

Committee(s): Epping Forest and Commons Committee – For Decision Epping Forest Consultative Group – For Discussion	Dated: 23/11/2023 28/02/2024
Subject: Revised Terms of Reference for Epping Forest Consultative Group (SEF 23/23)	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	4, 10, 11, 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	£0
What is the source of Funding?	
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	n/a
Report of: Bob Roberts, Interim Executive Director Environment	For Decision
Report author: Jo Hurst, Business Manager Epping Forest	

Summary

The Epping Forest Consultative Committee was founded in January 2018, and since then has met three times a year to discuss matters of Epping Forest management and policy, which have been conveyed to the Epping Forest and Commons Committee to help inform decision-making.

A series of changes to the Terms of Reference are required to reflect recent administrative changes within the City of London, as well as learning points from applications and admissions processes and new stakeholder engagement proposals adopted by Committee in July 2023. These updates include the new name, Epping Forest Consultative Group.

Recommendation(s)

Epping Forest and Commons Committee Members are asked to:

- Approve the adoption of revised Terms of Reference for the Epping Forest Consultative Group that reflect both the recommendations of the Lisvane Report and the Stakeholder Engagement report adopted by your Committee on 13 July 2023

Main Report

Background

1. The Epping Forest Consultative Committee met for the first time in January 2018, following an application process in Autumn 2017 involving membership organisations interested in the use and management of Epping Forest.
2. Since that time the Consultative Committee has met three times per year. The attendance was reviewed, according to the Terms of Reference, in early 2021.
3. Lord Lisvane's review of the City Corporation's Committee Structure between 2020 and 2021 resulted in a series of changes to Governance arrangements, including the devolution of the administration of various Consultative Committees from the Governance and Members Services Team in the Town Clerks Department to the relevant local service Departments. The final recommendations were agreed by the Court of Common Council in December 2021.
4. The Epping Forest and Commons Committee also adopted a series of 14 recommendations around the Stakeholder Engagement process on 13 July 2023 (see Appendix 1).
5. An update to the Terms of Reference also presents an opportunity for clarification around aspects of the admissions process.

Current Position

6. Revised Terms of Reference for the Epping Forest and Commons Committee are included at Appendix 2.
7. Key changes include a change to the group's name reflecting the decision of the Court of Common Council, an update to management and administration and additional clarification of the three-yearly admissions process.
8. A report on Stakeholder Engagement adopted by the Epping Forest and Commons Committee of 13 July 2023, considered 14 areas for modernisation and improvement, making six specific recommendations for the Epping Forest and Commons Committee:
 - a. The Chairman to appoint a Verderer to Chair the meetings on a trial basis. The Chair will rotate between the Verderers.
 - b. Reduction from three meetings each year to two, subject to a Charity Review recommendation to introduce an annual review meeting to bring the total number of consultative meetings back to a total of 3).
 - c. Retaining the hybrid format of virtual and physical representation

- d. Replacement of detailed minutes with action logs, which would be made transparent to EF&CC
 - e. Commence work planning to improve the diversity and inclusion within the group.
 - f. Conduct a skills audit of group members to allow the experience and skills of individual members and organisations to be fully leveraged by the charity.
9. Recommendation 1 - the appointment of the EFCG Chair is clarified at paragraph 16 of the Terms of Reference
10. Recommendation 2 – is confirmed at paragraph 12 of the Terms of Reference, and proposals for a Public Annual Review Meeting is subject to the recommendations of the current Charity Review of Epping Forest.
11. Recommendation 3 – the retention of hybrid meeting arrangements introduced in 2021 and improved through uploading to the video sharing platform YouTube™ is consolidated at paragraph 16 of the Terms of Reference.
12. Recommendation 4 – the transfer to simplified action logs from detailed minutes is addressed at paragraph 3 of the Terms of Reference.
13. Recommendation 5 – work to improve the diversity and inclusion of EFCG member groups is outlined at paragraph 30 of the Terms of Reference.
14. Recommendation 6 – regarding skills audits of EFCG members is added at a new paragraph 37 of the Terms of Reference.
15. A further recommendation raised at the last EFCG regarding the improved integration of EFCG member's oversight of the three Epping Forest and Commons Committees, that are not preceded by an EFCG meeting, is included at a new paragraph 6 of the Terms of Reference.

Options for Epping Forest and Commons Committee

16. **Option 1** – Adopt the updated Terms of Reference for the Epping Forest Consultative Committee **This option is recommended.**

Proposals

17. The group is no longer referred to as the Epping Forest Consultative Committee, but instead the Epping Forest Consultative Group.
18. Paragraphs 15-18 reflect changes in management, with the Group now administered directly by Environment Officers (no longer Town Clerk's) and meetings Chaired by Assistant Director Environment (previously known as Superintendent Epping Forest). Chairman and Deputy Chairman are invited but no longer obliged to attend.

19. Paragraph 26 clarifies information to be provided by applicant organisation expressing interest in taking part each three years.
20. Four paragraphs are amended, and 2 new paragraphs added to reflect the changes implemented by the Stakeholder engagement proposals adopted by Committee in July 2023.
21. Discussion at the Epping Forest Consultative Group recognised that changes were small and sought reassurance that meetings would continue with a wide a range of groups with specific interest in the Forest as possible.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

22. Strategic implications – The continued attendance at the Epping Forest Consultative Committee supports the Corporate Plan items 4, 10, 11 and 12.
23. Financial and resource implications – The resources required for room hire light refreshments, the publication of agendas; reports and minutes are from Epping Forest Local Risk.
24. Legal implications – The Epping Forest Consultative Group is a consultative group, rather than a formal statutory committee, and its constitution is not subject to specific legislative provisions. The Epping Forest and Commons Committee is therefore able to vary its Terms of Reference and membership, as necessary.
25. Prior to exercising certain powers under the City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Act 2018 the Corporation as Conservators must consult such persons or bodies as it thinks appropriate, and the arrangements as set out in this report would generally satisfy that requirement.
26. Since the Consultative Committee/Group was first established, it has been confirmed that later iterations of the Members' Code of Conduct do not apply to the membership of consultative groups, so the Terms of Reference reflect this.
27. Risk implications – This is a revision of an existing Consultative Group structure and is therefore 'business as usual' and considered low risk.
28. Equalities implications – Equalities statements and policies are incorporated into these terms.
29. Climate implications – The UK Government has binding targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and hence global warming by 2050, with the Consultative Group acting as a key factor in the engagement and protection of the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) at Epping Forest which is directly affected by climate warming.
30. Security implications – None

31. Charity implications – Epping Forest is a registered charity (number 232990). Charity Law obliges Members to ensure that the decisions they take in relation to the Charity must be taken in the best interests of the Charity.

Conclusion

32. The Consultative Group has been a valuable asset to communication at Epping Forest since its foundation in 2018.

33. Necessary amendments following administrative changes at the City of London have been incorporated into these updated Terms of Reference, with the opportunity also taken to clarify selection criteria and processes in readiness for the next review.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Report to Epping Forest & Commons Committee
- Appendix 2 – Epping Forest Consultative Committee - Terms of Reference – Full Revised October 2022

Jo Hurst

Business Manager Epping Forest

E: jo.hurst@cityoflondon.gov.uk