

EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE
Thursday, 16 March 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held at
Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Thursday, 16 March 2023 at
11.00 am

Present

Members:

Benjamin Murphy (Chairman)
Deputy Graeme Doshi-Smith (Deputy Chairman)
Caroline Haines
Jaspreet Hodgson
Verderer Michael Chapman DL
Verderer William Kennedy
Verderer Nicholas Munday

Officers:

| | |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Sally Agass | - Natural Environment Department |
| Jako Beatrix | - Chamberlain's Department |
| Neil Chambers | - Chamberlain's Department |
| Deborah Cluett | - Comptroller & City Solicitor |
| Jacqueline Eggleston | - Natural Environment Department |
| Elisabeth Hannah | - Natural Environment Department |
| Clem Harcourt | - Chamberlain's Department |
| Joanne Hill | - Natural Environment Department |
| Richard Holt | - Town Clerk's Department |
| Jo Hurst | - Natural Environment Department |
| Jack Joslin | - Bridge House Estates |
| Tim Munday | - Natural Environment Department |
| Simon Owen | - Chamberlain's Department |
| Geoff Sinclair | - Natural Environment Department |
| Paul Thomson | - Natural Environment Department |

1. **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies.

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 and non-public summary of the Epping Forest Committee minutes and summary of the meeting held on 26 January 2023 be approved as a correct record of the meeting.

4. **MATTERS ARISING**

4.1 **Action Log**

Members received a report of the Town Clerk concerning Matters Arising.

The Chairman remarked that the report was in draft format and would be updated by Officers.

2023-4 Car Parking Income: Deadline extended to May 2023

The Committee received an update on the income generated from parking charges from the Chamberlain.

The Director noted that Chamberlain would prepare a report showing historic trends over the past 5 years on income. The report would be made available for discussions at the next meeting. This should include recommendations, for example, about what to do with unused car parks in the Commons. The reporting is expected to include granular level information, including land and property at charity level.

2023-5 HM King Charles III Coronation: Closed

The Superintendent of The Commons updated Members on plans to host a volunteer workshop as part of The Big Help Out on 8th May.

2023-8 Risk Register: Deadline extended to May 2023

The Committee requested that the updated charity level Risk Registers be presented at the Committee in May.

RESOLVED - That, the report be noted.

5. **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 Division of the Environment Department since the last Committee in January 2023.

The Chairman commended the Interim Director, noting her last day as the 31st March 2023. The Chairman also remarked that an offer had been extended to a candidate for a permanent Director's position.

In response to a question from Members, the Executive Director discussed the contents of the report, emphasising that the work done by the operational property review group in relation to land assets and identification of ownership and covenants had been completed. The Director noted that work has commenced on the property assets which would be linked to corporate and operational property and reported to the committee when completed.

Members discussed strategies for prioritising the project for the outstanding 300 assets within twelve (12) months.

Members discussed the output of the Committee's Away Day in February to agree next steps. The Chair suggested perhaps setting up a small working

group on governance, which could include one member from the consultative groups or the local government to review recommendations from the report. Recommendations would be brought back to the May meeting.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

6. **ASSISTANT DIRECTOR'S UPDATE**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment concerning an update on Epping Forest's activities between December 2022 and January 2023.

Members noted that good progress was recorded concerning the spending profile and improved income performance. It was also noted that the Avian flu deaths had stopped and there was no record of any escalation in number of deaths for a period of two months.

The Committee remarked on resources, restrictions on recruitment and the additional support required to address the increasing number of hazardous trees in the forest. Members noted the positive reactions to Protecting the Bluebells campaign.

