

EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE
Thursday, 13 October 2022

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held at
Committee Room 3 - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Thursday, 13 October 2022
at 10.00 am

Present

Members:

Benjamin Murphy (Chairman)
George Abrahams
Alderman Prem Goyal
Deputy Madush Gupta
Jaspreet Hodgson
Gregory Lawrence
Deputy Philip Woodhouse
Verderer Michael Chapman DL
Verderer H.H. William Kennedy
Verderer Paul Morris
Verderer Nicholas Munday

Also Present

Heather Kerswell

Officers:

Sally Agass	- Natural Environment Department
Neil Chambers	- Chamberlain Department
Jacqueline Eggleston	- Natural Environment Department
Elisabeth Hannah	- Natural Environment Department
Joanne Hill	- Natural Environment Department
Jo Hurst	- Natural Environment Department
Jack Joslin	- Bridge House Estate
Blair Stringman	- Town Clerk's Department
Paul Thomson	- Natural Environment Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Deputy Graeme Doshi-Smith and Caroline Haines.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the public minutes and non-public summary of the meeting held on 11 July 2022 be approved as a correct record subject to attendance alteration.

MATTERS ARISING

The Chairman referred to the financial reporting of the charities noting the Committee continues to work with the Chamberlain as financial reporting for the Epping Forest & Commons Committee was not sufficient and should this continue, the Chairman would request this be added to the risk register.

4. ***RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE REPORT**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment concerning the risk management procedures meet the Corporate Risk Management Framework and the Charities Act 2011.

In response to a question by the Chairman, the Executive Director confirmed that a risk on the corporate register is one that had wider implications for the whole City of London Corporation, the departmental risk register would affect most, or all the department and the cross divisional risk had been added to consolidate local charities for the natural environment division.

A Member raised the issue of damage to an Iron Age Monument which was not included on the risk register. The Executive Director agreed to take this as an action and report back to the Committee.

In response to a question raised by a Member, the Executive Director noted the department had recently completed a full list of cultural heritage assets that the natural environment has within their charitable areas, but a review of the main assets has not yet taken place to check whether they should be included as a risk on the register, but work was in progress on this matter.

In response to a question raised by a Member, the Executive Director commented that they shared the concerns in relation to the loss of knowledge in skilled staff including difficulties in recruitment.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

5. ***LEVELLING UP AND REGENERATION BILL**

The Committee received a report of Remembrancer concerning an overview of the Bill as it relates to heritage and open space.

There was a discussion on the progress of the bill, with concern expressed in relation to the tumultuous political climate and increasing risks to the City Corporation which should be captured.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

6. ***EPPING FOREST - ASSISTANT DIRECTOR'S UPDATE FOR JUNE - JULY 2022 (SEF 26/22)**

The Committee received a general update report of the Executive Director of Environment. The following matters were raised:

- There had been 86 fires between June and August at Epping Forest, and tribute was made to staff and volunteers who had demonstrated dedication under difficult circumstances. Most fires were limited and thanks were also extended to the fire brigade to prevent spread to residential areas. There had been proactive volunteering and social media campaigns to help prevention. Attention had already turned to 2023, with signs commissioned. In that vein, the Committee asked for a report on the learnings from the wildfires of 2022.
- 26 September saw the opening of the first externally sponsored waymark trail at Goldings Hill. There was also a visit from the Lord Mayor to Hither Wood in memory of Sir Roger Gifford and in promotion of the work taking place at the forest.
- There was a discussion on the reduction of prosecutions for fly tipping, and challenges resulting in a backlog of court cases. A question was raised whether the City could drive a global or national campaign to push for an appropriate financial punishment and how magistrates might be engaged.
- Members were keen to see proposals on income generation as well as a separate report on bylaws and a final one on the continuing education for Chairs Clerk and Magistrates.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

7. **EPPING FOREST DEER SANCTUARY (SEF 29/22)**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment concerning proposed deer culling activity to be undertaken at the Birch Hall Park Deer Sanctuary for 2022-23.

Following discussion at Committee, it was agreed by Members to take discussion on the recommendation to 'Approve the option for the 2022/23 season reduction of 34 - 40 deer, to maintain a sustainable stocking rate of 1.5 fallow deer/acre (3.7 deer acre) across 66 acres' into Non-Public, with no decision undertaken at the meeting.

