

EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE
Monday, 10 May 2021

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held remotely
on Monday, 10 May 2021 at 11.00 am

Present

Members:

Graeme Doshi-Smith (Chairman)
Benjamin Murphy (Deputy Chairman)
Peter Bennett
Caroline Haines
Alderman Robert Hughes-Penney
Gregory Lawrence
Deputy Edward Lord
Jeremy Simons
Verderer Michael Chapman DL
Verderer H.H William Kennedy
Verderer Nicholas Munday

Officers:

Richard Holt	- Town Clerk's Department
Sarah Phillips	- Town Clerk's Department
Mark Jarvis	- Head of Finance, Chamberlain's Department
Bukola Soyombo	- Chamberlain's Department
Charlie Pearce	- Chamberlain's Department
Jeremy Dagley	- Head of Conservation Epping Forest
Jo Hurst	- Business Manager, Epping Forest
Gerry Kiefer	- Business Manager, Open Spaces Department
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

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Alderman Nicholas Lyons and Verderer Paul Morris.

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

Verderer Michael Chapman made a declaration that he was President of Theydon Bois and District Rural Preservation Society mentioned in Item 12.

Jeremy Simons and Caroline Haines made declarations as members of the Epping Forest Heritage Trust mentioned in Item 12.

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

The Committee received the Order of the Court of Common Council dated 15 April 2021 appointing the Committee and setting its Terms of Reference.

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 public minutes and non-public summary of the previous meeting of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee held on the 8th of March 2021. The Chairman noted that the sentence on item 9 of the minutes needed to be corrected to make clear that the Epping Forest Charity did not receive any funds from local authorities.

The Chairman noted that Sylvia Moys had stepped down from her role on the Court of Common Council and, as a result, from the Epping Forest and Commons Committee. The Chairman added that he would be writing to Ms Moys to thank her for contribution to the work of the Committee and the City of London Corporation.

RESOLVED- That the public minutes of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee held on the 8th of March, subject to the corrections specified, be approved as an accurate record.

7. **2021/22 COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS**

The Committee considered a report of the Town Clerk, inviting Members to make their appointments to various Consultative Committees and Groups for 2021/22.

The Committee agreed that the Consultative Committees and Groups would continue with their membership for the previous year with the change of Sylvia Moys no longer serving on the various committees she previously served on and Caroline Haines stepping down from the Epping Forest Consultative Committee.

The Town Clerk informed the Committee that Jeremy Simons was the only Member expressing an interest to be appointed as the local observer on the Open Spaces & City Gardens Committee. Jeremy Simons 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:

Ashtead Commons Consultation Group

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

Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common Consultation Group

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

Coulsdon Commons, West Wickham & Spring Park Consultation Group

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

Epping Forest Joint Consultative Committee

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

Epping Forest Consultative Committee

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

Epping Forest Management Plan Steering Group

Graeme Doshi-Smith (Chairman)
Benjamin Murphy (Deputy Chairman)
Verderer Michael Chapman DL
Verderer Paul Morris

H.H. Verderer William Kennedy
Verderer Nicholas Munday

Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee Representative

Jeremy Simons.

8. EPPING FOREST AND COMMONS COMMITTEE 2021 DATES

The Committee received a report of the Town Clerk on the dates for 2021 relating to the Epping Forest and Commons Committee.

A member of the Committee commented that it would be helpful to extend the meeting dates provided into 2022 and that it was important that a variety of sites were visited to ensure appropriate oversight of land under the Committee's responsibility. The Director of Open Spaces informed the Committee that a number of visits have had to be cancelled due to the requirements of the Coronavirus Regulations. The Director hoped that visits would resume once the restrictions had been eased. Responding to a query from a Member of the Committee the Director of Open Spaces confirmed that a date for the Lord Mayor's visit to Burnham Beeches would be established when appropriate.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

9. 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'.

