue: COMMITTEE ROOM - 2ND FLOOR WEST WING, GUILDHALL

Members:

Benjamin Murphy (Chairman)	The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mayor, Nicholas Lyons
Caroline Haines (Deputy Chairman)	Andrew McMurtrie (Ex-Officio Member)
Deputy Graeme Doshi-Smith	Deputy Philip Woodhouse
George Abrahams	Verderer Michael Chapman DL
Jaspreet Hodgson	Verderer William Kennedy
Alderman Vincent Keaveny	Verderer Paul Morris
Gregory Lawrence	Verderer Nicholas Munday

Enquiries: Blair Stringman
Blair.Stringman@cityoflondon.gov.uk

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Ian Thomas CBE
Town Clerk and Chief Executive

AGENDA

Agenda

Part 1 - Public Agenda

1. **APOLOGIES**

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

3. **MINUTES**

To agree the public and non-public minutes of the meeting held on 18 May 2023.

For Decision
(Pages 5 - 10)

4. **MATTERS ARISING**

For Information

a) Action Log

Report of the Town Clerk.

Epping Forest

5. **EPPING FOREST GOVERNANCE PROPOSALS**

Report of the Executive Director, Environment.
(*To Follow*).

For Decision

6. **WANSTEAD PARK PROJECTS UPDATE (SEF 13/23)**

Report of the Executive Director, Environment.

For Information

7. **VISITOR SURVEY (SEF 11/23)**

Report of the Executive Director, Environment.

For Information

8. **REVISED TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR EPPING FOREST CONSULTATIVE GROUP (SEF 08/23)**

Report of the Executive Director, Environment.

For Decision
(Pages 11 - 20)

9. **EPPING FOREST - FUTURE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROPOSALS (SEF 12/23)**

Report of the Executive Director, Environment.

For Decision
(Pages 21 - 28)

Natural Environment

10. **NATURAL ENVIRONMENT LEARNING PROGRAMME AT EPPING FOREST**

Report of the Executive Director, Environment.

For Information

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

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

Part 2 - Non-Public Agenda

13. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

MOTION: The following matters relate to business under the remit of the Court of Common Council acting for the City Corporation as charity Trustee, to which Part VA and Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 public access to meetings provisions do not apply. The following items contain sensitive information which it is not in the best interests of the charity to consider in a public meeting (engaging similar considerations as under paragraphs 3 and 5 of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Act) and will be considered in non-public session.

For Decision

14. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

To agree the non-public minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 May 2023.

For Decision

15. **MATTERS ARISING**

For Information

- a) Action Log
Report of the Town Clerk.

16. **REPORT OF ACTION TAKEN**

Report of the Deputy Town Clerk.

For Information

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

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

EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE

Thursday, 18 May 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held at
Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Thursday, 18 May 2023 at
11.00 am

Present

Members:

Benjamin Murphy (Chairman)
Jaspreet Hodgson
Alderman Vincent Keaveny
Gregory Lawrence
Andrew McMurtrie (Ex-Officio Member)
Deputy Philip Woodhouse
Verderer Michael Chapman DL
Verderer William Kennedy
Verderer Paul Morris
Verderer Nicholas Munday

Officers:

Jako Beatrix	- Chamberlain's Department
Neil Chambers	- Chamberlain's Department
Deborah Cluett	- Comptroller & City Solicitor
Polly Dunn	- Deputy Town Clerk's Department
Jacqueline Eggleston	- Natural Environment Department
Elisabeth Hannah	- Natural Environment Department
Stefania Horne	- Natural Environment Department
Clem Harcourt	- Chamberlain's Department
Joanne Hill	- Natural Environment Department
Jo Hurst	- Natural Environment Department
Juliemma McLoughlin	- Natural Environment Department
Tim Munday	- Natural Environment Department
Simon Owen	- Chamberlain's Department
Geoff Sinclair	- Natural Environment Department
Blair Stringman	- Deputy Town Clerk's Department
Paul Thomson	- Natural Environment Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mayor Nicholas Lyons and Deputy Graeme Doshi-Smith.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

3. ORDER OF THE COURT OF COMMON COUNCIL

The Committee received the order of the Court of Common Council held at the Guildhall of the City of London on Thursday 27th April 2023, which appointed the Committee until the first meeting of the Court in April 2024 and approved its terms of reference.

RESOLVED - That the order be noted.

4. **ELECTION OF CHAIR**

The Committee considered the report to elect a Chairman in accordance with Standing Order No. 29.

