

Committee(s)	Dated:
Epping Forest and Commons Epping Forest Consultative Group	21/3/24 19/6/24
Subject: Epping Forest – Assistant Director’s Update (SEF 08/24)	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?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	N/A
Report of: Bob Roberts, Interim Executive Director Environment Department	For Information
Report author: Jacqueline Eggleston – Assistant Director (Superintendent) of Epping Forest (Interim)	

Summary

The purpose of this report is to summarise Epping Forest’s progress against business plan objectives since October 2023 along with updates of note.

Of particular note, recruitment to new posts and existing vacancies is progressing well, a range of new fleet vehicles have been purchased to create working efficiencies and new gates installed across the Warlies estate to improve accessibility.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Key performance measures

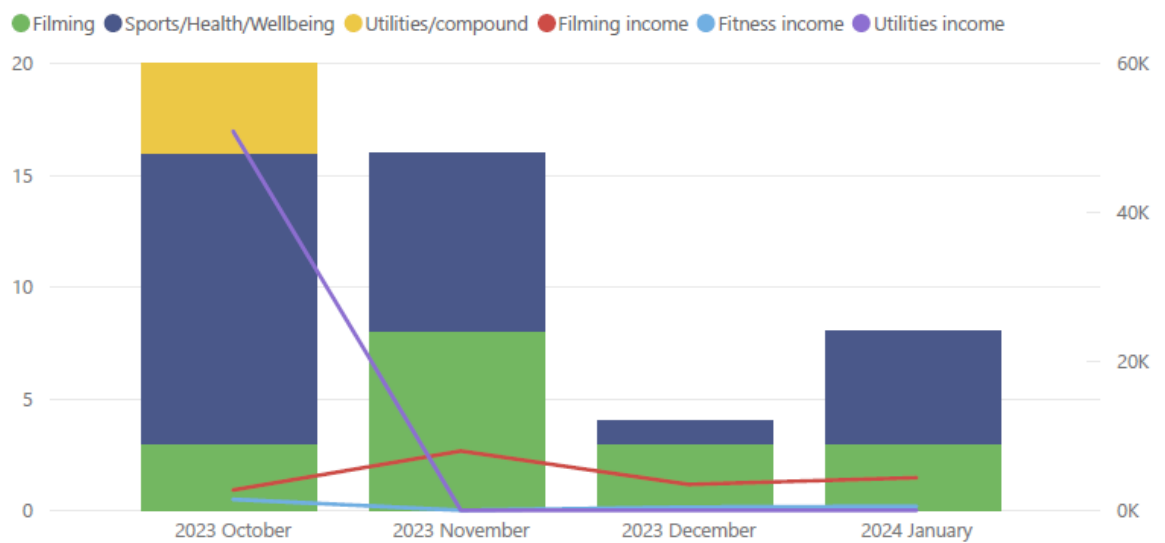
1. **Car Parking Income**– Monthly income for car parking in Financial Year 2023/24 is approximately the same as that received in the previous financial year.

Car park income December 2022/23



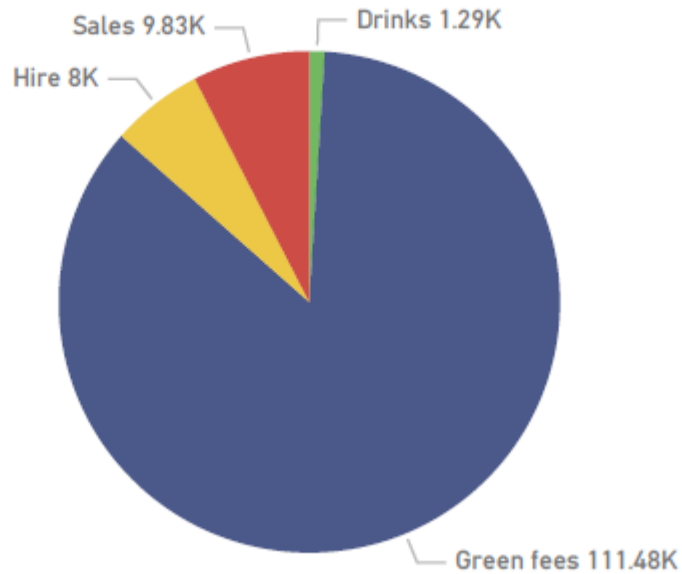
2. **Licencing** - Licencing continues to do well, particularly in Filming and Photography. This is an unpredictable income stream, but work continues to focus on growing this area where possible.

