

EPHING FOREST CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 21 October 2020

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

Present

Members:

Graeme Doshi-Smith (Chairman)	Robert Levene, Bedford House Community Association
Benjamin Murphy (Deputy Chairman)	Carol Pummell, Epping Forest Riders Association
Judith Adams, Epping Forest Heritage Trust	Tim Wright, Orion Harriers
Martin Boyle, Theydon Bois & District Rural Preservation Society	Verderer Michael Chapman DL
Susan Creevy, Loughton Residents Association	Verderer H. H William Kennedy
Matthew Frith, London Wildlife Trust	Verderer Paul Morris
Andy Irvine, Bushwood Area Residents Association	Verderer Nicholas Munday
Gill James, Friends of Wanstead Park	Janet Charlesworth
Deborah Morris, Epping Forest Forum	David Jennings
	Tim Payne

In attendance:

Deputy Philip Woodhouse

Officers:

Colin Buttery	- Director of Open Spaces
Jeremy Dagley	- Head of Conservation, Epping Forest
Jacqueline Eggleston	- Head of Visitor Services, Epping Forest
Juliane Heinecke	- Open Spaces Department
Jo Hurst	- Business Manager, Epping Forest
Laura Lawson	- Open Spaces Department
Ben Rosendale	- Open Spaces Department
Geoff Sinclair	- Head of Operations, Open Spaces Department
Paul Thomson	- Superintendent, Epping Forest
Richard Holt	- Town Clerk's Department
Kerry Nicholls	- Town Clerk's Department
Ellen Wentworth	- Chamberlain's Department
Paul Monaghan	- Department of the Built Environment
Tim Munday	- Department of the Built Environment

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mark Squire and Jill Carter.

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 24th of June 2020.

RESOLVED- That the minutes of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee 24th of June 2020 be approved as an accurate record.

4. **EPPING FOREST AND COMMONS COMMITTEE DRAFT MINUTES**

The Committee received the draft minutes of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee on the 7th of September 2020.

RESOLVED- That the minutes be noted.

5. **REVIEW OF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

The Director of Open Spaces was heard in relation to the review of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee membership which, as specified in the Committee's Terms of Reference, is required to be undertaken every three years. It was noted that the website page for prospective Committee members to register their interests in serving on the Committee was due to go live on the 21st of October and that the Town Clerk would be sending a letter detailing this process to current membership of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee.

It was confirmed that existing members were required to register a new statement of interest.

RESOLVED- That the update be noted.

6. **EPPING FOREST - SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE FOR JULY 2020 (SEP 20/20)**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces which summarised the Epping Forest Division's activities across July 2020.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

7. **VISITOR SURVEY**

The Director of Open Spaces was heard in relation to the Epping Forest Visitor Survey for June and July 2020. The Director of Open Spaces informed the Committee that the Survey was undertaken as a response to the huge increase in visitor numbers. In addition, the Committee were informed of the methodology of the Survey and its key conclusions.

The Chairman noted that it was clear that there was a large increase in the visitor numbers in this period and its effect should be noted.

In response to a query regarding the scope of the Survey it was noted that due to resource limitations not all of the Forest could be included but that every effort had been made to include a variety of sights.

RESOLVED- That the update be noted.

8. **EPPING FOREST CONSULTATION POLICY SEF 24/20**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Epping Forest Consultation Policy. The Director of Open Spaces noted that key events such as the establishment of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee and the introduction of GDPR are reflected in an updated policy in line with more modern communication methods.

Replying to a query from a Committee member it was confirmed there was no reduction in the matters which requires consultation.

RESOLVED- That the update be noted.

9. **EPPING FOREST CYCLING STRATEGY SEF 25/20**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Epping Forest Cycling Strategy. The Director of Open Spaces introduced the report and invited the Committee to email any further questions which, due to the length of the Committee's Agenda, could not be considered on the 21st of October. The Committee suggested a number of possible cycle routes to Officers for further consideration.

