

EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE

Monday, 13 September 2021

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held remotely
on Monday, 13 September 2021 at 11.00 am

Present

Members:

Graeme Doshi-Smith (Chairman)
Benjamin Murphy (Deputy Chairman)
Peter Bennett
Caroline Haines
Gregory Lawrence
Alderman Nicholas Lyons
Jeremy Simons
Verderer Michael Chapman DL
Verderer Paul Morris

Officers:

Richard Holt	- Town Clerk's Department
Leanne Murphy	- Town Clerk's Department
Bukola Soyombo	- Chamberlain's Department
Nicholas Welland	- City Surveyor's Department
Kristina Drake	- Media Officer, Town Clerk's Department
Bob Roberts	- Director of Communications, Town Clerk's Department
Paul Thomson	- Superintendent, Epping Forest
Andy Barnard	- Superintendent, The Commons
Andrew Thwaites	- Head Ranger, The Commons
Jeremy Dagley	- Head of Conservation, Epping Forest
Sally Gadsdon	- Environmental Stewardship Officer
Sarah Reid	- Community Engagement Officer
Islam Roush	- Community and Marketing Manager, Open Spaces Department
Jo Hurst	- Business Manager, Epping Forest
Jacqueline Eggleston	- Head of Visitor Services, Epping Forest
Gerry Kiefer	- Business Manager, Open Spaces Department
Abigail Tinkler	- Head of Learning, Open Spaces Department
Tristan Vetta	- Land Agent. Epping Forest

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Alderman Robert Hughes-Penney, Deputy Phillip Woodhouse, Verderer H.H William Kennedy and Deputy Edward Lord.

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

The Deputy Chairman noted that, although it was on their register of interests, a number of committee members should make it clear that they were residents of Epping Forest. Jeremy Simons made a declaration as a member of the Epping Forest Heritage Trust and Caroline Haines made a declaration as a member of the Epping Forest Heritage and Copped Hall Trusts.

3. **MINUTES**

The Committee considered the public minutes and non-public summary of the meeting of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee held on the 12th July 2021.

The Deputy Chairman commented that the phase two of the Epping Forest Car Parking Project originally expected to begin in September was now planned for October.

RESOLVED- That the public minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee held on the 12th July 2021 be approved as an accurate record.

4. **LEARNING PROGRAMME - TWO YEAR CORE FUNDING REPORT: 2019 TO 2021**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Learning Programme two-year funding report 2019-2021. The Committee commended officers for their work on the project and highlighted the massive return on investment and critical role in the protection of the Forest. In addition, it was noted that the Programme had received positive reaction from other bodies at the City of London Corporation such as the Education Board.

Answering a question from the Deputy Chairman on the communication of the Programme the Director of Communications explained that a press release on the Learning Programme had received positive responses nationally and internationally, including interest from Japanese media.

A member of the Committee commented that it would be good for the Programme to include for Epping Forest District areas in future outreach.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

5. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

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

The Chairman highlighted that there were issues with Thames Water at sites in Epping Forest and the Commons sites commenting that a joint approach to this could be a more productive approach in negotiations.

Responding to a query from a Committee member the Director of Open Spaces agreed to circulate photographic examples of wildlife discussed in the report to Committee.

The Committee discussed the appropriate way to thank volunteers across all the City of London Corporation Open Spaces for their work particularly over the difficult period effected by the COVID-19 Pandemic. A Member noted that the Volunteer's Reception had been arranged for the 8th of February 2022.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

6. **THE COMMONS EVENTS POLICY (PART 2) -PROPOSED AMENDMENTS**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Commons Events Policy proposed amendments.

Responding to a query from the Deputy Chairman the Director of Open Spaces explained the factors which would be taken into consideration when assessing whether to approve the holding of any specific event.

The Director of Open Spaces provided further information on the apprenticeship scheme in response to a Member's question.

RESOLVED- Members approved the amended Events policy (Part 2) for the Division.

7. **KENLEY AIRFIELD PRESENTATION**

The Committee received a presentation from the Director of Open Spaces on Kenley Airfield. The Chairman thanked officers for their work on the project and highlighted the Lord Mayor's visit to the site. The Chairman added that officers needed to remain mindful of the upkeep of the site and retain this in the Committee's portfolio.

Responding to a query from a member of the Committee the Director of Open Spaces confirmed that officers were confident in the quality of the refurbishment works at the site but noted that there was a provision in the budget for maintenance works.

RESOLVED- That the presentation be received.

8. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces which summarised the Epping Forest Division's activities across June to July 2021.

The Director of Open Spaces confirmed, in response to a question from the Deputy Chairman on access to Council CCTV footage, that the City of London Corporation had an information-sharing agreements with most of the relevant local authorities which sometimes assisted with evidencing instances of fly tipping.

The Deputy Chairman raised the issue of the condition of the paths within Epping Forest and suggested that this be added to the Committee's Risk Register as it would be issue for the Committee going forward. The Director of Open Spaces agreed and responded by explaining that the wet weather coupled with the increased footfall associated with the COVID-19 Pandemic had caused severe damage to the paths which would cost an estimated £377,000 to resolve. It was added that a report would be prepared for the November Epping Forest and Commons Committee meeting on this matter which would confirm the extent of the damage and the details of the repairs required. The Chairman added that this was an issue which the Committee could not avoid not addressing and highlighted the likely increasing impact of changing climate on the tracks in Epping Forest. A Member highlighted that the Epping Forest paths repairs would be considered by the Resource Allocation Sub-Committee for Capital Funding.