Licences and income



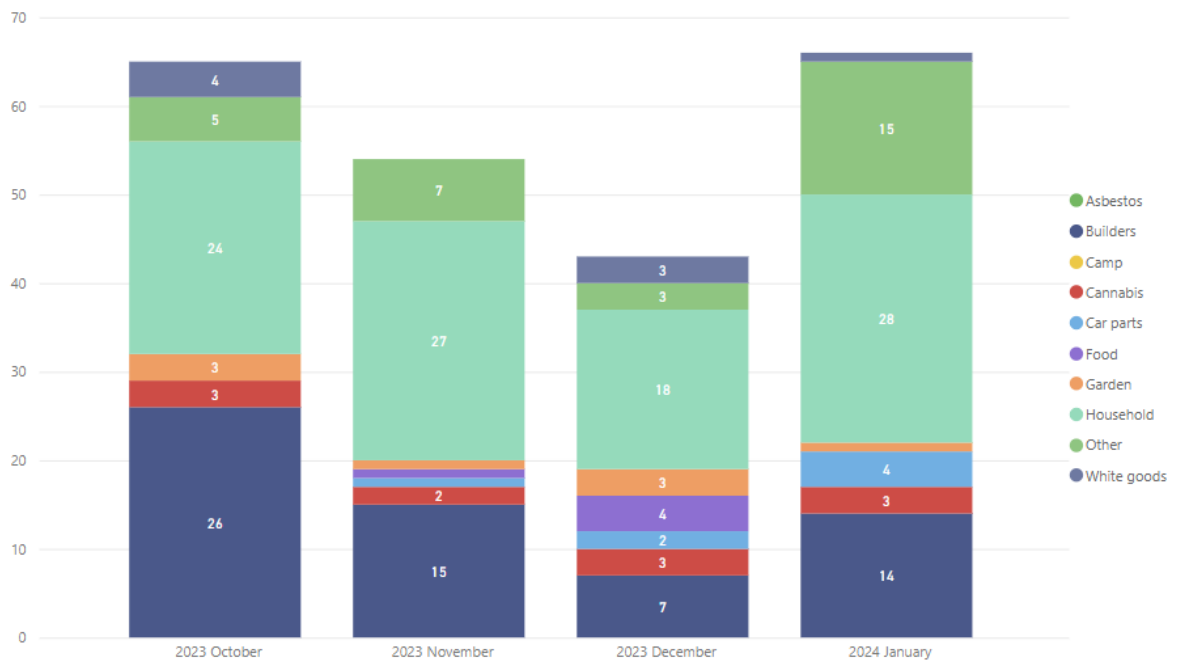
3. **Golf** – Income for the period since October is higher than the same period last year. Of note, a new buggy store has been built which will house 13 buggies in total, to meet demand and increase hire income.

Golf course income October - February 2024



4. **Fly tips**—General household waste continues to dominate the fly tips experienced across Epping Forest followed by builder’s waste.

