

Committee(s)	Dated:
Epping Forest and Commons	26/01/2023
Epping Forest Consultative Group	01/03/2023
Subject: Epping Forest – Assistant Director’s Update (SEF 01/23)	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	2, 5, 11 & 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	City’s Cash Local Risk if required
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	Y
Report of: Juliemma McLoughlin, Executive Director Environment Department	For Information
Report author: Paul Thomson – Superintendent & Assistant Director of Epping Forest	

Summary

The purpose of this report is to summarise Epping Forest’s activities between October and November 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 to summarise key data and statistics. Further data streams will be added to subsequent reports.

Of particular note was an outbreak of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 strain across five lakes in Epping Forest; a range of tree planting activities to provide a memorial to Queen Elizabeth II; alongside a planting at Giffords Wood to recognise the contribution of the late Lord Mayor Roger Gifford to the creation of Giffords Wood; and participation in the Lord Mayor’s Show with a float entitled the ‘Epping Forest – the Green Lungs of London’.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report

Main Report

Epping Forest Local Risk Financial Summary – Appendix 1

1. Appendix 1 contains graphical representation of financial data to the end of November 2022 (period 0823). These figures are Epping Local Risk only and do not include central risk elements such as City Surveyors projects.
2. The first table in appendix 1 gives actual expenditure to the end of November 2022 against whole year budget, subdivided by type and Department of Service (DOS), where CGC is Chingford Golf Club, CSS is Countryside Stewardship, WF is Wanstead Flats (football) W&W is Woodredon and Warlies and EF is all other expenditure/income at Epping Forest. This is further summarised graphically in Budget and Actuals by Type, across all these Departments of Service for this financial year.
3. Debt figures have been managed downward very significantly over the last twelve months, with longer debt periods being dominated by singular large accounts which are subject to particular focus at present and should be resolved before financial year end. Property debts are largely wayleaves and similar, administered through one system, while non-property are all other payable invoices raised by the Epping Forest office.
4. The overall financial summary at Appendix 1 shows very positive performance on income across the first 8 months, with car parking and some notable filming licences helping to exceed targets. Expenditure is depressed in some areas, particularly employees as a high number of vacancies are currently being experienced, as not all specialist roles can be effectively covered through the use of casual contracts. Plans are in place to prioritise expenditure to fleet and mechanical asset replacement and contracted works by year end.
5. All financial information shown in Appendix 2 is a subset of these Appendix 1 figures.

Epping Forest Key data – Appendix 2

6. **Car Parking Income (table 1)** - with Phase 2 spaces coming onstream in November 2021, the 2022/23 income performance has continued to exceed the 2021/22 introductory year apart from November 22 (the first month with comparable numbers of paid spaces across both years)
7. **Licencing (table 2)** - Licencing continues to do well this financial year, particularly in Filming and Photography. This is an unpredictable income stream, but work continues to focus on growing this area where possible.

8. **Golf Income (table 3)** - With total income of £20,790.88 at Chingford Golf Course for November, play across 2022 continued to reflect a strong position compared to pre-pandemic levels.
9. **Energy Consumption (table 4)**- Further planned projects are being developed to increase efficiency include increased insulation and boiler replacement through central projects and local investment into battery storage for energy generated through existing solar panels at the Warren. Consumption is given in kWh to give proper comparison across years, avoiding fluctuations in unit cost.
10. **Waste Disposal (table 5)** - 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 fluctuations in fly tipping experienced. These disposal costs include our own waste generated as well as that collected from litter, fly tip clearance or speciality waste.
11. **Fly tips (table 6)** – General household waste continues to dominate the fly tips experienced across Epping Forest.
12. **Staff Vacancies (table 7)** - This pie chart shows FTE posts in current structure (not proposed structure post-TOM phase 2) filled either by permanent or fixed term contract, versus vacant. Posts filled with casual or temporary staff are shown as vacant. Vacancies have risen with the secondment of Geoff Sinclair, Operations Manager to Assistant Director of Commons.
13. **Volunteering (table 8)** – Although variable, volunteer hours continue to average at around 1,000 hours per month level.
14. **Current Lodge Occupancy** – at the end of November 2022 23 (62%) of the Forest 37 lodges were occupied, with 12 lodges awaiting CWP or Local investment. These figures do not include facilities at Field Studies Centre High Beach, or the Warren House.
15. **Visitor Centre Numbers (table 10)** - Visitor numbers mirrored previous year trends, with decreases as weather declined and daylight hours shrunk.
16. **Outstanding Tree Works** – Better-than-budgeted income for this financial year is being directed toward carrying out this backlog of works both in house and through contractors on a risk priority basis.
17. **Grazing (table 12)** - The first calf was born on 15th October and 30 in total have been born so far, 9 heifers (female) / 21 steers (male).
18. A group of cows grazing Furze ground have been given extended access to Loughton Golf Course using the GPS collars.
19. **Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (table 13)** - Natural England's current assessment places 30 of the Forest's 38 SSSI compartments in

‘Favourable’ or ‘Unfavourable Recovering’ condition.

20. **Quality Awards** - Green Flag and Green Heritage Site awards renewed 30th July 2022. Coveted Visit England ‘Blue Badge’ Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme (VAQAS) also renewed.
21. **Social Media** – Follower numbers on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter remain healthy and all show a small increase since last report.
22. Further tables planned for future reports include current status of cases proceeding through prosecution stages, detail of tenancies and wayleaves and football play statistics.

Additional Important Updates

Queens Green Canopy

23. In May 2022, Epping Forest was designated as one of 70 ancient woodlands forming part of the Queens Green Canopy to mark Queen Elizabeth II’s Platinum Jubilee. Following her passing in September, his Majesty the King agreed to extend the scheme to allow people to plant trees in her memory. A range of tree planting activities have been undertake including an oak tree for Epping Green planted by deputy Lord Lieutenant of Essex Hugh Pegrum and a new memorial of 70 white birch at Wanstead Flats mirroring the earlier Coronation Grove planted in 1953. There was also a planting in October at Giffords Wood to recognise the contribution of the late Lord Mayor Roger Gifford to the creation of Giffords wood and participation in the Lord Mayor’s Show with a float entitled the ‘Epping Forest – the Green Lungs of London’.

Planning Matters – October/November

24. Comments were made by the Conservators to the following planning applications:
 - EFDC225722 – Loughton Library. The Conservators were supportive of the retention of the public facility. However, the Local Plan had suggested 20 dwellings capacity for the site and the application was for 38. The site is very near the SAC and the proposed has no private amenity space.
 - EFDC246122 – Mossfield Nursery Abridge. 5 dwellings. Comments made questioning number of visits, did not address SAC in any part of application.
 - EFDC242222 – 86 Westbury Way, Buckhurst Hill, IG9 5PW. 6 x dwellings within 200m of SAC. No HRA provided, which is counter to EFDCs proposed Local Plan conditions.
 - No objections made in LBWF or LBR during this period.

Major Incidents

25. Sadly, following notification by DEFRA in Autumn 2021 of Higher Risk mapping for Avian Influenza across waterbodies in the south of Epping Forest, unusual behaviour amongst individual wildfowl, sometimes followed by death, was noted across five lakes in the Forest including Connaught Water; Eagle Pond; Hollow Ponds starting in late September 2022. Between 15

October 2022 and 5 January 2023, 67 wildfowl carcasses have been collected by Epping Forest staff for specialist-controlled waste disposal.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Epping Forest Local Risk Financial Summary

Appendix 2 – Epping Forest Key Data

Appendix 3 – Epping Forest Project Status

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