It was requested that further consideration be given to the bicycle parking and safety concerns including the relationship between bicycles and horse riders sharing the roads. The Committee noted the changes to the Highway Code with relation to the horse riders and bicycles. In relation to this it was suggested that the Horse Riding Fee be reviewed. The Director of Open Spaces confirmed that this review would be undertaken.

Responding to a query from a Committee member the Director of Open Spaces informed that the report would not be ready for inclusion in the November Epping Forest & Commons Committee and would be targeting January for the report to be considered by the Grand Committee. Further to this it was confirmed that further consultation would be undertaken.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

10. **WANSTEAD PARK PONDS PROJECT - INITIAL ENGINEERING ASSESSMENT**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces which provided the Initial Engineering Assessment in relation to the Wanstead Park Ponds Project. The Director of the Built Environment commented that the Assessment had confirmed that the works required were not as extensive as originally expected, however the interaction between the ornamental water and the river was complex.

It was stated by a Committee member that the City of London Corporation should act to manage the chain of ponds at Wanstead Park in the short and medium term while the further study was being undertaken. The Director of Open Spaces confirmed that complementary management activity would be completed with the further study outlined in the report will be taking place.

Replying to a query raised by a Committee member it was confirmed that work had begun with Thames Water and discussions were taking place with Cadent Gas to resolve issues present at the site.

RESOLVED- That the update be noted.

11. **THE GROTTO, WANSTEAD PARK: CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN SEF 22/20**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces regarding the Grotto, Wanstead Park Conservation Management Plan. The Director of Open Spaces introduced the report and outlined the future plans for the site.

Responding to a query from a Committee member the Director of Open Spaces explained the security measures which were to be introduced to keep the Grotto site safe.

It was commented by a Committee member that a summary report on the Grotto project would be helpful for members of the public to be better informed on this subject. The Chairman noted that a webpage with all these details would be a useful reference for members of the public interested. The Director of Open Spaces explained that the Issues Report due to be considered by the Epping Forest and Commons Committee would include a brief summary of the issues present at Wanstead Park.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

12. **PATH MANAGEMENT: POLICY DEVELOPMENT NOTE SEF 23/20**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Path Management Policy Development Note. The Director of Open Spaces explained the process undertaken to produce the Policy Development Note and issues going forward. It was noted that the Policy was just the beginning of the process regarding path management in Epping Forest.

A member of the Committee highlighted that Epping Forest was not a park and, therefore, required this to be reflected in the number of paths present in the Forest. Replying to this the Director of Open Spaces confirmed that the Forest was considered as semi-rural environment noting that access to the Forest was also an ongoing issue.

Replying to a point raised by a Committee member the Director of Open Spaces explained any paths created by users of Epping Forest which were deemed harmful to the Forest would be resolved.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

13. **NIGHT-TIME GATING PROPOSALS FOR MANOR ROAD, HIGH BEACH FOR AMENITY PURPOSES SEF 26/20**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Night-time Gating proposals for Manor Road, High Beach for amenity purposes. The Director of Open Spaces introduced the report and explained the context of this

proposal to gate the Manor Road car park. It was noted that while there was risk of displacing antisocial behaviour to other sites but that it was clear that more decisive action was required to resolve issues present which had been commented on by local residents.

Responding to a Committee member's query the Director of Open Spaces commented that the decision to recommend the introduction of car parking charges was separate to the decision to gate Manor Road car park.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

14. EPPING FOREST CAR PARKING - POLICY AND STRATEGY, INTRODUCTION OF PARKING CHARGES AND ENFORCEMENT

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Epping Forest Car parking Policy and Strategy, introduction of Parking Charges and Enforcement. The Director of Open Spaces explained the challenge relating to management of the car parks in Epping Forest and the reasons for the proposed introduction of car parking charges.

