

EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE
Thursday, 26 January 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held at
Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Thursday, 26 January 2023 at
11.00 am

Present

Members:

Benjamin Murphy (Chairman)
Deputy Graeme Doshi-Smith (Deputy Chairman)
George Abrahams
Alderman Prem Goyal
Deputy Madush Gupta
Jaspreet Hodgson
Gregory Lawrence
Deputy Philip Woodhouse
Verderer Michael Chapman DL
Verderer William Kennedy
Verderer Nicholas Munday

Officers:

Sally Agass	- Natural Environment Department
Deborah Cluett	- Comptroller & City Solicitor
Jacqueline Eggleston	- Natural Environment Department
Elisabeth Hannah	- Natural Environment Department
Joanne Hill	- Natural Environment Department
Jo Hurst	- Natural Environment Department
Juliemma McLoughlin	- Natural Environment Department
Tim Munday	- Natural Environment Department
Simon Owen	- Chamberlain's Department
Geoff Sinclair	- Natural Environment Department
Blair Stringman	- Town Clerk's Department
Paul Thomson	- Natural Environment Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Andrew McMurtrie and Verderer Paul Morris.

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

There were no declarations.

3. MINUTES

3.1 **To agree the public minutes and non-public summary of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee meeting held on 13 October 2022**

RESOLVED – That, the public and non-public summary minutes of the meeting held on 13 October be agreed as a correct record.

3.2 **To agree the public minutes and non-public summary of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee meeting held on 21 November 2022**

RESOLVED – That, the public and non-public summary of the minutes of the meeting held on 21 November be agreed as a correct record.

4. ***DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment concerning an update on matters relating to the work of the Natural Environment Department since the last Committee in December 2022.

In response to questions raised by a Member, the Executive Director noted lower than expected car parking income in the Commons. The reason why income was lower than expected was due to local on street parking availability free of charge. Members were informed that Officers would investigate how the space could be used in the future to derive the best outcomes for the charity. Members were also informed that the department was open to potential commercial sponsorship options for reducing costs concerning dog faeces waste bags.

The Chairman noted the Committee's appreciation and recognised the work of volunteers, it was requested that Officers consider ways in which volunteers could be celebrated. The Executive Director confirmed there were many financial benefits to the Forest from volunteers that were currently not quantified, and this was a piece of work the department would consider moving forward.

In response to a question raised by a Member, the Executive Director provided a brief update on the Target Operating Model (TOM), confirming the TOM was originally agreed by the Court of Common Council in 2020, following Lord Lisvane's Governance Review. It was noted that the purpose of the TOM was not solely about delivering a savings programme. It was also noted that the TOM had been agreed and supported by the relevant Committees and following approval at Corporate Services Committee on 17 January, formal consultation with staff began on 25 January 2023.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

5. ***ASSISTANT DIRECTOR'S UPDATE (SEF 01/23)**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment concerning Epping Forest activities between October and November 2022.

In response to a question raised by a Member concerning avian influenza (bird flu), the Executive Director, Environment noted that due to ongoing pressures, the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), were unable to confirm promptly that avian flu was in circulation. The Committee was informed that there were also issues about lab capacity for testing. Moving

forward, the Executive Director said lessons had been learned such as understanding the processes to identify these problems as soon as possible and better ways of understanding waste streams were needed. Members paid tribute to volunteers who assisted in helping with the outbreak of avian flu. It was agreed that a lesson learnt update to be brought back to a future Committee meeting for discussion.

In response to a question raised by the Chairman, the Executive Director noted concerns related to the sustained increase in fly-tipping, which significant financial implications for the Epping Forest charity in particular. The Executive Director confirmed that officers are looking to carry out further collaborative work with Local Authorities, which may include CCTV and tracking Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) data. A further report would be brought forward on this matter.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

6. ***OPERATIONAL FINANCE PROGRESS REPORT (PERIOD 8 APRIL - NOVEMBER) 2022/23 - EPPING FOREST AND COMMONS**

The Committee received a report of the Chamberlain concerning an update on the operation finance position as of April-November 2022/23 for the Epping Forest and Commons Committee.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

7. **RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE REPORT**

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment concerning risk management procedures in place within the Environment Department.

In response to a question raised by the Chairman, the Executive Director, Environment, noted that risks currently either reside on the corporate risk register, the departmental risk register, or the Committee risk register. Members were informed that the cross-divisional risk register is reviewed in detail by the Open Spaces & City Gardens Committee. The Chairman challenged this framework, as it resulted in the highest level of risk not being reported at charity level. The Executive Director Environment agreed to amend the framework to ensure that all risks related to each charity were included in charity level reporting for each committee going forward, with the higher departmental or corporate risks also appearing on the relevant registers.