RESOLVED – That,

- a) Members approve the creation of an Epping Forest Deer Oversight Group comprising of Members and Officers to report to Committee on the annual management of deer.

8. **DEER MANAGEMENT ON BUFFER LAND**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment concerning approval for proposed deer management activity to be undertaken for Epping Forest Buffer Lands 2022-23.

Following discussion at Committee, it was agreed to take discussion on the recommendations into Non-Public with no decision undertaken at the meeting.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

9. **CREATION OF UNRESTRICTED DESIGNATED RESERVE FUND FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF THE ANCIENT TREES AT EPPING FOREST**

The Committee received a report of the interim Charity Project Accountant, Chamberlain concerning Committee approval for the proposed creation of an unrestricted designated fund for ancient tree maintenance at Epping Forest.

In response to a question raised by a Member, the Executive Director, Environment confirmed that the fund for this project would be ringfenced.

RESOLVED – That,

- a) Members approve on behalf of the Trustee the creation of an unrestricted designated fund for the maintenance of the ancient trees at Epping Forest (55,000 ancient trees).

10. **EPPING FOREST FORWARD AGENDA PLAN 2022 (SEF 27/22)**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment concerning the forward agenda plan for Epping Forest and The Commons for 2022.

RESOVLED – That, the report be noted.

11. ***EPPING FOREST ANNUAL REVIEW 2021-22 (SEF 28/22)**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment concerning a review of the year 2021-22 for Epping Forest and records progress made against its business plan objectives.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

12. ***ASSISTANT DIRECTOR'S UPDATE FOR THE COMMONS**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment concerning the Assistant Director's update for The Commons.

In response to a question raised by the Chairman, the Executive Director confirmed that payment would be applied for once winter work at Ashtead had been completed and as such no money would be lost in relation to carryover budget.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

13. **CHILTERN AND SURREY HILLS AREA OF NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB) BOUNDARY REVIEWS**

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment concerning Chilterns and Surrey Hills Area of Natural Beauty Boundary Review for decision.

The Committee was provided with a verbal update from the Chairman of the Surrey Hills Area of Natural Beauty (AONB). In response to a question raised by a Member, the Chairman of Surrey Hills AONB confirmed that Natural England were leading on the delivery of the Department for Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA's) Landscape Design Programme and although this was currently in a confidential stage, the programme would be made public in February 2023 with Natural England planning to arrange meetings with landowners in January 2023.

The Chairman suggested that in the future a single Member from the Committee be appointed to assist with the initial groundwork with local teams for the programme to be moved forward.

RESOLVED – That,

- a) Members approve further involvement in the AONB boundary revision consultation process with the current intention being 'inclusion within their boundaries' as follows:
 - i) Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common within an extended Chilterns AONB boundary.
 - ii) The Coulsdon Commons within an extended Surrey Hills AONB boundary.

14. *SENIOR OFFICER RECRUITMENT

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment concerning the retirement of a senior officer with a proposed recruitment plan.

The Chairman moved a vote of thanks to the former Assistant Director of The Commons.

The Executive Director provided a verbal update to the Committee noting that it was decided the position would not be advertised as a permanent position but would be offered as a development opportunity within the team and wider City of London Corporation and the new Assistant Director would be in post on a twelve-month assignment and would start by November.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

15. *NATURAL ENVIRONMENT CHARITY REVIEW REPORT

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment concerning actions being taken on the City of London Corporation charity review actions and timescales.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

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

There were no questions.

17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

There was no other business.

18. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED - The following matters relate to business under the remit of the Court of Common Council acting for the City Corporation as charity Trustee, to which Part VA and Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 public access to meetings provisions do not apply. The following items contain sensitive information which it is not in the best interests of the charity to consider in a public meeting (engaging similar considerations as under paragraphs 3 and 5 of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Act) and will be considered in non-public session.

19. ***CHARITIES REVIEW UPDATE**

The Committee received a report of the Managing Director of Bridge House Estates.

20. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

RESOLVED – that the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2022, be approved as an accurate record.

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

There were no questions.

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

There was no other business.

23. **TARGET OPERATING MODEL PHASE II SCHEDULE**

The Committee received a presentation from the Executive Director of Environment.

The meeting ended at 12.15pm.

Chairman

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