A Member expressed concern on the abuse of staff mentioned in the report and asked how this abuse had affected staff morale. The Director of Open Spaces replied by explaining that, in general, the morale of staff had shown great resilience in the period effected by COVID-19, but that this would of course be keep under review.

Responding to a Member's query on the visitor numbers to the open spaces the Director of Open Spaces explained that numbers were expected to increase in the summer months and added that the numbers were likely to be higher than they were pre COVID19 pandemic for years to come. The Chairman noted that it was important to establish if any substantive mitigation strategies would be required in relation to the increased visitor numbers. Replying to a question from the Deputy Chairman the Director of Open Spaces explained that the Department would continue to work with local open spaces to discuss the effect of increased visitor numbers.

RESVOLED- That the report be noted.

10. 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 February to March 2021.

A Member commented on the virtual outing to Epping Forest for young unaccompanied refugee minors mentioned in the report and suggested that a similar in person event be considered when possible.

The Committee discussed the issue of increased fly tipping in Epping Forest. The Director of Open Spaces informed the Committee that the Department were working closely with the local authorities in the area and that a number of prosecutions were being placed before the Courts following their reopening. It was commented by a Committee member that they were scheduled to meet with Officers to assist with familiarisation visits by local Magistrates. The Deputy Chairman suggested that a specific metric be developed to measure against for fly tipping in Epping Forest as it was evident that this was a significant issue for the Department.

The Director of Open Spaces, replying to a query from the Deputy Chairman, explained that the term clearance had been used in the report to refer to the removal of waste left by rough sleepers, rather than describing the NSNO process. The Director confirmed that Rough Sleeper numbers had increased due to household sharing restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. It was added that volunteer litter pickers had been extremely helpful in clearing this waste. Further to this the Chairman noted he and the Deputy Chairman were writing to open spaces staff to thank them for their contribution.

Responding to query from a member of the Committee the Director of Open Spaces informed the Committee that Fixed Term Contract staff were to be recruited, which should improve response to issues presented deer vehicular collisions.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

11. EPPING FOREST WORK PROGRAMME 2021/2022

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Epping Forest Work Programme 2021/22.

RESOLVED- The annual work programme as summarised in the report be approved.

12. EPPING FOREST CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS 2021 TO 2024 (SEF 21/21)

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Epping Forest Consultative Committee appointments 2021 to 2022. The Chairman noted that the correct version of the report was included in the supplementary agenda which the Committee would be considering.

Verderer Michael Chapman made a declaration that he was President of the Theydon Bois and District Rural Preservation Society, which was mentioned in the report and, therefore, decided not to take part in the discussion further beyond raising concerns regarding the report's description of Society's constitution. Jeremy Simons and Caroline Haines made declarations as members of the Epping Forest Heritage Trust.

A Member of the Committee commended the option to co-opt further representatives of certain groups, onto the Epping Forest Consultative Committee to allow those groups to contribute to relevant discussions.

The Committee considered the various organisations which had applied for membership of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee. The Committee agreed with list recommended but to leave the position allocated to heritage organisation vacant to limit the size of the Committee to ensure there is room to co-opt members as appropriate.

The Epping Forest Conservation Volunteers were not appointed as recommended to allow for co-option's It was decided that the Loughton Residents Association could remain as a member of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee for a restricted period, while alternative measures are considered with regard to the rules on Political Party membership. The Forest Forum was co-opted. With regard to cycling groups representation on the Consultative Committee the Committee agreed that the Four cycling organisations who have applied would be encouraged to choose their representative.

RESOLVED- That: -

- I. The applications as explained in the report, and detailed in Appendix 1, were considered and appointed as appropriate under the revised Terms of Reference; and
- II. That thanks be extended to organisations that have applied, particularly those who have attended for the last three years but have been unsuccessful in their application this time around.

13. COPPED HALL PARKLAND MANAGEMENT PLAN. (SEF 22/21)

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Copped Hall Parkland Management Plan. The Director of Open Spaces noted that there were some challenges regarding the funding of this project and the connections to carbon recovery, public access and carbon recovery.