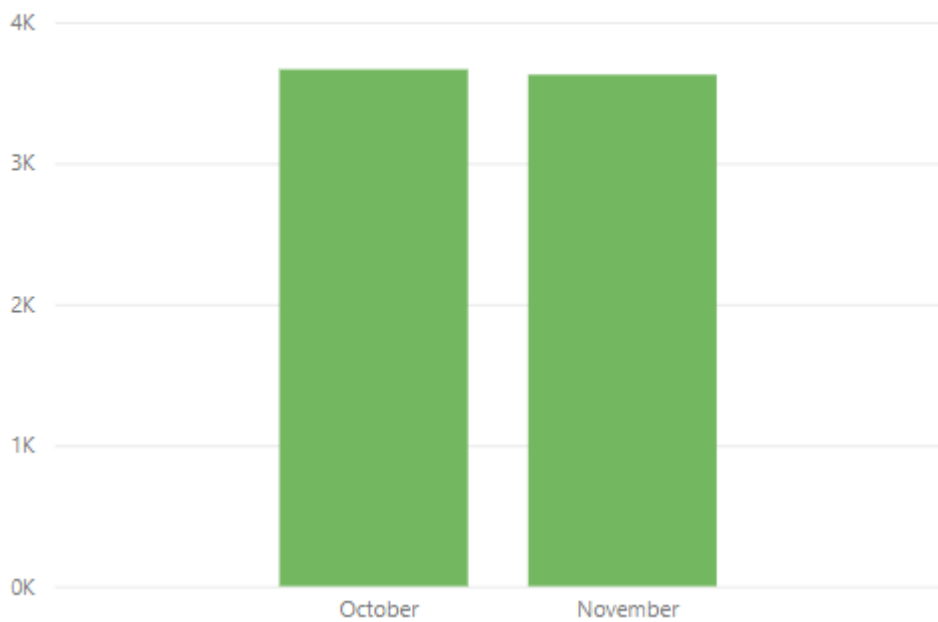
Number of Fly Tips



5. **Waste Disposal costs**

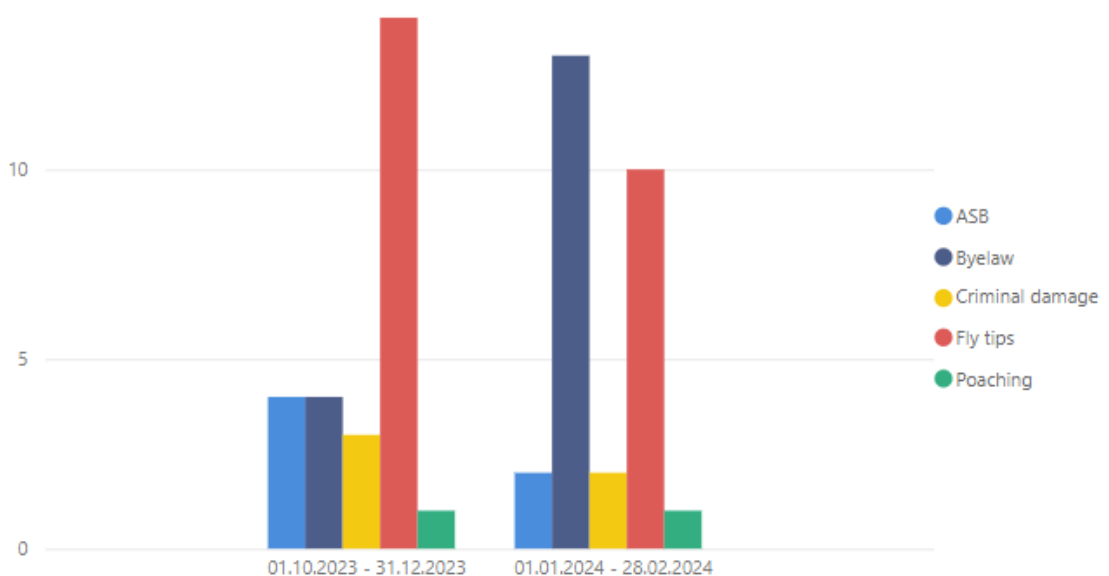
Costs of disposal of litter and fly tips. All waste is recycled.

Waste Disposal Costs



6. **Enforcement** - Epping Forest Enforcement Officers have investigated a total of 54 matters since October. 24 fly tip reports; 17 byelaw matters of which 7 involved dog attacks, 5 damage to trees and 6 anti-social behaviour matters involving off road motorcycles in the forest and 3 parking matters. Of these matters, 7 conditional cautions / fixed penalty notices totalling £1050 were issued. 30 investigations remain on-going. One summonsed for court for fly tipping.