Replying to a Committee member's question the Director of Open Spaces confirmed that the City of London Corporation would be looking to engage with the riding community in Epping Forest to discuss matters relating to the sale of Woodredon Farm.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

9. STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND FOR LONDON BOROUGH OF WALTHAM FOREST LOCAL PLAN (SEF 36/21)

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Statement of Common Ground for London Borough of Waltham Forest Local Plan.

Following a question from a committee member the Director of Open Spaces explained that a report on the governance of local authority representative group could be considered by the Epping Forest and Commons Committee as early as November.

RESOLVED- That: -

- I. The Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) with London Borough of Waltham Forest in relation to its Local Plan as set out in **Appendix 1** of this report be approved; and
- II. That authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, to make and agree minor changes to the SoCG to ensure it evolves and is kept up-to-date as a working document, while any major alterations to the SoCG as a result of substantive Local Plan Policy rewording may be reserved for further Committee approval.

10. EPPING FOREST AND COMMONS MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS (SEF 37-21)

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Communications on the Marketing and Communications for Epping Forest and Commons. The Director of Communications introduced the report noting that the Epping Forest and Commons communications strategy had moved to a more proactive and

positive direction but highlighted that, without increased resources, there were limitations on what could be achieved.

The Deputy Chairman thanked The Director of Communications for the report and for the transparency in discussing the work undertaken by the Communications Team but noted that this position was not yet where the Committee would want it to be. It was added that more work was required to effectively publicise the work undertaken to support Epping Forest and encouraged officers to continue work in this regard. A member of the Committee commented that there was a need to be more locally and charity-focused with communications. The Chairman noted that there was a strong case for a dedicated resource to support to help secure income for the open spaces charities. It was agreed that a meeting with the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and the new Executive Director for the Environment be arranged to discuss the business case for a funded marketing strategy for Epping Forest and the Commons. The Director of Communications noted that there were examples of devolved communications plans at other City of London Corporation institutions.

Responding to a request from the Committee, the Director of Communications agreed to provide a report on the annual review of the Marketing and Communications for Epping Forest and Commons for the Committee.

RESOLVED- That the Communications Plan be agreed.

11. EPPING FOREST ANNUAL REVIEW 2020-21

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Epping Forest Annual Review 2020-21. The Director of Open Spaces introduced the report and informed the Committee that Officers were exploring how best to circulate the appropriate audience. A Member suggested that the Epping Forest Annual Review 2020-21 would be a good document to demonstrate the breadth of work of the Open Spaces Department

A Committee member suggested that future iterations of the report make clear the distinction between the Epping Forest and buffer lands areas.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

12. MAIN MODIFICATION FOR EFDC (SEF 39/21)

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Main modification in the relation to the Epping Forest District Council Local Plan. The Committee thanked officers for their work on this response and confirmed that if further resources were required to complete this work then the City of London Corporation should approve this as a reflection of its far reaching impact.

The Committee discussed the importance of the Conservators' response to the Epping Forest District Council Local Plan and noted it was vital for the Committee to fulfil its responsible to protect Epping Forest from any adverse effect resulting from the Local Plan.

RESOLVED- That: -

- I. Authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, to complete a response to the Epping Forest District Council on the proposed Main Modifications to the Local Plan; and
- II. Officers be instructed to seek resolutions to any outstanding issues in relation to Local Plan Strategies through the key forums, particularly the SAC Mitigation Oversight Group; and
- III. Officers be instructed to report back on any significant changes to the Local Plan Strategies that may affect their implementation or effectiveness, including resolution of the SAMMS costings package

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

The Committee received no questions in the public session.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

The Committee considered no urgent business in the public session.

15. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

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 under Section 100(A) 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.

16. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

The Committee considered the non-public minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee held on the 12th July 2021.

RESOLVED- That the non-public minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee held on the 12th July 2021 be approved as an accurate record.

17. CLIMATE ACTION STRATEGY - CARBON REMOVALS PROJECT GATEWAY 5 SEPT 2021 (SEF 35/21)

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Climate Action Strategy Carbon Removals Project Gateway 5.

RESOVLED- That the report be approved.

18. CAPEL ROAD CHANGING ROOMS AND FORMER CARETAKER'S RESIDENCE INSTRUCTION TO MARKET

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Capel Road changing rooms and former caretaker's residence instruction to market.

RESOLVED- That the report be approved

19. **HIGH BEACH VISITOR CENTRE FUTURE OPTIONS (SEF 42/21)**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the High Beech Visitor Centre future options.

RESOLVED- That the report be agreed.

20. **FOREST FUND OUTTURN AND EXPENDITURE PLAN**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Forest Fund Outturn and Expenditure Plan.

RESOLVED- That the report be approved.

21. **PROPERTY MATTER**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on a Property Matter.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

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

The Town Clerk informed the Committee that as the Committee was no longer Quorate in accordance with Standing Order 36 (3) the formal meeting would be dissolved.

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

There were no urgent items considered in the non-public session.

The meeting ended at 1.30 pm

Chairman

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