

EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE
Monday, 7 September 2020

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held remotely
on Monday, 7 September 2020 at 11.30 am

Present

Members:

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

Officers:

Richard Holt	- Town Clerk's Department
Polly Dunn	- Town Clerk's Department
Kristina Drake	- Media Officer, Town Clerk's Department
Colin Buttery	- Director of Open Spaces
Paul Thomson	- Superintendent of Epping Forest
Andy Barnard	- Superintendent of The Commons
Jacqueline Eggleston	- Head of Visitor Services, Epping Forest
Jeremy Dagley	- Head of Conservation, Epping Forest
Martin Newnham	- Head Forest Keeper, Epping Foest
Helen Read	- Conservation Officer, Open Spaces
Jo Hurst	- Business Manager, Epping Forest

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Gregory Lawrence and Sylvia Moys.

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

No declarations were received.

3. **ORDER OF THE COURT OF COMMON COUNCIL**

The Committee received the Order of the Court of Common Council dated 16 July 2020 appointing the Committee and setting its Terms of Reference. The Town Clerk noted the change to include the newly elected Verderers.

A member of the Committee commented that the Committee's Terms of Reference was not constitutional. The Town Clerk replied that the Comptroller would be informed of this concern.

RESOLVED- That the Epping Forest and Commons Committee Order of the Court of Common Council be noted.

4. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

The Committee proceeded to elect a Chairman in accordance with Standing Order No. 29. The Town Clerk informed that Graeme Doshi-Smith, being the only Member expressing their willingness to serve, was duly elected Chairman of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee for the ensuing year and took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

RESOLVED- That Graeme Doshi-Smith be elected Chairman of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee for the ensuing year.

5. **ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN**

The Committee proceeded to elect a Deputy Chairman in accordance with Standing Order No. 30. The Town Clerk informed that Benjamin Murphy, being the only Member expressing their willingness to serve, was duly elected Deputy Chairman of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee for the ensuing year and took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting

RESOLVED- That Benjamin Murphy be elected Deputy Chairman of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee for the ensuing year.

6. **MINUTES**

The Committee considered the draft public minutes and non-public summary of the last meeting of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee held on the 6th of July 2020.

RESOLVED- That the public minutes and non-public summary of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee held on the 6th of July 2020 be approved as an accurate record.

7. **2019/20 COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS**

The Committee considered a report of the Town Clerk, inviting Members to make their appointments to various Consultative Committees and Groups for 2020/21.

The Committee agreed that the Consultative Committees and Groups would continue with their membership for the previous year with Verderers elected in January appointed in the place of previously elected Verderers. The Director of Open Spaces explained that the Epping Forest Joint Consultative Committee

was oversubscribed with relation to the agreement with the Forest Skills Centre and that only three Members should be appointed to the Committee.

The Town Clerk informed the Committee that two Members had stated their interest to be appointed as the local observer on the Open Spaces & City Gardens Committee and therefore the Committee would move to vote on this appointment. A vote on this appointment was conducted with nine votes in favour of Deputy Phillip Woodhouse and three in favour of Jeremy Simons. Deputy Phillip Woodhouse was therefore approved as the Epping Forest and Commons Committee appointed local observer on the Open Spaces & City Gardens Committee.

RESOLVED – That the following appointments be agreed:

Ashted Commons Consultation Group

Graeme Doshi-Smith (Chairman)
Benjamin Murphy (Deputy Chairman)
Sylvia Moys
Jeremy Simons

Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common Consultation Group

Graeme Doshi-Smith (Chairman)
Benjamin Murphy (Deputy Chairman)
Sylvia Moys
Alderman Robert Hughes-Penney

Couldson Commons, West Wickham & Spring Park Consultation Group

Graeme Doshi-Smith (Chairman)
Benjamin Murphy (Deputy Chairman)
Sylvia Moys
Jeremy Simons

Epping Forest Joint Consultative Committee

Graeme Doshi-Smith (Chairman)
Benjamin Murphy (Deputy Chairman)
Sylvia Moys

Epping Forest Consultative Committee

Graeme Doshi-Smith (Chairman)
Benjamin Murphy (Deputy Chairman)
Sylvia Moys
Caroline Haines
Verderer Michael Chapman DL
Verderer Paul Morris
Verderer H.H. William Kennedy
Verderer Nicholas Munday

Epping Forest Management Plan Steering Group

Graeme Doshi-Smith (Chairman)
Benjamin Murphy (Deputy Chairman)

Sylvia Moys
Benjamin Murphy
Verderer Michael Chapman DL
Verderer Paul Morris
Verderer H.H. William Kennedy
Verderer Nicholas Munday

Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee Representative
Deputy Phillip Woodhouse

8. **EPPING FOREST AND COMMONS COMMITTEE 2020 DATES**

The Committee received a report of the Town Clerk on the dates for 2020 relating to the Epping Forest and Commons Committee. The Town Clerk clarified that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on the 16th of November and not the 17th as had previously been listed.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

9. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

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

The Committee's Deputy Chairman and the Chairman of the Open Spaces & City Gardens Committee highlighted the contribution of car parking charges to funding the management of the open spaces noting the importance of this in the period of increased pressures on the management budgets. The Chairman commented that there would be a further discussion of ideas for increasing revenue later in the meeting. The Director of Open Spaces explained that proposals for car parking charges in Epping Forest would be considered at the November meeting of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

10. **DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BURNHAM BEECHES AND STOKE COMMON CONSULTATION GROUP 18TH AUGUST 2020**

The Committee received the draft minutes of the Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common Consultation Group meeting held on the 18th of August 2020. The Director of Open Spaces noted that it was a productive and well supported meeting which was particularly positive when considering the difficulties associated with remote committee meetings.

