

EPHING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE
Monday, 8 March 2021

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held remotely.

Present

Members:

Graeme Doshi-Smith (Chairman)
Benjamin Murphy (Deputy Chairman)
Deputy Philip Woodhouse
Peter Bennett
Caroline Haines
Alderman Robert Howard
Alderman Robert Hughes-Penney
Gregory Lawrence
Jeremy Simons
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
Joseph Anstee	- Town Clerk's Department
Kristina Drake	- Media Officer, Town Clerk's Department
Mark Jarvis	- Head of Finance, Chamberlains
Jacqueline Eggleston	- Head of Visitor Services (Epping Forest)
Paul Thomson	- Superintendent, Epping Forest
Andy Barnard	- Superintendent, Burnham Beeches, Stoke Common & City Commons
Colin Buttery	- Director of Open Spaces & Heritage
Jeremy Dagley	- Head of Conservation, Epping Forest
Jo Hurst	- Business Manager, Epping Forest
Gerry Kiefer	- Business Manager, Open Spaces Department
Laura Lawson	- Projects Officer, Epping Forest
Martin Newnham	- Open Spaces Department
Hadyn Robson	- Business Manager, The Commons
Geoff Sinclair	- Head of Operations, Epping Forest

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Sylvia Moys.

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 public minutes and non-public summary of the previous meeting of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee held on the 18th of January 2021.

RESOLVED- That the public minutes of the previous meeting of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee held on the 18th of January 2021 be approved as an accurate record.

4. **EPHING FOREST AND COMMONS COMMITTEE 2021 DATES**

The Committee considered a report of the Town Clerk on the Epping Forest and Commons Committee dates for 2021. It was noted that due to the COVID19 restrictions the provisional Epping Forest and Commons Committee visit to Epping Forest would likely need to be rearranged.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

5. **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Committee considered a report of the Town Clerk on the Epping Forest and Commons Committee's Terms of Reference.

It was noted by a Committee member that the streaming of meetings online was a useful adjustment to the work of the Committee, allowing more members of the public to view the meeting and suggested that this be continued when the Committee is able to meet in person. The Chairman and Town Clerk confirmed that the future policy on this point was yet to be confirmed and all appropriate opportunities would be explored.

In response to a comment from a member of the Committee the Chairman agreed that the lengthy agenda was not optimal for the governance of the Committee but confirmed that all of the reports had been thoroughly assessed by all members of the Committee.

RESOLVED- That: -

- I. The terms of reference of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee be approved for submission to the Court of Common Council in April, and that any further changes required in the lead up to the Court's appointment of Committees be delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman; and
- II. That Members did not consider any change be required to the frequency of the Committee's meetings.

6. **DRAFT MINUTES EPHING FOREST CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

The Committee noted the draft minutes of the last meeting of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee held on the 10th of February 2021.

RESOLVED- That the draft minutes of the last meeting of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee held on the 10th of February 2021 be noted.

7. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Superintendent's update which summarised the Epping Forest Division's activities across December 2020 to January 2021.

The Committee placed on record their appreciation to Officers and volunteers for their contribution to managing Epping Forest in an especially difficult period.

RESOLVED- That the update be noted.

8. REVISED TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR EPPING FOREST CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (SEF 06/21)

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the revised Terms of Reference for the Epping Forest Consultative Committee.

A member of the Committee suggested that the amendments made to the Epping Forest Consultative Committee's Terms of Reference be highlighted to make clear the changes made.

The Chairman commented that options for future items of business for the Consultative Committee were discussed to allow for greater freedom for members to suggest topics for consideration.

RESOLVED- That: -

- I. The updated Terms of Reference be approved; and
- II. Applying organisations be requested to resubmit their details according to these new terms, for consideration of forward membership at May Committee

9. EPPING FOREST CAR PARKING - ADDITIONAL TARIFF OPTIONS AND CONSULTATION FEEDBACK (SEF 12/21)

The Committee considered a report of the Director of the Open Spaces on Additional tariff options and consultation feedback for Epping Forest Car Parking. The Chairman highlighted the extensive analysis, consultation and debate which had been undertaken to reach this point. In addition, it was emphasised that option C was the recommended option.

The Committee discussed the need to secure a modest income from the Epping Forest Car Parks to help with the management of the Forest. The Chairman highlighted significant financial contribution of the City of London Corporation to the Epping Forest Charity and that contribution from local authorities contributed to the Charity.

In response to a query from a Member, the Director of Open Spaces explained that for the policy to be cost effective means testing was not possible.

RESOLVED: That: -

- I. The feedback from the public consultation exercise be noted; and
- II. That option C be approved for car park charging at Epping Forest.