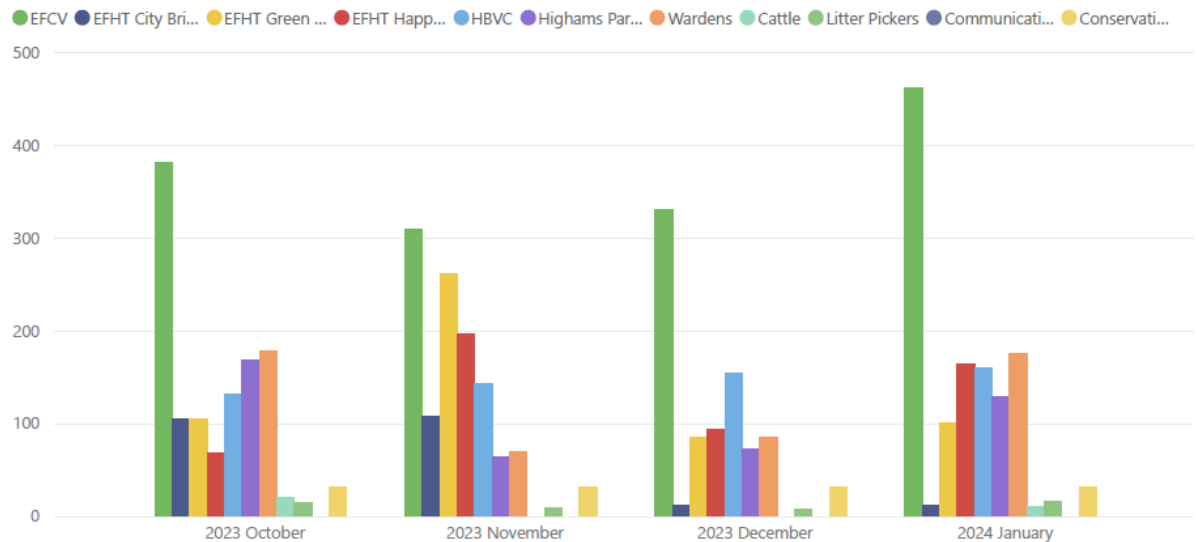
Enforcement investigations



7. Volunteering

We continue to be supported by significant volunteering efforts. The table shows those organisations we collect numbers from but we recognise that considerable informal volunteering is undertaken throughout the Forest.

Volunteer hours by group



Updates

8. **Current Lodge Occupancy** –We have a TOTAL of 32 residential properties excluding 2 holiday lets. Of these, 21 are currently (or about to be) occupied by staff. Two are commercially let and one is an assured shorthold tenancy (AST).

There are 8 vacant properties of which two flats are undergoing renovation to be ready by summer for AST. 3 require work before use and 3 are earmarked for new staff yet to be recruited but may be released for AST once the recruitment round is completed if not required.

Following a programme of assessment and inspections, the City Surveyor is confident that there is no Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in any Epping Forest properties.

9. **Outstanding Tree Works** – An in house survey of ‘green zones’ took place from December to January and an externally provided survey of red zones will continue until April. Storms Gerrit, Henk, Isha and Jocelyn in the early part of 2024 have created a constant stream of reactive work for the arborists creating a further lag in progress with tree work.

Recruitment to vacant Arborists posts is currently taking place alongside recruitment for temporary and contract arrangements to help address the backlog.

10. Recruitment

Epping Forest now has 40% vacancies. This is broken down as follows:

Total staff number 101 in new structure (about 25% increase).

39 vacancies

Of which, 10 vacancies currently live in process of recruitment

3 are pending external funding sources/ project commencement

3 apprentice positions pending managers in place

4 pending job re-evaluation

19 pending managers recruitment to provide adequate line management resource. (this includes 15 from keeper team)

Posts recruited since November and in post:

Visitor Centre Manager

Campaigns and Fundraising Officer

Assistant Grounds/Greenskeeper

Sports Administration Assistant (2 part time posts)

Grazing and Landscape Team Leader

Herdsperson

Grassland Conservation Officer

Regulatory Officer

Due to start in April:

Wildlife Management Officer

Health and Safety and Property officer

Head of Conservation

Arborist Manager

Within the current live recruitment process are the four vacant team managers within the Operations team. Keeper and Assistant Keeper roles will be advertised concurrently from early March.

