

<b>Committee(s)</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Epping Forest and Commons	21/11/2022
Epping Forest Consultative Group	TBC
<b>Subject:</b> Epping Forest – Assistant Director’s Update (SEF 31/22)	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	<b>2, 5, 11 &amp; 12</b>
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>If so, how much?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	<b>City’s Cash Local Risk</b>
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?</b>	<b>Y</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Juliemma McLoughlin, Executive Director Environment Department	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Paul Thomson – Superintendent of Epping Forest	

### **Summary**

The purpose of this report is to summarise Epping Forest’s activities between August and September 2022. Reflecting the Chairman’s guidance, the Assistant Directors report is being presented in a shorter format but retaining the essential information for Members, with a dashboard style in development for future presentation. Further data streams will be added to subsequent reports.

Of particular note was an end to the high temperature and low rainfall character of the summer with a series of thunderstorms across late August and early September, marking the end to some 86 fires in the Forest between mid- June and the end of August. This report contains an update on Avian Influenza and this information will be verbally updated at Committee.

Completion of the Small Raised Reservoirs works at Birch Hall Park, together with the creation of ‘leaky’ dams downstream to retard peak flows in local streams

### **Recommendation(s)**

Members are asked to:

- Note the report

## Main Report

### Budgets, income and expenditure

1. Agenda item non public, Epping Forest and Commons Finance Report contains all current information for Members and therefore is not included here
2. Long term outstanding debts have been reduced significantly over the last twelve months, with almost all outstanding sums being property related (wayleaves). Work to resolve these is articulated in Wayleaves project and recruitment of Wayleaves Officer, also dependant on TOM.
3. **Car Parking Income** – With a full year of activity, with Phase 2 spaces coming onstream in November 2021/22, the 2022/23 income performance has continued to exceed the 2021/22 introductory year. Income for August 2022 was £42,231, up 20.9% compared to £34,926, while September 2022 was £40,229, up 29.2%, compared to £31,123. In both months, the majority of income being derived from Pay & Display activity largely using the RINGO™ application.
4. **Sport Income** - With total income of £52,739.07 for August and £56,987.56 at Chingford Golf Course for September, play across 2022 continued to reflect a strong position compared to pre-pandemic levels.
5. **Sustainability-** Further planned projects are being developed to increase efficiency include increased insulation, boiler replacement and battery storage for energy generated through existing solar panels at the Warren.
6. **Waste Disposal** - The 1.95% rise in Landfill Tax Disposal charges to £98.60 per tonne since April 2022 continues to be reflected in the rise in disposal charges, alongside a significant rise in fly tipping in August. These disposal costs include our own waste generated as well as that collected from litter, flytip clearance or speciality waste.
7. **Volunteering** – Volunteer hours continue to hold at around the 1,000 hours level. The October data is still being compiled before loading and will show fully in the next report.
8. **Current Lodge Occupancy** – 23 (62%) of the Forest 37 lodges are currently occupied, with 12 lodges awaiting CWP or Local investment. The Forest's second holiday let at Barn Hoppitt Lodge, Chingford went live for bookings on 26 September, with the first booking scoring maximum points on the bookings.com review.
9. **Outstanding Tree Works** – Better-than-budgeted income for this financial year is being directed toward carrying out this backlog of works through

contractors on a risk priority basis.

