

EPHING FOREST CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 24 June 2020

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee held remotely at 7.00 pm

Present

Members:

Graeme Doshi-Smith (Chairman)
Deputy Philip Woodhouse (Deputy Chairman)
Benjamin Murphy
Caroline Haines
Judith Adams, Epping Forest Heritage Trust
Gill James, Friends of Wanstead Parklands
Martin Boyle, Theydon Bois & District Rural Preservation Society
Jill Carter, Highams Residents Association
Susan Creevy, Loughton Residents Association
Robert Levene, Bedford House Community Association
Tim Harris, WREN Wildlife & Conservation Group
Ruth Holmes, London Parks & Gardens Trust
Andy Irvine, Bushwood Area Residents Association
Brian McGhie, Epping Forest Conservation Volunteers
Deborah Morris, Epping Forest Forum
Gordon Turpin, Highams Park Planning Group (inc Snedders)
Mark Squire, Open Spaces Society
Tim Wright, Orion Harriers
Carol Pummell, Epping Forest Riders Association
Steve Williamson, Royal Epping Forest Golf Club
Verderer Michael Chapman DL
Verderer Paul Morris
Verderer Nicholas Munday
Verderer H.H William Kennedy

Officers:

Richard Holt	- Town Clerk's Department
Lorraine Brook	- Town Clerk's Department
Paul Thomson	- Superintendent of Epping Forest
Colin Buttery	- Director of Open Spaces
Jeremy Dagley	- Head of Conservation, Epping Forest
Jo Hurst	- Business Manager, Epping Forest
Martin Newnham	- Head Forest Keeper, Epping Forest
Geoff Sinclair	- Head of Operations, Epping Forest
Jacqueline Eggleston	- Head of Visitor Services, Epping Forest

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Sylvia Moys and Matthew Frith. It was noted that Verderer H.H William Kennedy would be joining the Epping Forest Consultative Committee late.

The Chairman welcomed the new members of the Committee to their first meeting including the Verderers who were elected in February.

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 minutes of the previous meeting of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee held on the 29th of January 2020.

RESOLVED- That the minutes of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee 29th of January 2020 be approved as an accurate record.

4. **MINUTES OF THE EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE**

The Committee received the minutes of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee on the 10th of March 2020.

A member of the Committee noted the Committee's thanks to Melissa Murphy for her time serving as a Verderer of Epping Forest.

RESOLVED- That the minutes be noted.

5. **REVENUE OUTTURN 2019/20 - EPPING FOREST AND COMMONS**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Revenue Outturn 2019/20 for Epping Forest and the Commons. The report 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.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

6. **EPPING FOREST - SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE FOR FEBRUARY TO APRIL 2020 (SEF 13/20)**

The Committee received a report of the Superintendent on the Epping Forest Division's activities across February to April 2020.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

7. **EPPING FOREST - SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE FOR MAY TO JUNE 2020 (SEF 16/20)**

The Committee received a report of the Superintendent on the Epping Forest 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 associated estimated 122% increase in visitor numbers based on mobile phone location data.

A member of the Committee asked a question regarding deer collisions with motorised vehicles within Epping Forest, particularly at the Theydon Bois site, noting the problem of dealing with deer who are seriously injured in these collisions. The Director of Open Spaces explained that the Epping Forest Management team were not able to respond to instances of deer collision at this time and were instead being supported by Essex Police. It was added that once the Management Team again had the ability to respond, this service will be reinstated.

Replying to a query from a member of the Committee the Director of Open Spaces clarified that swings present on trees with OPM would be removed for safety reasons.

Following to a query from a Committee member the Director of Open Spaces confirmed that the Deer Strategy review report was ready for review and would be distributed to allow the Committee to comment.

Responding to a question raised by a member of the Committee the Director of Open Spaces explained that temporary traffic restrictions at High Beach had been established to reduce issues caused by the increased visitor number travelling by car caused by COVID. It was noted that there were mixed feelings from the public on these traffic restrictions and that the Traffic Regulation Order review would consider the best way forward on this issue. A member of the Committee commented that he, and the other Verderers, had been in contact with the Epping Forest Management team throughout the implementation of these traffic restrictions and would be willing to receive any further comments from the Committee. The Director of Open Spaces confirmed that the City of London Corporation was in contact with the relevant local authorities regarding methods to improve travel facilities for the Forest. It was added that the Car Park Strategy will engage with these issues.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

8. EPPING FOREST RESPONSE TO COVID PANDEMIC (SEF 17/20)

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Epping Forest Management Team's response to the COVID Pandemic. The Chairman thanked Officers and volunteers for their work in the Forest during COVID. The Director of Open Spaces provided further information on the temporary mortuary facility which had been established at a site in Wanstead Flats noting national emergency powers and the role of the Gold Group in the approval of the site. It was commented by a member of the Committee that effective communication was important in scenarios where urgent decision making was required. In addition it was clarified by the Director of Open Spaces that the site had been chosen for the temporary mortuary facility, in part, because it was of relatively low ecological value, but confirmed that a commitment to improving ecology of the site was included in the agreement with the Government. The Chairman agreed with a comment made by a member of the Committee noting that the communication of the urgent decision on this subject could have been

better and stated that that a return to more conventional governance structures was expected.

The Director of Open Spaces provided an update on the effect that the COVID restrictions had on air pollution within Epping Forest.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

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

The Committee received 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 introduced the report and highlighted the requirement for a Green Infrastructure plan to properly mitigate the effect of local development on the Forest. In addition, it was noted that a letter response from the Epping Forest and Commons Committee Chairman had been drafted and was close to being completed.

A member of the Committee emphasised the role that organisations represented on the Committee could play in highlighting the importance of mitigating the effect of increased housing to the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation and requested that Officers work to facilitate this at an early stage. The Director of Open Spaces replied by explaining that the project was now in a stage where the Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs) Strategy proposals would be key to the successful mitigation of increased development. In addition, it was noted that the funding provision, transparency and consultation mechanisms would be crucial to the successful mitigation.

A member of the Committee commented that the Loughton Residents Association were disappointed that the Epping Forest District Council's Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy included some building on existing green space. The Director of Open Spaces agreed observing that the COVID-19 pandemic had highlighted the public need for large high-quality open spaces. Replying to a query from a Committee member the Director of Open Spaces explained that the SAC Mitigation Strategy would include an agreed framework for local authorities.

A Committee member commented that consideration needed to be given to farming needs within the Forest and noted that a balance between park and open land was important to maintain. In response the Director of Open Spaces clarified the City's position on the use of Buffer lands and agreed that a sustainable balance between park and open land needed to be considered appropriately.

Replying to a query from a Committee member it was confirmed that a strategy for managing cycling within the Forest was being developed and would be considered by Members once finalised.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

10. QUESTIONS

Replying to a query from a Committee member Director of Open Spaces explained that COVID-19 had heavily impacted the Epping Forest management finances which would require an increased emphasis on income generation noting that this was a required consideration across all of the City of London Corporation managed open spaces.

A member of the Committee expressed frustration that he had not received notice of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee meeting and stated that it was vital that an adequate period of notice be provided to allow consultation with organisation the member represented.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no further business considered.

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm

Chairman

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