The Town Clerk explained the Standing Order of the Court held on 27th April 2023 to the Committee.

The Committee received an Expression of Interest from Benjamin Murphy to be elected as uncontested Chair of the committee.

RESOLVED - That Benjamin Murphy be declared as Chair of the Committee for the ensuing year.

5. **ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIR**

The Committee considered the report to elect a Deputy Chairman in accordance with Standing Order No. 30

The Committee received one Expression of Interest from Caroline Haines to be elected as uncontested Deputy Chair of the committee.

RESOLVED - That Caroline Haines be declared as Deputy Chair of the Committee for the ensuing year.

6. **MINUTES**

The Committee considered the public minutes of the Committee held on 16th March 2023.

RESOLVED, that the public minutes and summary of the meeting held on 16 March 2023 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

7. **MATTER ARISING**

The Committee received a report of the Town Clerk concerning Matters Arising.

7.1 **Action Log**

The Chairman remarked that this was a new concept to the Committee and explained the importance was for tracking the progress dates of action items and to encourage closure of all action items within specified timelines.

The Chairman noted that the Chamberlain's report for the last five years income which would help predict how to generate income in the future

had been delayed and would be presented to the Committee at the next meeting.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

8. **2023/24 COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS**

The Committee considered a report of the Town Clerk concerning the appointment of Members to various groups.

RESOLVED – That the Committee:

Appointed the following Members to the listed Consultative Committees and Groups:

- Ashted Commons Consultative Group;
The Chairman was appointed and a vacancy was rolled over to the next Committee meeting.
- Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common Consultative Group;
The Chairman and Paul Morris
- West Wickham, Spring Park and Coulsdon Commons Consultative Group;
The Chairman and Andrew McMurtrie subject to his willingness to serve.
- Epping Forest Consultative Group
Verderer William Kennedy and Paul Morris
- Deer Management Oversight Group;
Verderer Michael Chapman DL, Verderer H.H. William Kennedy, Verderer Paul Morris, Verderer Nicholas Munday and Gregory Lawrence.
- Verderer Paul Morris as an observer to the Natural Environment Board.
- Approved that the relevant terms of reference for the consultative bodies be updated to reflect that they will be supported locally by the Environment Department and that the job titles be updated.

9. **ASSISTANT DIRECTOR'S UPDATE**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment concerning Epping Forest's activities between February and March 2023.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

10. **ASSISTANT DIRECTOR'S UPDATE**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment summarising activities across The Commons between February 2023 and March 2023.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

11. SURREY HILLS AONB BOUNDARY EXTENSION PROPOSALS

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment concerning proposals to extend the boundaries of the Surrey Hills and Chilterns Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

The Chairman requested that the Superintendent clarify the relationship between the Committee and the Conservation Board going forward and work out the governance structure.

RESOLVED – That the Committee agreed to:

- support the inclusion of part of Farthing Downs in the proposed Happy Valley extension to the Surrey Hills AONB.

12. FARTHING DOWNS LAND REGISTRY MAPPING ANOMALY ADJUSTMENT

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment concerning the Land Registry application or transfer to be undertaken to restore the boundary situation at Farthing Downs Land.

RESOLVED – That the Committee agreed that:

- a Land Registry application be made to restore the boundary of the City Corporation's registered title to Farthing Downs to reflect the locally understood boundaries, or alternatively that a Transfer of the relevant strip of land is made by the City Corporation back to the London Borough of Croydon for nil consideration to achieve the same effect.

13. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment concerning an update on Epping Forest activities.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

14. RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE REPORT

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment concerning the Cross-Divisional risks management update and summary of the risk register for each of the charities.

RESOLVED – That the Committee agreed:

- that the report be noted; and
- to confirm on behalf of the City Corporation as Trustee, that the registers appended to the report satisfactorily set out the key risks to each of the charities and that appropriate systems are in place to identify and mitigate risks.

15. SPORTS STRATEGY VERBAL UPDATE

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment concerning the Sports strategy updates.

The Chairman remarked that it would be helpful to put the report through the Consultative Committees and Groups for review.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

16. **CHARITIES REVIEW UPDATE**

The Committee received a report of the Head of Corporate Charities Funding Unit to be heard.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

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

There were no questions.

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

There were no urgent items.

19. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED - The following matters relate to business under the remit of the Court of Common Council acting for the City Corporation as charity Trustee, to which Part VA and Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 public access to meetings provisions do not apply. The following items contain sensitive information which it is not in the best interests of the charity to consider in a public meeting (engaging similar considerations as under paragraphs 3 and 5 of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Act) and will be considered in non-public session.

20. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

RESLOVED - The non-public minutes and summary of the meeting held on 16 March 2023 be agreed as an accurate record.

21. **MATTERS ARISING**

The Committee received a report of the Town Clerk

21.1 **Action Log**

22. **HISTORICAL INCOME REPORT (2018-24) FOR EPPING FOREST**

The Committee received a report of the Chamberlain

23. **RENEWABLE ENERGY STORAGE FACILITY**

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment.

24. **AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE OF A DEED OF GRANT EASEMENT AND DEED OF RELEASE**

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment.

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

There were no questions.

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

There were two items of urgent business.

The meeting ended at 1.45pm

Chairman

Contact Officer: Blair Stringman
Blair.Stringman@cityoflondon.gov.uk

Committee(s): Epping Forest and Commons – For Decision Epping Forest Consultative Group – For Discussion	Dated: 15/06/2023 21/06/2023
Subject: Revised Terms of Reference for Epping Forest Consultative Group (SEF 08/23)	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	4, 10, 11, 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	£
What is the source of Funding?	
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	n/a
Report of: Juliemma McLoughlin, Executive Director, Environment	For Decision
Report author: Jo Hurst, Business Manager Epping Forest	

Summary

The Epping Forest Consultative Committee was founded in January 2018, and since then has met three times a year to discuss matters of Epping Forest management and policy.

Minor changes to the Terms of Reference are required to reflect recent administrative changes within the City of London, as well as learning points from applications and admissions processes. These updates include the new name, Epping Forest Consultative Group.

Recommendation(s)

Epping Forest and Commons Committee Members are asked to:

- Agree the updated Terms of Reference

Main Report

Background

1. The Epping Forest Consultative Committee met for the first time in January 2018, following an application process in Autumn 2017 involving membership organisations interested in the use and management of Epping Forest.
2. Since that time the Consultative Committee has met three times per year. The attendance was reviewed, according to the Terms of Reference, in early 2021.
3. Recent administrative changes within the City of London require a change to how the group is organised, managed and referred to.
4. An update to the Terms of Reference also presents an opportunity for clarification around aspects of the admissions process.

Current Position

5. Revised Terms of Reference for the Epping Forest and Commons Committee are included at Appendix 1.
6. Key changes include a change to the groups name, an update to management and administration and additional clarification of the three-yearly admissions process.

Options for Epping Forest and Commons Committee

7. **Option 1** – Adopt the updated Terms of Reference for the Epping Forest Consultative Committee **This option is recommended.**

Proposals

8. The group is no longer referred to as the Epping Forest Consultative Committee, but instead the Epping Forest Consultative Group.
9. Paragraphs 15-18 reflect changes in management, with the Group now administered directly by Environment Officers (no longer Town Clerk's) and meetings Chaired by Assistant Director Environment (previously known as Superintendent Epping Forest). Chairman and Deputy Chairman are invited but no longer obliged to attend.
10. Paragraph 26 clarifies information to be provided by applicant organisation expressing interest in taking part each three years.
11. Discussion at the Epping Forest Consultative Group recognised that changes were small and sought reassurance that meetings would continue with a wide a range of groups with specific interest in the Forest as possible.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

12. Strategic implications – The continued attendance at the Epping Forest Consultative Committee supports the Corporate Plan items 4, 10, 11 and 12.
13. Financial and resource implications – The resources required for room hire light refreshments, the publication of agendas; reports and minutes are from Epping Forest Local Risk.
14. Legal implications – The Epping Forest Consultative Group is a consultative group, rather than a formal statutory committee, and its constitution is not subject to specific legislative provisions. The Epping Forest and Commons Committee is therefore able to vary its Terms of Reference and membership, as necessary.
15. Prior to exercising certain powers under the City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Act 2018 the Corporation as Conservators must consult such persons or bodies as it thinks appropriate and the arrangements as set out in this report would generally satisfy that requirement.
16. Since the Consultative Committee/Group was first established, it has been confirmed that later iterations of the Members' Code of Conduct do not apply to the membership of consultative groups, so the Terms of Reference reflect this.
17. Risk implications – This is a revision of an existing Consultative Group structure and is therefore 'business as usual' and considered low risk.
18. Equalities implications – Equalities statements and policies are incorporated into these terms.