11. Incidents

- There have been two separate incidents of poaching in the Forest/buffer land. These have been investigated with the support of Essex Police.
- A person was injured due to an encounter with one of the cattle on the Forest. This has been investigated and a report concluded minor recommendations.
- There is an ongoing issue with quad bikes riding aggressively through the Forest. Officers are collaborating with Essex Police to try to apprehend the offenders.
- If members or public witness an incident this can be reported on our 24 hour telephone 020 8532 1010. Emails can be sent to eping.forest@cityoflondon.gov.uk or to any of our social media accounts but these will only be responded to during normal business hours.
- There is often speculation about incidents on social media. We will post an update, if necessary, on our website, or on our own social media accounts

once officers have the full account of an incident. Public enquiries should be referred to the epping.forest@cityoflondon.gov.uk email and media enquiries to the City's media team.

12. Fleet

We are pleased that some long standing fleet needs have now arrived:

- 4.5t litter cart (after waiting two years)
- Toyota Yaris pool vehicle
- Hilux pool vehicle.
- Massey Ferguson tractor for the farm.

13. Education

The Natural Environment Learning Team has worked with 3,844 students at Epping Forest (April 2023 – Jan 2024). This is a positive increase on previous years' numbers, with a total of 3,381 school students in 2022-23 and 2,260 in 2021-22.

In addition to the general school programme at Epping Forest, this year the team has facilitated visits for:

- Phoenix SEND School from Tower Hamlets
- Mulberry School (SEND group) from Tottenham
- Greenwell Academy Pupil Referral Unit from Essex
- Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers, via CoL DCCS Virtual School
- Ambition Achieve Aspire groups from Newham

The Learning Team has a leadership role in Climate Action Pathways in Education (CAPE), an alliance of researchers, educators, schools, and partners across the UK who are working to change today's education for tomorrow's climate. Their work was showcased in the latest CAPE report [CAPE+Report+2024-web_2.pdf \(squarespace.com\)](#) (see p31-32).

14. Projects

Wanstead Park

A contractor has been appointed to carry out work to the Lost Spur and reedbed creation on Heronry Pond. The work will take place in the Autumn and clearance work to the Lost Spur will need to take place early September, ideally with volunteer support. This contract has been funded via Thames 21.

Procurement of a consultant to deliver The Grotto restoration and management plan has now been completed and work will be commencing on this.

Wanstead Flats

A refresh of the former 'Parklife' football hub project is taking place to look at potential alternative methods of delivering against the core objectives. A zero based costing of football provision along with fresh analysis of latent demand will inform a new report.

Paths

A trial of materials for path works is taking place using a range of samples. Significant path works are due to take place and materials must be suitable for use within the SSSI, meet a range of user needs (horse-riding/cycling), and have sufficient durability and porosity.

Access

A new suite of gates have been installed across the Warlies estate to replace broken and difficult to use gates and to replace stiles to improve accessibility. The gates all conform to latest best practice standards for accessibility. Further work will take place once the weather is drier to provide robust surfacing around the gates to address the poached ground.

Before Photos



After Photos



Countryside Stewardship Grant Scheme – The final application to the government's Countryside Stewardship (CS) grant scheme was submitted in November for the second half of the Forest, which follows on from the first CS 10-year agreement started in 2020.

Baldwins Pond Small Raised Reservoir Dam Repairs – The Environment Department's District Surveyors Team has appointed a contractor to progress plans for the repair of the leaking 6.4-metre-high dam. Site meetings are underway with works planned to commence in early Summer 2024.

Great Gregories Farm – Roofing improvement and Barn Project – Planning consent has now been provided for EPF/1054/23 for the erection of

three agricultural buildings, roof canopy to existing building, water storage tank and retrospective consent for staff welfare cabin. Principal contractor has been appointed and building works commence in May.

Climate Action Strategy – Carbon Removals Project – This project has widened its scope to include protecting our existing habitats as well as creating new habitats to increase carbon removal capacity. The project will include work such as natural flood management, wood-pasture, meadow, hedge and reedbed creation.

Jacqueline Eggleston

T: 0208 532 1010

E: jacqueline.eggleston@cityoflondon.gov.uk