The Committee commented on the requirement for adequate consideration to be given to pricing structure to allow for appropriate discounts for certain users. The Director of Open Spaces agreed confirming that a blue badge concession scheme would be in place. In addition, it was explained the Epping Forest and Commons Committee annually reviewed fees and charges review which this car parking charge would be added to. A Committee member suggested that voluntary car parking charges options be explored. Replying to this the Director of Open Spaces explained that voluntary schemes had been trailed at Burnham Beeches which achieved only minimal fees collected.

The Committee discussed the suitability of differing payment methods noting that car park payment machines using cash leave the sites vulnerable to vandalism and would substantially increase maintenance costs.

It was commented by a member of the Committee that the public transport in the north of Epping Forest was insufficient for the public to access the Forest without using cars and that internet reception was not of a standard to allow access to online payment systems. In addition, the member noted that he believed that the Epping Forest Act precluded the introduction of Car Parking Charges and that their introduction was not within the ethically spirit of this act. Further to this it was suggested that the funds raised from car parking charges be ring fenced for expenditure at Epping Forest. The Director of Open Spaces replied that he did not agree with the ethical issues relating to the introduction of car parking charges and that many other local authority car parks in the area did charge.

A Committee member highlighted that the experience of car parking charges at Burnham Beeches would help the City of London Corporation with the introduction at Epping Forest but noted it was not going to be a simple or easy process. The Director of Open Spaces emphasised that lessons learnt at sites

such as Burnham Beeches would be incorporated into the introduction of car parking charges in Epping Forest.

A Member commented that there was never going to be an ideal time to introduce the car parking charges but noted that the increasing costs of the running the Forest required new measures to increase income. In addition, he confirmed that he was fully in favour of the introduction of car parking charges for these reasons. In response to this a Committee member commented that the proposed introduction of car parking charges had not been consulted on and was now being introduced as a fait accompli. The Director of Open Spaces outlined the budgetary position of Epping Forest and the City of London Corporation noting the requirement for increased income and efficiencies. Responding to this a Committee member commented that the introduction of car parking charges was clearly an income generation exercise and should be presented as such. The Deputy Chairman stated that the City of London Corporation should be unequivocal in confirming that part of this decision is motivated by the requirement to raise funds for the Forest. The Chairman noted that the City of London Corporation contributes over £29M a year to open spaces management and there was clearly a need to find new ways of increasing income to maintain this expenditure.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

15. LOCAL PLANS: ON-SITE SAMM PROPOSALS

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Epping Forest SAC mitigation of Local Plans on site SAMM Proposals. The report presented the proposals of the City of London Corporation in its capacity as The Conservators of Epping Forest (CoLC) for within site Strategic Access Management & Monitoring (SAMM) mitigation measures for the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (EFSAC).

The Chairman commented on the importance of this work to safeguard the future of Epping Forest. It was agreed that other relevant wildlife trusts would, with the City of London Corporation, write to support the comments in the report to relevant local authorities and Greater London Authorities.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

16. QUESTIONS

Responding to a question from a Committee member the Chairman explained that balance needed to be reached on the items for discussion on Epping Forest Consultative Committee agendas. The Deputy Chairman suggested that this be considered as part of the City of London Corporation's Governance review to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the various groups and meetings relating to the governance of Epping Forest.

Replying to a query from a Committee member on planning permission in Epping Forest the Director of Open Spaces explained that the proposed development specified had not referenced SAC mitigation strategies and therefore was not approved. It was added that developments which included

details of SAC mitigation funding, such as Whipps Cross University Hospital, would likely be approved. The Chairman confirmed that the City of London Corporation had been involved actively in the Whipps Cross University Hospital consultation.

Replying to a member's query it was confirmed that a substantial response to Government's white paper 'Planning for the Future' was being developed by the City of London Corporation which included contributions from the Open Spaces Department.

17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no further

The meeting closed at 21:31

Chairman

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