19. Climate implications – The UK Government has binding targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and hence global warming by 2050, with the Consultative Group acting as a key factor in the engagement and protection of the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) at Epping Forest which is directly affected by climate warming.

20. Security implications – None

21. Charity implications – Epping Forest is a registered charity (number 232990). Charity Law obliges Members to ensure that the decisions they take in relation to the Charity must be taken in the best interests of the Charity.

Conclusion

22. The Consultative Group has been a valuable asset to communication at Epping Forest since its foundation in 2018.

23. Necessary amendments following administrative changes at the City of London have been incorporated into these updated Terms of Reference, with the opportunity also taken to clarify selection criteria and processes in readiness for the next review.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Epping Forest Consultative Committee - Terms of Reference – Full Revised September 2022

Jo Hurst

Business Manager Epping Forest

E: jo.hurst@cityoflondon.gov.uk

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Author: Jo Hurst
Date: September 2022



Epping
Forest

Registered Charity

Epping Forest Consultative Group – Terms of Reference

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Purpose of Group

1. The Epping Forest Consultative Group considers and discusses areas of current concern or debate at Epping Forest. It receives public reports prior to their consideration by Epping Forest and Commons Committee and provides advice or opinion on those matters.
2. Members of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee (EF&CC) will be in attendance to listen to views expressed by consultees, and to represent them back to the EF&CC where necessary and appropriate.
3. Minutes of meetings and outcomes of the Consultative Group's discussions are considered by the Epping Forest and Commons Committee in a public report to inform decision making. Likewise, most recent minutes of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee are to be reviewed by the Consultative Group.
4. The EF Consultative Group is not a formal decision-making body, but views will be noted in formal reports to the Epping Forest and Commons Committee.
5. Consultative Group meetings are to be scheduled several weeks prior to alternate Epping Forest and Commons Committee meetings to consider papers and matters arising, with sufficient time scheduled for revisions to papers to be made for Epping Forest Committee, and minutes to be included in documentation.

Conduct, attendance and other principles

6. The City of London Member's Code of Conduct 2018, associated guidance, declarations appendices establishes the principles of behaviour and conduct expected by Members of this Group.
7. Should an attendee fail to attend 2 or more out of four consecutive meetings, their place may be forfeited. The Epping Forest and Commons Committee may choose to reallocate this space to an alternative interested organisation.
8. Although not a decision-making Committee, deliberations should be sufficiently well attended for advice to the Epping Forest and Commons Committee to be considered representative. For those reasons, minimum attendance of four representatives of locally interested organisations is required.

9. Consultative Group Members are representatives of their organisation, affiliates and theme of interest, but Code of Conduct and other legal and administrative requirements apply to individuals. Every effort will be made to accommodate attendance by nominated proxy in unavoidable circumstances, but such substitutions may not always be possible and must not be considered routine.

Scheduling, location and public access

10. Meetings are scheduled at Loughton (as far as is possible), as the geographic centre of Epping Forest. Alternative venues may be considered by agreement, including wholly or partially 'virtually hosted' meetings using suitable internet communications technology.
11. Meetings are on a weekday evening, avoiding school and public holidays.
12. There will be a minimum of three meetings a year.
13. Should a change of frequency or location, including peripatetic meetings be preferred by this forum, that request must be made to the Epping Forest and Commons Committee.
14. Meetings will be held in public (numbers subject to venue capacity). Public questions are at the discretion of the Chairman.

Allocation of positions

15. The EF Consultative Group has representation from Members of the EF&CC including Verderers. Chairman and Deputy Chairman may attend according to availability and agenda.
16. Meetings are chaired by the Assistant Director Environment (previously Superintendent of Epping Forest) or other nominated Officer or Member in their absence.
17. Other City of London officers will attend as required.
18. The meetings are administered by a nominated City of London Environment Officer.
19. Attendants are nominated members of groups that hold a specified interest in Epping Forest, and that have a comparably large membership, and/or a broad geographically spread membership from across the Forest and with knowledge or interest in the themes of heritage; recreation/sport;

conservation; general/informal use or voluntary and friends' groups.