A Member of the Committee encouraged Officers to be bold in their approach to this project especially regarding the connections to the Climate Action Strategy. In addition, it was commented that a practical management plan and public consultation would be important. The Director of Open Spaces confirmed that a further report with more details on the project would be prepared for consideration by the Committee in July.

RESOLVED- That Option 1 to make the PMP publicly available and to allow dialogue with key stakeholders from 11th May 2021 onwards be approved.

14. EPPING FOREST 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 the Chamberlain. The Chamberlain drew the Committee's attention to the £5.2

million from City's Cash that was provided to the Epping Forest Charity in the previous year.

A Member suggested that the full membership of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee be detailed in future reports to evidence with whom specific responsibility, of the City of London Corporation as the Corporate Trustee, is held.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

15. WHIPPS CROSS HOSPITAL DEVELOPMENT : IMMINENT PLANNING APPLICATION.

Due to the timing of the planning application, the Committee considered a late report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Whipps Cross Hospital Development Imminent Planning Application. The Director of Open Spaces apologies for the lateness of the report and outlined the central elements of the report to the Committee.

The Chairman noted that while he was happy to see a new hospital development in the area and reiterated the Committee's role in protecting Epping Forest. The Deputy Chairman added that there were significant issues with the Development particularly the number of homes which were to be included.

A Committee Member commented that he was happy to delegate authority to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, to resolve a way forward on the access issue with Barts Health NHS Trust, but requested that related reports are circulated to the Committee for their views.

RESOLVED- That: -

- I. Authority be delegate to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, to negotiate and resolve a way forward on the access issue with the Barts Health NHS Trust; and
- II. That the City Solicitor be instructed to provide advice on 'in perpetuity' in relation to SAC Mitigation; and
- III. Authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, to continue SAC mitigation negotiations, 'without prejudice' to the planning application response and returning to Committee for approval of any final mitigation package agreed by the parties

16. DRAFT PUBLIC MINUTES OF THE EPPING FOREST JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 22ND OF APRIL

The Committee considered the draft public minutes of the Epping Forest Joint Consultative Committee held on the 22nd of April 2021.

RESOLVED- That the draft minutes be noted.

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

There were no questions received in the public session.

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

The Chairman requested that a report on the communications policy relating to the City of London Corporation managed open spaces be prepared for the Committee's consideration. The Deputy Chairman commented that the Committee had a specific challenge in presenting a number of complex planning documents in a manner which is publicly accessible, noting that the requisite skills were present in the City of London Corporation, but were not always best utilised to this end. The Director of Open Spaces informed the Committee that the report on communication policies was being worked on and would be prepared for the next meeting of the Committee.

In response to a query from a member of the Committee the Chairman informed the Committee that its future meetings were planned to be held in a hybrid format with Members and Officers able to attend in person or dial-in to the meeting and public discussions being streamed to YouTube. However, it was added that the ability of the Committee to meet, at least partly, in person was dependant on the position regarding social distancing rules.

19. **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.

20. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

The Committee considered the non-public minutes of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee meeting held on the 8th of March 2021.

RESOLVED- That the non-public minutes of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee meeting held on the 8th of March 2021.

21. **CLIMATE ACTION STRATEGY - CARBON REMOVALS PROJECT (SEF 23/21)**

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

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

22. **WHIPPS CROSS: INITIAL NEGOTIATIONS ON SPECIAL AREA OF CONSERVATION (SAC) AND VEHICULAR ACCESS (SEF 25/21)**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Whipps Cross Hospital Development Imminent Planning Application.

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.

23. DRAFT PUBLIC MINUTES OF THE EPPING FOREST JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 22ND OF APRIL

The Committee considered the draft non-public minutes of the Epping Forest Joint Consultative Committee held on the 22nd of April 2021.

RESOLVED- That the draft minutes be noted.

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

There were two questions received in the non-public session.

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

There were not urgent items considered in the non-public session.

The meeting ended at 13:27

Chairman

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