10. **Grazing** - A challenging year with scarcity of labour, machinery, and water resources. The Stockperson left at the beginning of February and was replaced in July which left a gap which was filled with a secondment from another department and the Grazing and Landscape officer taking on extra responsibilities. The lack of rain throughout the spring and summer vastly reduced the amount of vegetation growth across the landscape, greatest affected were the gravel bed acid grasslands in the south of the Forest which resulted in deferring the popular grazing of Wanstead Park. The bottom performing 5% of the herd were culled out in early summer to preserve enough food for the rest of the herd in slow growing conditions. This ensured we did not have to supplementary feed and took advantage of seasonally high beef prices.
11. GPS collars have continued to create efficiency savings with faster checking times through accurate locations and the low maintenance comparative to the previous buried wire system. The technology has enabled further expansion of existing grazing areas and into new desirable areas such as Furze Ground which is being grazed for the first time since the 1980's.
12. An extra 33Ha of Forest received grazing management even though several usual sites were rested. A leaky weir system created by the operations teams at Yardley Hill is supplying year-round drinking water for the cattle grazing on the site which previously had to be carted in by truck several times a week.
13. A successful Mid-tier Countryside Stewardship application in the summer will see large improvements to the winter housing for the cattle, the grant is helping to fund buildings works to reduce water and air pollution.
14. **Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)** - Natural England's current assessment places 30 of the Forest's 38 SSSI compartments in 'Favourable' or 'Unfavourable Recovering' condition.
15. **Quality Awards** - Green Flag and Green Heritage Site awards renewed 30<sup>th</sup> July 2022. Coveted Visit England 'Blue Badge' Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme (VAQAS) also renewed.
16. **Social Media** – Follower numbers on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter remain healthy. We plan to include upward/downward trends in future updates.

### **Additional Important Updates**

#### **Wildfires**

17. The Epping Forest wildfire Plan agreed with the Fire Brigades and Emergency Planning Officers was implemented from June following consistent High Fire Severity ratings, with some weeks in August being at the highest 'exceptional' rating. A total of 86 fires were recorded between 26 June and the end of

August storms. Some significant 1-hectare burns were quickly brought under control by the Fire Brigades. The London Fire Brigade received 2,600 calls on the 20 July, compared to a normal busy day of 500 call, describing the day as the busiest since the Blitz.

## Data Management

18. Epping Forest has successfully 'gone live' with its new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software CiviCRM which will administer all customer contacts, incident reports, defects, licences, events and mailings and all associated payments. This is a 'soft' go live with the aim to have all relevant workflows handled by the system by 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023.

## Planning Matters – August/September

19. **EFDC – EPF 1822/22** a revised planning application 13/15a Alderton Hill was submitted to EFDC for a care facility. This was originally refused for 106 units in 2017 by EFDC and subsequently the Planning Inspectorate on appeal. The basis was the likely significant impact upon the EFSAC. The revised application is 16% smaller at 90 units, the application cited strategic mitigation from the Local Plan as a justification for the development, however on a plan level this still lacks clarity from EFDC.
20. **LBWF – Larkswood (LBWF 222505)** a 72-dwelling development, immediately adjacent to Larkswood (up to 7 storeys), this was prior to re-submitted SANGS and AQMS documents being provided by LBWF in respect of their local plan. Natural England have informed the Conservators that they have pushed LBWF to present a SANGS toolbox for this development.
21. **EFSAC Oversight Group Meeting. This group met on the 29 September -** LBWF confirmed in the meeting that they will be signing the SAMMS agreement.
22. SANG Provision in London Boroughs – 8ha would not be applied to urban environment, as urban dwellers perception of what constitutes a 'busy' site is different from rural SANGS.
23. Newham Reg 18 Consultation coming soon.
24. Enfield Reg 19 consultation coming next year.
25. Actions from the meeting were as follows:
  - NE West Anglia to arrange a meeting with EFDC to discuss SANGs and the progress that has been made.
  - Redbridge to confirm happy with a common commencement date as the date the agreement has been through all LPA cabinets and is signed and sealed by all parties.
  - Natural England to circulate the governance agreement by the 14 of October, with any **feedback was to be received from LPAs by 28**

**October.** After this date assume that this is the final version of the Governance Agreement and there are no further legal queries.

### **Major Incidents**

26. The Epping Forest Emergency and Wildfire Plans were active during this reporting period, with additional fire watch shifts operated at peak heat periods.
27. A series of wildfowl deaths, all of which occurred within the DEFRA Higher Risk Avian Influenza Mapping area notified in November 2021, were reported to DEFRA as suspected Avian Influenza cases. The first confirmed case of Avian Influenza was recorded on 30 October 2022. Verbal update will be given by Assistant Director.

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Epping Forest Major Projects

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