

Committee(s)	Dated:
Epping Forest and Commons	16/03/2023
Epping Forest Consultative Group	21/06/2023
Subject: Epping Forest – Assistant Director’s Update (SEF 06/23)	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 December 2022 and January 2023. The Assistant Directors report is presented in a revised format that retains essential information for Members, using a dashboard style to summarise key data and statistics. Further data streams will be added to subsequent reports.

Of particular note was good progress with local risk spending to profile alongside improved income performance; procurement to reduce the amount of outstanding hazardous trees; the delay of the Countryside Stewardship bid for Copped Hall to provide more time to complete the additional requirements associated with the Forest #2 Stewardship Bid and completion of the LiDAR historic features overflight.

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 January 2023 (period 1023). 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 January 2023 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, a reduction in debt by £24,839.95 since the last report. 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 year so far, 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. Budget pressures such as the purchase of fleet, the use of contractors to complete outstanding works and investment in property in particular have required additional investment. Managers are confident of an balanced budget outturn by financial 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)** – Car parking over the winter months has been slightly lower than in the previous year but remains on target to achieve budget for year end.

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)** – Income is reduced for December and January as is expected for Golf. Yearly income totals show a healthy outturn against budget.
9. **Energy Consumption (table 4)**- A change of reporting systems has caused a delay in information being received. This will be caught up in future reports. The Epping Forest team are investing in battery storage for our existing large solar arrays to utilise power during peak periods, avoiding the loss of value by channelling excess power to the National Grid at a low tariff.
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. This data will be utilised to monitor the impact of trials of new time slot booking and identification requirements at Household Waste Recycling Centres in Essex, which began on 13 March 2023.
12. **Fly tips (table 6)** – General household waste continues to dominate the fly tips experienced across Epping Forest.
13. **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. The recent resignation of our Stockperson gives another small rise in vacancies this period.
14. **Volunteering (table 8)** – Although variable, volunteer hours continue to average at around 1,000 hours per month level. There is often a lag in hours work and data recorded, so recent months will be updated in future reports.
15. **Current Lodge Occupancy** – with the loss of Stockperson and Head of Operations 14 lodges are currently empty. Refurbishment works, including removal of known asbestos containing materials are being undertaken from local risk and Forest Fund, but outcome of TOM is awaited prior to making decisions on future use. These figures do not include facilities at Field Studies Centre High Beach, or the Warren House.
16. **Visitor Centre Numbers (table 10)** - Visitor numbers mirrored previous year trends, with decreases as weather declined and daylight hours shrunk.
17. **Outstanding Tree Works** – Better-than-budgeted income for this financial year is being directed towards addressing the backlog of works through the

procurement of contractors on a risk priority basis. Graph show total number of tasks, not trees, and although a number have now moved to over a year old, the total number is reducing.

18. **Grazing (table 12)** - Planning permission has been granted for a hay shed at Great Gregories, a second application will be submitted shortly for further buildings which are part of grant funded works under Countryside Stewardship.
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. Last updated in Jun '22.
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, learning sessions, detail of tenancies and wayleaves and football play statistics but are delayed due to available resource at present.
23. **Operations** – Work has been principally focused on tree safety and vegetation against property responsibilities, alongside a major procurement exercise to commence work on 517 priority hazardous trees and tender the Epping Forest Tree Inspection programme.
24. **Heritage** – External contractors have been commissioned to undertake a full Light Imaging, Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) overflight of Epping Forest and the Buffer Land which will collection information on poorly understood heritage features as part of the Charity's Section 7(3) duties in the Epping Forests Acts 1878 and 1880.
25. **Learning** – The learning team are leading a new 'Climate Action Pathways in Education' (CAPE) alliance, bringing together teachers and researchers to develop best practice in climate education. The alliance will work together to change today's education for tomorrow's climate, equipping people with the knowledge and skills to take climate action and protect the environment.
26. The learning programme has engaged 3,026 school students at Epping Forest (April 2022 – February 2023). The programme has reached schools from some of London's most deprived boroughs, including Tower Hamlets, Enfield, Newham, Hackney and Haringey. Schools took part in facilitated workshops that support the National Curriculum and boost fusion skills, wellbeing and connection to nature.

27. Over January and February, Newham school students took part in Wellbeing Workshops at Wanstead Flats, and our Iron Age workshop at Barh Hoppitt was very popular with Hackney and Waltham Forest schools.

28.

Epping Forest school visits: number of students and boroughs of origin	Newham	Islington	Hackney	Waltham Forest	Haringey
January	90		120	180	13
February		18	30		26

29. The team have welcomed students from a local pupil referral unit. The team have been working with a Newham charity to engage children and families with West Ham Park; building on this collaboration, they have organised three facilitated trips to Epping Forest in the Easter holidays.

Additional Important Updates

Projects

30. **CSS** - An application to the government's Countryside Stewardship (CS) grant scheme is being prepared for the second half of the Forest, this follows on from the first CS agreement started in 2020. The works cover restoration of nationally important habitats, preservation of historic features and assisting visitors to navigate the Forest. A public consultation on the proposals is open until 10th March 2023. Work to a further CS bid for Copped Hall Park has been postponed due to competing pressures associated with the Carbon Storage Project.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Epping Forest Local Risk Financial Summary

Appendix 2 – Epping Forest Key Data

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