20. Tenants, business partners or other organisations with commercial interest in Epping Forest (or wider City of London Open Spaces) are not invited to attend as other routes exist for such input. Local authorities of all tiers also have access to direct liaison forums and are not invited to attend.
21. In the interests of impartiality and equality, political parties and religious groups are not invited to attend.
22. Organisations with or supportive of extremist policies or views including supporting, planning or carrying out criminal activity motivated by a political or ideological viewpoint are prohibited
23. Groups nominating a representative must be formal, constituted organisations. This may include rule books, articles of association, standing orders or other formal agreement to which members sign-up to and adhere. This must include their own definitions of formal membership and their subscription terms, meetings and voting rights.
24. Groups must also ensure that their constitution (or equivalent) includes or makes reference to that groups Equality Statement or policy, which must be provided to the City of London on request.
25. Invitations to express interest and to nominate representatives are advertised through press release, social media, email and direct correspondence by City of London.
26. Applications require details of how the nominating organisation meets the above criteria and must include:
 - The theme of interest the organisation wishes its application to be considered under.
 - A brief (maximum 150 words) explanation of the purposes and aims of the organisation.
 - Number of members at time of application (see definition at 29 below)
 - Name and contact details of nominated representative.
 - Copies of Constitution, Equality Statement and other relevant documentation.
 - Any other relevant and necessary information requested by Officers at the time of application.
27. A balance of themes of interest is ideally met as follows:

Nature Conservation <i>Conservation groups in Forest, or with wider remit</i>	3
Friends/Voluntary	3

<i>Formal working groups e.g. litter pickers groups, 'Friends of' etc.</i>	
Heritage <i>Historical societies, rural preservation etc.</i>	2
Informal users <i>Schools, Youth groups, families associations, local forums and interest bodies</i>	2
Recreation <i>Recreational user groups – e.g. walkers, riders, cyclists</i>	3
Sports <i>Formal organised sports on Forest e.g. Golf, Football, cricket running etc.</i>	3
	16

28. Should more expressions of interest be received than can logistically be accommodated, selection will be made by members of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee by the following (not in order of importance):

- Size of membership
- Geographical area of interest (i.e. area of Forest covered)
- Theme of interest
- Record of attendance (if existing attendee)

29. Where membership numbers are declared by an applying organisation or group, these must be active members – i.e. those who have actively subscribed or joined providing full name and contact details; agree to a constitution or similar as aforementioned, including invitation to attend and vote at annual general meetings; and requirement to renew periodically (typically annually), most usually with an associated fee. Members must be counted as individuals subject to such terms, and not households or groups. 'Membership', for the purposes of this definition does not include customers paying for goods or services or 'passive' subscriptions or sign ups to mailing lists either electronic or hard copy, or followers or group members to social media broadcasts, chats and communications.

30. Epping Forest and Commons Committee may appoint further members or co-opt representatives (for example subject matter experts) to attend where it deems appropriate.

31. The Consultative Group serves as established for three years (starting in 2018), after which the invitation and nomination process outlined above is repeated.

Requirements and responsibilities

32. Nominated representatives must meet criteria similar to those set out by the Electoral Commission for eligibility for local government election:

- At least 18 years old
- Not employed by the City of London, or another organisation holding a commercial interest in Epping Forest or other CoL open spaces.
- Have not been sentenced to a term of imprisonment of three months or more (including suspended sentences), without the option of a fine, during the five years before nominations close.
- Not disqualified under the terms of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (which covers corrupt or illegal electoral practices and offences relating to donations).

33. Representatives must commit to representing the views of their organisation and members. Organisations that have applied but could not be accommodated will be advised to communicate with members representing their theme of interest either formally (e.g. affiliation) or informally and such communication is encouraged.

34. Representatives must share agenda and documentation internally within their organisation (subject to confidentiality) as well as minutes and outcomes of discussions.

35. Any representative or organisation found to contravene any of the terms herein may be excluded from the Consultative Group permanently and without notice by order of the Chairman of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee.

Agenda Item 9

Committee(s): Epping Forest and Commons – For Decision	Dated: 15/06/2023
Subject: Epping Forest – Future Stakeholder Engagement Proposals (SEF 12/23)	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	9, 10, 11 & 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	
What is the source of Funding?	
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	N
Report of: Juliemma McLoughlin, Executive Director, Environment	For Decision
Report author: Paul Thomson, Natural Environment Assistant Director (Superintendent) Epping Forest	

Summary

The Epping Forest and Commons Committee Governance arrangements for Epping Forest business has remained largely unchanged for the past 25 years. However, alongside the formal Committee governance process supported by six additional Local discussion meetings, there are a range of supplementary engagement processes including three Epping Forest Consultative Committee with seventeen stakeholder representatives since 2019; six annual Local Authority Liaison Meetings with the four relevant Local Authorities since 2008, Annual Review Reporting from 2020 and a stronger more formalised Departmental reporting commitment on matters ranging from Finance to Risk.