The Committee expressed concerns at Essex County Council's nine (9) months pilot scheme where a prebooking system was introduced to access any of the recycling centres or the dumps or tips as colloquially known. This is likely to see increased fly-tipping in Epping Forest, with resource implications for the charity. The Chairman has made representations to the Cabinet Member at Essex County Council and as a result, Epping Forest has been engaged as a key monitoring partner.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

7. **EPPING FOREST TRUSTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022**

The Committee received a Joint report of the Chamberlain and Executive Director, Environment concerning the Trustee's Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year ended 31 March 2022 for Epping Forest (charity registration number 232990).

The Committee was informed that the accounts were signed by the chairman and Deputy Chairman of Finance Committee, the Chamberlain and the auditors and were filed by the Charity Commission by the deadline of the 31st of January 2023.

In response to questions from a Member, the Executive Director explained the climate action strategy is a significant piece of work for the corporation and one which will be incorporated in the corporation's long-term strategy.

The Committee suggested that the National Environment Department review the report.

The Chairman recommended a review of the Delegation of Authority for approval of the report to be added to the action log.

RESOLVED - That Members,

- a) Note the Trustee's Annual Report and Financial Statements for the 2021/22 Financial Year.

8. **DRAFT HIGH-LEVEL BUSINESS PLAN 2023/24 - ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment regarding the high-level Business Plan for the Environment Department for 2023/24.

The Committee noted that the draft high level plan contained only top strategic plans which was set out in a corporately agreed format.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

9. **ASSISTANT DIRECTOR'S UPDATE**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment concerning activities across the Commons between December 2022 and January 2023. Reflecting the Chairman's guidance, the Assistant Directors report was presented in a shorter format but retained the essential information for Members, with a dashboard style to summarise key data and statistics.

It was noted that further refinement of the report will be made to better reflect progress on delivering the respective management and risk plan.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

10. **ASHTEAD COMMON TRUSTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022**

The Committee received a Joint report of the Chamberlain and Executive Director, Environment concerning the Trustee's Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year ended 31 March 2022 for Ashtead Common (charity registration number 1051510) which were presented for information in the format required by the Charity Commission

RESOLVED – That, the reported be noted.

11. **BURNHAM BEECHES AND STOKE COMMON TRUSTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022**

The Committee received a Joint report of the Chamberlain and Executive Director, Environment. The Trustee's Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year ended 31 March 2022 for Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common (charity registration number 232987) which were presented for information in the format required by the Charity Commission.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

12. **WEST WICKHAM COMMON AND SPRING PARK WOOD, COULSDON AND OTHER COMMONS TRUSTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022**

The Committee received a Joint report of the Chamberlain and Executive Director, Environment concerning the Trustee's Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year ended 31 March 2022 for West Wickham Common and Spring Park Wood, Coulsdon and Other Commons (charity registration numbers 232988 and 232989) which were presented for information in the format required by the Charity Commission

The Committee discussed the Trustee's Annual Report and Financial Statements for the 2021/22 Financial and its role in discussions related to non-Epping Forest issues. It was clarified that Verderers may only vote on Epping Forest matters.

RESOLVED - that the report be noted.

13. **EXTENSION OF EXISTING PSPOS AT BURNHAM BEECHES**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment concerning an update on proposals to extend existing Public Space Protection Orders for reducing antisocial dog behaviours at Burnham Beeches. The Committee was supportive of the recommendation to commence consultation on the extension, but due to having become inquorate was unable to agree the recommendation.

RESOLVED – That, the decision be taken under urgency procedures

14. **EPPING FOREST AND THE COMMONS MEDIA COVERAGE**

The Committee received a report of the Media Officer concerning a summary of media coverage between July 2022 to February 2023.

The Committee commended the positive effort of the media team and the Chairman requested for a media coverage forward plan to be presented in May.

RESOLVED - that the report be noted.

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

There were no questions.

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

There were no urgent items.

17. **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.

18. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

That due to having become inquorate the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2023 be agreed at the next meeting.

19. **MATTERS ARISING**

The Committee received a report of the Town Clerk.

19.1 **Action Log**

The Committee noted the report.

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

There were no questions.

21. **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 1.20pm.

Chairman

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