RESOLVED- That the draft minutes of the Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common Consultation Group meeting held on the 18th of August 2020 be noted.

11. **TIMETABLE UPDATE - PRODUCTION OF NEW MANAGEMENT PLANS AND ASSOCIATED PUBLIC CONSULTATION - KENLEY COMMON, COULSDON COMMON, RIDDLEDOWN AND FARTHING DOWNS/NEW HILL**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of the Open Spaces on the Timetable Update regarding the production of New Management Plans and Associated Public Consultation for Kenley Common, Coulsdon Common, Riddlesdown and Farthing Downs/New Hill. The Director of Open Spaces introduced the report and highlighted the key elements to Members.

RESOLVED- That the amended timetable for the production of the 10-year management plans for Kenley Common, Coulsdon Common, Riddlesdown and Farthing Downs/New Hill be approved.

12. **PROPOSAL TO EXTEND THE USE OF PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDERS AT BURNHAM BEECHES - OUTCOME OF THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION PROCESS**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces concerning the continued use of the five existing PSPOs (Public Safety Protection Orders) at Burnham Beeches and the outcome of the public consultation process. The report provided a summary of the key elements of the proposal and the previous actions taken on this project.

RESOLVED- That: -

- I. Option 1, as explained in the report, to extend the effect of the existing PSPOs at Burnham Beeches for a further three years from 1st December 2020 be approved; and
- II. That the Comptroller and City Solicitor be authorised to make the replacement/extended Orders; and
- III. That authority be delegated to the Director of Open Spaces to authorise officers at Burnham Beeches to issue Fixed Penalty Notices in relation to Public Spaces Protection Orders; and
- IV. That the set the fixed penalty for breach of a Public Spaces Protection Orders at Burnham Beeches be approved at £80 with a reduction to £50 if paid within 10 days.

13. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces which provided a summary of the Epping Forest Division's activities across July 2020. The Chairman commented on the work of Officers across an extremely busy summer period.

Replying to a query from a member of the Committee the Director of Open Spaces confirmed that the engineer's report on the Wanstead Park reservoirs had been completed and would be incorporated into a Committee report for consideration at the November meeting. Responding to a further comment, the Director of Open Spaces confirmed that the Dams in question were regularly inspected by Officers including the water levels.

Responding to a query from the Deputy Chairman the Director of Open Spaces explained the City of London Corporation's policy with regard to rough sleepers in Epping Forest, noting the Corporation's adherence to the 'No Second Night Policy' and cooperation with relevant local authorities to assist rough sleepers.

The Chairman of Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee referenced a recent publication on the voltage shocks to cattle in invisible fencing and requested further information on the use of electric collars in the management of the cattle in Epping Forest. The Director of Open Spaces explained that the shocks to cattle in the invisible fencing system were less than the equivalent from physical fences and observed that, as an audio warning precedes the shock administered, cattle quickly learn to avoid these prohibited areas and therefore rarely experienced any shock. In addition, the Director of Open Spaces explained that the invisible fence system could not be extended to deer in the Forest as these were wild animals.

The Director of Open Spaces explained that the Deer Strategy was due to be completed and ready for the Committee's consideration at the meeting in November. In addition, it was confirmed that the Cooped Hall management plan, which was also due for Committee consideration, would look at the management of the reservoir present at the site.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

14. **DRAFT MINUTES OF THE EPPING FOREST CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**
The Committee received the draft minutes of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee held on the 24th of June 2020.

RESOLVED- That the draft minutes of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee held on the 24th of June 2020 be noted.

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

A member of the Committee commented on the issue of maintaining swan nesting sites within Epping Forest and expressed that something needed to be done to resolve these issues. The Director of Open Spaces explained that combating these issues would likely be an expensive undertaking. The Committee discussed the possibility of involving volunteers and the Vintners Livery Company in this process.

It was noted by a member of a Committee that the increased visitor numbers had demonstrated that the communication, including signage and the City of London Corporation open spaces website, were not working in an optimal manner. The Chairman noted that there was a balance to be reached between maintaining aesthetic quality of the Forest and providing appropriate signage. In addition, the Chairman commented that the City of Corporation's open spaces website was not of the quality required and suggested that this matter be escalated by Officers.

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

There was no urgent business considered in the public session.

17. **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.

18. **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 6th of July 2020.

RESOLVED- That the non-public minutes of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee held on the 6th of July 2020 be approved as an accurate record.

19. **LOCAL PLANS UPDATE - BURNHAM BEECHES SAC**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces which provided a summary of the work undertaken regarding Local Plans and the Burnham Beeches SAC.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted

20. **FARM BUSINESS TENANCY UPDATE**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Farm Business Tenancy Update.

RESOLVED- That the report be agreed.

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

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

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

The Committee considered one item of urgent business in the non-public session.

The meeting ended at 1.45 pm

Chairman

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