These additional responsibilities have placed a considerable additional burden on the Chairman, Deputy Chairman, Members and Officers alike and this report proposes changes to the informal meeting arrangements that currently supplement the formal governance and reporting mechanisms designed to reduce the time commitments on individual Members, broaden chairing responsibilities and improve the overall effectiveness and scrutiny of the management and oversight of the Epping Forest Charitable Trust.

Recommendations

Members are asked to approve the:

- a. Retention of Epping Forest & Commons Committee Meetings on a bimonthly basis holding six meetings each year, four for primarily Committee business and two meetings focused on strategy and policy development.

- b. Endorse the revision of Director and Assistant Director reporting to Trustees from narrative-based reporting to business reporting focused on key business indicators and project progress timetables.
- c. Endorse the provision of early drafts of new decision or policy items to EF&CC prior to being considered by EFCG, to allow Trustees the benefit of an early contribution to policy and topic issues.
- d. Retention of Epping Forest Local Meetings on a bimonthly basis but without the Chairman and Deputy Chairman operating instead as a 'surgery' directly with the Epping Forest Senior Management Team led by the Assistant Director (Superintendent)
- e. Retention of Local Authority Liaison Meetings, supported by microsites, on a regular basis, but again without the Chairman and Deputy Chairman operating instead as a 'surgery' with the Epping Forest Senior Management Team led by the Assistant Director (Superintendent)
- f. Changing the arrangements of the Epping Forest Consultative Group as follows
 - Operate the Group on an area basis according to North and South Forest Parishes
 - EF&CC to appoint a Verderer to Chair the area meetings on a trial basis.
 - Reducing each area meeting from three to two per year
 - Retaining the hybrid format of virtual and physical representation
 - Replacement of minutes with action recording
 - Planning to improve the diversity and inclusion within the group.
 - Conduct a skills audit of group members.
- g. Note that the Epping Forest and Commons Committee Management Plan Sub-Committee and the Land Registration Working Group was abolished for the time being by the Court of Common Council in December 2021.
- h. Note that the Epping Forest Joint Consultative Committee was abolished for the time being by the Court of Common Council in December 2021.
- i. Regularise community liaison for project management around time limited 'Task and Finish Groups'
- j. Continue with arrangements for the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (EFSAC) Mitigation Joint Steering Group meetings agreed by Committee in November 2019.

Background

1. The management of Open Spaces saved for the benefit of Londoners through funding provided by the Metage on Grain (Port of London) Act 1872 has always been guided by a dedicated City Corporation Committee. This work was originally led by the Coal, Corn and Finance Committee 1886-1966, taking its title from the enabling Metage Act, with the Committee being responsible.

for open spaces largely acquired through the Epping Forest Acts 1878 & 1880, City of London (various Powers) Act 1878 and Highgate & Open Spaces Act 1886.

2. Following a reorganisation in 1966, the Epping Forest and Open Spaces Committee (EFOS) superseded the Coal, Corn and Finance Committee. On the acquisition of Hampstead Heath from the London Residuary Body in 1989, The Local Government Reorganisation (Hampstead Heath) Order 1989 saw Committee arrangements adapted to form the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queens Park Committee (HHC), with responsibility for Highgate Wood and Queens Park moving from EFOS to the new HHC. A new Epping Forest and Commons Committee (EF&CC) was formed to manage Epping Forest, Epping Forest Buffer Land and Commons.
3. Over 2020 and 2021, the Lord Lisvane was commissioned to conduct a review of all City Corporation committees and, following extensive Member consultation, the final recommendations were agreed by the Court in December 2021. With regard to open spaces, including Epping Forest, the impact involved the deletion of several defunct working parties, and the devolution of administration of the various Consultative Committees from the Governance and Member Services Team to the relevant local service department(s).