10. **EPPING FOREST CYCLING MANAGEMENT STRATEGY (SEF 25/20B)**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Epping Forest Cycling Management Strategy. It was noted that analysis of the implementation of the Strategy would be provided at the November Epping Forest and Commons Committee.

In response to a query from a Committee member the Director of Open Spaces confirmed that walkers had right of way over cyclist.

RESOLVED- That the Epping Forest Cycling Management Strategy as at Appendix 1 be approved.

11. **CLIMATE ACTION STRATEGY - OPEN SPACES "CARBON REMOVALS" (SEF 10/21B)**

The Committee noted a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Climate Action Strategy Open Spaces "Carbon Removals".

In response to a query from a member of the Committee it was explained that the carbon sequestration achieved at Epping Forest would only be considered in contribution to the carbon offsetting of the City of London Corporation, not of the local authorities.

A member of the Committee commented that, while he was supportive of the Strategy, it was important for the Committee to consider this in the context of the wider aims of Epping Forest Charity.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

12. **DEER MANAGEMENT STRATEGY (SEF 07/21B)**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Deer Management Strategy. The Chairman highlighted that the Strategy had been established to resolve the issue of large numbers of deer in Epping Forest which unfortunately were not successfully limited through natural methods. The Deputy Chairman stressed that this was not to demonise the deer, but to highlight that without effective management the deer population would be adversely effected by the large number in an area of limited resources.

The Committee noted the importance of adopting best practice in regard to the management of the Epping Forest deer population ensuring safe and human deer culling. In addition, it was noted that a regular review of the Strategy would be undertaken by Officers and reported annually to the Epping Forest and Commons Committee. In response to a Member's query the Director of Open Spaces confirmed to the Committee that all Officers would action the Deer Strategy in accordance with national best practice and that the use of body worn cameras would be considered accordingly.

Following the expression of concern by a Member the Director of Open Spaces clarified that the full report on Deer Strategy provided detailed information on the exploration of alternative approaches, the Member reporting mechanism and the requirement to reach a decision promptly to allow for effective future planning. The Chairman added that an extensive analysis had been undertaken on this policy and that future review would be a key element of the implementation Deer Strategy.

RESOLVED- The Committee approved Option 1 for implementation including the management by Epping Forest Charity staff of all deer.

13. **HIGH BEACH INDIVIDUAL SITE PLAN (SEF 08/21B)**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the High Beech Individual Site Plan.

A member of the Committee commented that the impact to the Church in High Beech needed to be fully considered in the High Beech Individual Site Plan, particularly in relation to the introduction of car parking charges.

Following a suggestion by a member of the Committee the Director of Open Spaces confirmed that the High Beech Individual Site Plan would consider the interaction with other local strategies and the overall impact on visitors to Epping Forest.

RESOLVED- That Option 1 be approved.

14. **WANSTEAD PARK: WETLAND IMPROVEMENT PROPOSALS (SEF 09/21B)**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Wanstead Park Wetland Improvement Proposals.

The Committee noted that the Epping Forest Consultative Committee had indicated its approval to the report at its meeting held on the 10th of February 2021.

RESOLVED- That Option 1 of the report be approved.

15. **2019 COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP GRANT APPLICATION - AMENDED AGREEMENT 2021 (SEF 13/21)**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the 2019 Countryside Stewardship Grant Agreement Amendment.

It was noted by a member of the Committee that while they were disappointed the significantly reduced offer it was important to use the funds available. In addition, it was highlighted that a public facing document to summarise the position on the Countryside Stewardship Grant to the general public.

RESOLVED- That: -

- I. The Director of Open Spaces be authorised to sign the revised 10-year CSS agreement offer of approximately £1.27Million; and

- II. Authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, to agree further measures with the Rural Payments Agency that will make adjustments to the timetable, seek to maximise per hectare payments and allow flexibility in the way in which annual work is recorded and payments made.

16. EPPING FOREST DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN: SAC MITIGATION PROGRESS (SEF 14/21)

The Committee considered a late report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Epping Forest District Council SAC Mitigation progress.

A member of the Committee commented that the creation of an APMS Stakeholder Working Group was a useful addition to the project and suggested that a public facing mission statement be provided in order that Committee members can be properly informed. The Chairman and Deputy Chairman agreed with this suggestion and requested that an approval timeline be added to this public facing document for ease of reference.