In response to a question raised by a Member, the Executive Director, Environment noted that in Epping Forest, under the former dog control orders, there were fixed numbers of dogs that could be accompanying a single dog walker in each local authority area. It was noted that colleagues in Hampstead Heath were experimenting with a licencing scheme and colleagues would await the outcome of this pilot before considering implementations for Epping Forest. In the Commons, Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) were used.

RESOLVED – That Members,

- i) Agree on behalf of the City of London Corporation as a Trustee, that the registers appended to the report satisfactorily set out the key risks to the charities and the appropriate systems are in place to identify and mitigate risks.

8. LICENCES, SPORTS, WAYLEAVES AND PRODUCE FEES AND CHARGES FOR 2023/24 SEF 02/23

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment concerning proposals for setting fees and charges for activities in Epping Forest for the forthcoming financial year 2023/24.

In response to a question raised by a Member, the Executive Director, Environment agreed to bring back the full operating cost relating to car parking charges in Epping forest, to include staff resources who have to open and close each gate daily.

In response to a question raised by a Member, the Chairman confirmed that ongoing conversations were taking place between the City of London Corporation and The Football Association regarding funding for the Parklife project, it was noted that this would also be considered by the Sports Strategy Group.

In response to a question raised by the Chairman, the Chamberlain agreed to confirm if the car parking income generated from 2021 and 2022 was more than the 12% cuts equivalent or less and if more, the Chamberlain would confirm how the income had been spent.

RESOLVED – That Members,

- i) Agree the proposed licence fees and sports charges for 2023/24 as itemised in Appendix 2.
- ii) Note the income generated in 2021/22 from charged activities in Epping Forest.

9. WANSTEAD PARK PONDS PROJECT UNIQUE PROJECT IDENTIFIER: 12058

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment concerning solutions that fulfil both the City's statutory duties and other works in the Wanstead Parkland Plan contributing to the removal of the Heritage Risk status.

In response to a question raised by the Chairman, the City Surveyor noted that this project was to address the potential risk of a large raised reservoir overflowing, by strengthening the banks around ornamental waters at Wanstead Park. It was also noted that the water features formed an important part of the heritage features of the site. Members were informed that the City Surveyor is to reinstate the pump house beside ornamental water which would pump water from the River Roding into the ornamental water during the winter

months, should the Environment Agency approve the license. Members were additionally informed that the man-made, clay-lined ponds would continue to naturally leak and, in the event of another long warm summer, the ponds would dry out again resulting in wildlife concerns.

The Chairman requested that all key projects aligned to the Committee should have GAANT charts to allow Members to track key deadlines and progress. The Executive Director Environment agreed.

RESOLVED – That Members,

- i) Agree to shift the project pathway from complex to regular.
- ii) Agree that recommended Option 2 (to carry out panel engineer recommendations and reinstate and extend the up-cascade pumping station) is approved.
- iii) Agree that additional budget of £333 500 is approved to reach the next Gateway.
- iv) Agree that a Costed Risk Provision (CRP) of £40 000 is approved at Gateway 4, to be drawn down via delegation to Chief Officer for the fee/investigation items specifically identified in the appended Risk Register, funded by City Cash.
- v) Note the total estimated cost of the project at £1.15 million (excluding risk).
- vi) Agree that Gateway 5 is delegated to the Executive Director, Environment.

10. WANSTEAD PARK - SHONKS MILL FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME

The Committee noted the request but resolved not to make a voluntary financial contribution at this stage.

11. THE COMMONS: LICENCES, SPORTS, WAYLEAVES AND PRODUCE FEES AND CHARGES FOR 2023/24

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment concerning proposals for a price increase of 5% in 2023/24 on charges levied for licensed activities (excluding filming), produce sales and formal sports

RESOLVED – That Court Members,

- i) Note the income generated in 2021/22 from changed activities in The Commons.
- ii) Agree the proposed licence fees and sports charges for 2023/24 as itemised in Appendix 2.
- iii) Note that car park changes will be further reviewed in 2023/24.

12. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

There were no questions.

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

There were no urgent business.

14. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED – That, 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.

15. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

15.1 **To agree the non-public minutes of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee meeting held on 13 October 2022**

RESOLVED – That the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

15.2 **To agree the non-public minutes of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee meeting held on 21 November 2022**

RESOLVED – That the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

16. **GRANT OF EASEMENT**

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment.

17. **TENANCY TENDER ARRANGEMENTS**

The Committee received a verbal update of the Executive Director, Environment.

18. **EPPING FOREST LAND AGENT**

The Committee received a verbal update of the Executive Director, Environment.

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

There were no questions.

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

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting ended at 1.40 pm

Chairman

Contact Officer: Blair Stringman
Blair.Stringman@cityoflondon.gov.uk