Current Position

4. In addition to the formal Epping Forest and Commons Committee arrangements, a series of supplementary engagement meeting arrangements have developed to enable greater consultation and make best use of individuals and their expertise, ahead of matters being reported to the formal Committee.
5. **Local Meetings:** The previous EFOS Committee met between 1966-89 on a bi-monthly basis (i.e. six meetings a year). Recognising the concerns of the Verderers, Epping Forest business was discussed, but not determined, at six additional 'shadow' meetings on alternate months to EF&CC meetings. These meetings have traditionally been chaired by the Chairman or Deputy Chairman of EF&CC. COVID-19 Lockdown arrangements and Target Operating Model pressures on remaining Officer time has prevented the reestablishment of these meetings.
6. **Epping Forest Joint Consultative Committee (EFJCC):** A joint Committee of the City of London Corporation and the Field Studies Council to administer the management of the High Beach Field Centre built in 1972. The City of London Corporation Governance Review – the 'Lisvane Report' - recommended that this Committee should be abolished with work ceded to EF&CC. This was agreed and implemented in December 2021 – April 2022.
7. **Epping Forest Management Plan Sub-Committee:** This was a dedicated Sub-Committee with responsibility for the content of the Epping Forest Management Plan. This Sub-Committee had not met since 2016 and as such, was abolished as part of the City of London Corporation Governance Review – 'the Lisvane Report' - with work ceded to EF&CC in 2021/2022.
8. **Epping Forest Land Registration Working Group:** Formed in 2013 to manage the registration of 1,400 deeds associated with the purchase of Epping Forest for public benefit. Essentially a 'Task and Finish Group' the Working Group of Members and Officers is awaiting a final report, which is being considered by the

Comptroller & City Solicitor on advising EF&CC on how to determine historic encroachments before ceasing its activity.

9. **Deer Management Working Group:** Inaugurated in 2022 to provide oversight of the management of deer in across the Epping Forest Buffer Land. Due to Target Operating Model pressures on remaining Officer time this meeting has yet to meet formally. This is an informal group resourced by the Environment Department and does not feature within the Corporation's formal committee structure. Any recommendations from the Working Group will be presented to EFCC for decision as required.
10. **Epping Forest Consultation Committee (EFCC):** Formed following the passage of the Open Spaces (City of London Corporation) Act 2018 to consult with various user groups on the management of Epping Forest. The City of London Corporation Governance Review – 'the Lisvane Report' - recommended that the Committee should be run local as a Consultation Group from 2021. The revised Terms of Reference are proposed in an associated report.
11. **Local Authority Liaison Meetings:** Given the need to work in partnership with Local Authorities within whose jurisdiction Epping Forest falls, since 2008 regular biannual meetings have been held between Ward or appointed Councillors from the London Local Authorities of Newham, Redbridge and Waltham Forest, together with Epping Forest District Council with Members from EF&CC. The meetings are supported by Microsoft Teams microsites to update Councillors on work undertaken in their Wards by the Charity.
12. **Wanstead Park Working Party & Liaison Groups:** Given the complex management challenges at Wanstead Park regarding High Risk dams; flood risk from the River Roding; Heritage at Risk Register entries for the Registered Park, Conservation Area and The Grotto and pressure on future water abstraction a working party for the four Registered Park owners and Heritage England has been established to agree a joint Parkland Management Plan (PMP). The City of London Corporation Governance Review – 'the Lisvane Report' abolished this Group and an alternative negotiation will be required to complete this work. Uniquely, a Liaison Group chaired by Verderer has also been established to maintain discussions with the Friends Group, other key stakeholders and local Councillors with regard to Park maintenance matters.
13. **Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (EFSAC) Mitigation Joint Steering Group:** Approved by your Committee of 18 November 2019 this joint Committee of six representatives of the nine Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) whose Zone of Influence (Zol) impacts on the EFSAC will continue to monitor the impact of additional recreational visits from new housing constructed within the Zol; assess the performance of Suitable Alternative natural Greenspaces (SANGs) and determine how dedicated 'passported' funds from section 111 Local Government Act 1972 agreements and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) are invested at Epping Forest via the Strategic Access Management & Monitoring Strategy (SAMMS).
14. These supplementary meetings place a considerable extra burden of responsibility and commitment for City of London Corporation Committee Members including local elected Verderers, especially the Chairman and Deputy Chairman.

Proposals

15. Wide-ranging Governance discussions at the Strategy Awayday of 17 February 2023 have been brought forward by the Chairman and Officers to provide the following improvements.