RESOLVED- That: -

- I. Authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, to complete a response to the proposed Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy amendments discussed with Council officers, reiterating the concerns on SANGS capacity and quality and on SAMMS contributions from masterplan sites; and
- II. That the Committee approved 'in principle' the acceptance of any invitation by Epping Forest District Council for membership of the APMS Stakeholder Working Group, with the provisos listed in the report; and
- III. The Comptroller & City Solicitor be instructed to review the terms of reference, and other membership rules, in relation to the APMS Stakeholder Working Group and to make recommendations in a further report to your Committee for decision; and
- IV. The reiteration of objections, by your officers, to the *Next* plc development in line with the proposals set out in the report be approved.

17. LONDON BOROUGH OF WALTHAM FOREST LOCAL PLAN UPDATE (SEF 15/21)

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces of the London Borough of Waltham Forest Local Plan (LBWF). The Director of Open Spaces introduced the report by explaining that the report had been produced to provide the Committee with a preview of the next stages for the LBWF.

It was commented by the Director of Open Spaces that the Whipps Cross Hospital development was due to be considered and a report would be prepared accordingly for the May Epping Forest and Commons Committee.

A member of the Committee thanked Officers for the regular updates received on the LBWF.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

18. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Superintendent's update issues across the nine sites within 'The Commons'.

RESOLVED- That the update be noted.

19. **LETTING OF THE KEEPERS COTTAGE, KENLEY**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the letting of the Keepers Cottage Kenley.

RESOLVED- That Members agree to the letting of the Keepers Cottage, Kenley Lane, Kenley as per option 1.

20. **ASHTEAD COMMON, WEST WICKHAM AND SPRING PARK DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLANS AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION RESULTS**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Ashtead Common, West Wickham and Spring Park Draft Management Plans and Public Consultation results. The Director of Open Spaces confirmed that he was confident that the Management Plans were the best presentation of the Department's position. The Chairman noted that these documents had been reviewed extensively by the relevant consultative committees and by Officers before being presented to the Committee.

A member of the Committee highlighted that, as detailed in the Terms of Reference of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee, the Verderers of Epping Forest were unable to vote on Commons business.

RESOLVED- That both final draft management plans (appendices 1 and 2) so that they can be submitted to Natural England for ratification and implementation as of 1st April 2021 be approved.

21. **ASHTEAD COMMON TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020**

The Committee received a joint report of the Director of Open Spaces and Chamberlain on the Ashtead Common Trustees Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2020.

RESOLVED- That the update be noted.

22. **BURNHAM BEECHES AND STOKE COMMON TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020**

The Committee considered a joint report of Chamberlain and Director of Open Spaces on the Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common Trustees Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2020.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

23. **WEST WICKHAM COMMON AND SPRING PARK WOOD, COULSDON AND OTHER COMMONS TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020**

The Committee received a joint report of the Director of the Open Spaces and Chamberlain on the West Wickham Common and Spring Park Wood, Coulsdon and Other Commons Trustees Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2020.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

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

A Member suggested the use of a specific web application for reporting incidents of fly tipping. The Chairman replied that he was keen to consider all options for improved measures to combat fly tipping however there might be data protection issues with using the specific application mentioned. The Director of Open Spaces confirmed that he was confident the measures to combat fly tipping were working well and that the issue with using the application specified was the access to third party information. The Committee discussed the prospect of funding opportunities relating to the fly tipping noting that the public would be happy to contribute to the fund for cleaning specific areas.

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

There was no urgent business considered in the public session.

26. **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.

27. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

The Committee considered the non-public minutes of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee meeting held on the 18th of January 2021.

RESOLVED- That the non-public minutes of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee on the 18th of January 2021 be approved as an accurate record.

28. **CONNAUGHT CLUB, BARN HOPPITT, CHINGFORD LICENCE (SEF 16/21)**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on Connaught Club Barn Hoppitt Chingford.

At 1pm Members agreed to extend the business of the agenda beyond two hours, in accordance with Standing Order 40, in order to conclude the business on the agenda.

RESOLVED- That the report be approved.

29. **FARM TENANCY - COPPED HALL NORTH - FUTURE OPTIONS SEF 17/21**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Farm Tenancy at Copped Hall North.

RESOLVED- That the report be approved.

30. **AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS ACT TENANCY WOODREDON SOUTH - FUTURE OPTIONS (SEF 18-21)**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Agricultural Holdings Act Tenancy Woodredon South.

RESOLVED- That the report be approved.

31. **APPROVAL REQUEST - MARKET LETTING - FARTHING DOWNS OFFICE, DITCHES LANE, COULSDON CR5 1DA**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Approval Request for Market Letting of the Farthing Downs Office, Ditches Lane, Coulsdon.

RESOLVED- That the report be approved.

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

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

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

There was no further business considered in the non-public session.

The meeting ended at 1.13 pm

Chairman

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