Service Committee – Epping Forest & Commons Committee

16. The frequency of EF&CC meetings should be retained at a bi-monthly arrangement of six meetings per annum previously based on January; March; May; July; September & November.
17. In future four meetings should be based around regular Committee business with the recently established Directors Report and the long-established Assistant Director (Superintendents) Report revised away from the current narrative and Key Performance Indicator (KPI) basis to provide Members with more formal metrics and aligned commentary on a quarterly basis, aligned with traditional quarter days, reporting where possible alongside quarterly internal data reporting periods.
18. The remaining two meetings would be split at six-monthly intervals to allow the Committee to have 'deep dives' into more strategic topic areas. These meetings can still be used for urgent issues requiring approval or debate, however, the new dashboard updates from control functions will not be included.
19. Members have also requested that early drafts of new decision or policy items are placed before EF&CC before being considered by EFCG, to allow Members the benefit of improved awareness and an early contribution to policy and topic issues.
20. The Epping Forest and Commons Committee meetings will be supplemented by an annual Strategy Away Day meeting. A specific action should be taken to create a plan to improve diversity and inclusion within the consultative groups.

Director & Assistant Directors Reports

21. The Director / ADs reports should be replaced by the charity level dashboards with trend commentary overlaid, alongside the charity level management plan commitments for the quarter (with RAG rating of completed or overdue, with commentary on overdue items) and what work is due to be completed over the next quarter. Any new items to be added to management plans should also be highlighted.

Risk Reporting

22. Standard Committee reporting should also include any proposed changes to each charity's risk register and each charity's financial report. The Town Clerk's Department will continue to retain the master copy of the action log which the Environment Department will routinely update to supplement the Committee minutes.

Epping Forest Consultative Group

23. EF&CC Consultative Group (EFCG) meetings should become more flexible in terms of membership, dependent upon the items being consulted upon. Meetings should remain in hybrid format, with a mix of virtual and physical participation to accommodate the widest possible audience. Minutes should no longer be taken

for any consultative group meetings, replaced instead by action recording, which will also be reflected in the action log of the EF&CC.

24. The process of initially consulting the EFCG on new and policy change reports will be continued but only following initial EF&CC consideration of draft reports. Specific feedback on items being consulted upon should be fed back to the Town Clerk and will form part of the Committee Report for decision, to ensure our key stakeholder voices are being considered. A specific action should be taken to create a plan to improve diversity and inclusion within the consultative groups.
25. It may be beneficial to perform a skills audit of consultative group members to understand where pockets of expertise exist and can support the charity in its work. Consultative group meetings should move from a cycle of three annual meetings to a cycle of two times each, however, agendas should be proactively communicated to consultative group members four times per year to allow for contributions to EF&CC meetings.
26. To align the Epping Forest consultative group to the original Forest Parish Structure of North and South Parishes, the EFCG should be split into a north and south meeting format, better aligning with the Verderer roles. The Chairmanship of these meetings should be delegated to Verderers on a trial basis.

Wanstead Park Steering & Liaison Groups

27. It is proposed to maintain the Steering Group of Registered Park landowners until the PMP has been finally adopted by all organisations. Given the wider 'federated' structure of Epping Forest, a single Liaison Group for Wanstead Park is anomalous, and it is proposed to move this work to become part of the regular peripatetic liaison work undertaken as 'Task & Finish Groups' by the new role of Keeper Team Managers and the Ponds Project Officer as work on the dam improvements is inaugurated.

Epping Forest Annual Public Meeting

28. The Natural Environment Division Charities Review will consider the opportunity to increase public engagement through an annual forum meeting to report on activities across the year and to answer public questions.

Policy Implications

29. The proposals related to meetings are intended to improve the Corporate Plan commitment to '**Shape outstanding environments**'.
 - a) We are digitally and physically well-connected and responsive.
 - b) We inspire enterprise, excellence, creativity and collaboration.
 - c) We have clean air, land and water and a thriving and sustainable natural environment.
 - d) Our spaces are secure, resilient and well-maintained.

Risk Implications

30. **Finance** – A reduction in the overall number of Committee meetings will save Member and Officer time.
31. **Human Resources** – The TOM proposals include provision for a Stakeholder Engagement Officer to support the administration of the new governance

arrangements beyond the work of the EF&CC which will continue to be managed by the Town Clerks Department.

Charity implications

32. Charity implications – Epping Forest is a registered charity (number 232990). Charity Law obliges Members to ensure that the decisions they take in relation to the Charity must be taken in the best interests of the Charity.

Conclusion

33. Following City of London Corporation Governance Changes agreed by the Court in 2021, the Committee reporting and business arrangements for the Epping Forest and Commons Committee and associated consultative and liaison activity have been reviewed recommending changes that will enable Members to better monitor activity and progress, while providing stakeholders and beneficiaries greater opportunities to engage with the charity and its many beneficiaries.

Appendices

'None'

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