

EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE
Wednesday, 22 May 2024

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held at
Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Wednesday, 22 May 2024 at
10.00 am

Present

Members:

Benjamin Murphy (Chairman)
Caroline Haines (Deputy Chairman)
George Abrahams
Jaspreet Hodgson
Alderman Vincent Keaveny, CBE
David Sales
Verderer Paul Morris
Verderer Nicholas Munday

Officers:

Anna Cowperthwaite	- Comptroller & City Solicitor's
Clem Harcourt	- Chamberlains
Jack Joslin	- City Bridge Foundation
Emily Brennan	- Environment Department
Anna Cowperthwaite	- Environment Department
Jacqueline Eggleston	- Environment Department
Joanne Hill	- Environment Department
Alex MacDonald	- Environment Department
Bob Roberts	- Environment Department
Geoff Sinclair	- Environment Department
Maria Traynor	- Environment Department
Tristan Vetta	- Environment Department
Blair Stringman	- Town Clerk's Department
Joseph Smith	- Town Clerk's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Verderer H.H. William Kennedy.

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

There were no declarations.

3. *ORDER OF THE COURT OF COMMON COUNCIL

Received the Order of the Court of Common Council dated 25th April 2024, appointing the Committee and setting its Terms of Reference.

4. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED, that - in accordance with Standing Order 29, to elect Benjamin Murphy as Chairman of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee.

5. **ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIR**

RESOLVED, that - in accordance with Standing Order 30, to elect Caroline Haines as Deputy Chairman of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee.

6. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED, that – the public minutes and non-public summary of the meeting held on 21st March 2024 be approved.

7. **MATTERS ARISING**

7.1 ***Action Log**

Members received the actions log and during the discussion, the following points were noted:

- a) The Lodge: Income Generation report, in relation to Action 2022-1, had been completed and would be discussed at the Epping Forest & Commons Committee away day. The Corporate Plan and Strategies would also be discussed at the away day.
- b) The officer confirmed that the installation of The Warren Battery Storage Facility, in relation to Action 2023-3, was imminent.
- c) The officer confirmed, in relation to Action 2023-4, that it was hoped the Wi-Fi at Coulsdon Common would be installed during the re-wiring of the site during July and August 2024.
- d) Chairman confirmed that Action 2024-6 – Matters Arising from 25 January 2024 could be closed.
- e) Officers indicated they would provide an update on Action 2024-7: Funding at the July meeting of the Committee.
- f) Officers explained, in relation to Action 2024-9: Phone-In Reporting Service, that there were issues with the reporting service and committed to providing an update at the next Committee meeting.
- g) Officers confirmed, in relation to the Action 2024-10 on Trustees Annual Financial Reporting, that the annual returns would come to Committee for information before being received by the Charity Commission. Chairman noted for this to be added to the Forward Plan and the Action closed.
- h) Officers agreed to provide a presentation, in relation to Action 2024-11, to the Committee on apprenticeships at The Commons and report on tree numbers at the next meeting of Committee.

- i) Officers agreed to raise the question of holding police horses at Epping Forest with the City of London Police.

8. **2024/25 COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS**

RESOLVED – That Members,

a) Endorse the continuation of the appointment and composition of the Consultative Committees and Groups made last year as outlined in the report. Thereafter reappoint, following the Epping Forest and Commons Committee away day for its next committee meeting.

b) endorse the continuation of the appointment of the representative to the **Natural Environment Board**. Thereafter reappoint, following the Epping Forest and Commons away day for its next committee meeting as a local observer for this Committee.

9. ***EPPING FOREST – ASSISTANT DIRECTOR’S UPDATE (SEF 11/24)**

The Committee received the Assistant Director’s update which summarised Epping Forest’s progress against objectives since March 2024 with updates of note.

During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- a) Members asked for an explanation of the difference between utilities compound and utilities income. Officers explained that utilities compound related to the taking over of a piece of land, usually one of the Corporation’s car park extensions as a base camp. Utilities income was usually a wayleave arrangement to dig up the forest and put things in.
- b) Members asked if there was a plan on the reduction in filming income. Officers noted that filming income was set to rise significantly next month due to a major feature film and there were plans by officers to increase the film team centrally.
- c) The Chairman queried whether an Asset Maintenance Plan was in place for the golf course. Officers indicated there was a plan in place and major investments had been done in the last three years.
- d) An internal Officer Project Board had been established to manage right concurrent projects taking place at Wanstead Park. Officers indicated there were plans to establish a stakeholder advisory group to support project delivery and assist in communication of progress with complex, multi-year projects.
- e) The Chairman enquired why planning permission being sought was not part of the original plan. Officers indicated they would confirm the answer and suggested that most of the delay was related to getting a contractor on board.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

10. **THE TEMPLE CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN (SEF 10/24)**

The Committee received the Assistant Director's report which presented the Conservation Management Plan, Maintenance Plan and associated documents for The Temple, Wanstead Park.

During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- a) Members raised questions related to health and safety concerns flagged in the commissioned report and whether funding was already allocated from CWP or Local Risk to remediate urgent works, such as leaks in the roof. Officers assured it was already covered, some of the work did not require a 2 year wait for the consultation and feasibility study.
- b) Officers indicated that a business case needed to be established before fundraising occurred and purpose of report was intended as a starting point for discussion.
- c) Officers wanted to get stakeholder organisations together in July and launch a consultation following that meeting, followed by feasibility studies on the ideas raised.
- d) The Parkland Plan needed a refresh to examine priorities and what to fundraise against which would take 18 months to 2 years to develop.
- e) Members raised the possibility of Pro Bono work being carried out when approaching contractors. Officers indicated they would discuss it with procurement officers.
- f) Members emphasised that the refreshing of the Parkland Plan needed to be part of a bigger re-imagining of the park and its use.
- g) Works that needed to take place in The Temple over the next 12 month would be examined once Conservation Management Plan was approved.
- h) Officers confirmed that Community Payback was used in relation to sports grounds.

RESOLVED -That, Members endorse the Temple Conservation Management Plan as a resource to guide maintenance and management decisions

11. ***THE COMMONS – ASSISTANT DIRECTORS UPDATE FEBRUARY 2024 - MARCH 2024**

The Committee received the Assistant Director's update which summarised activities across The Commons between February 2024 to March 2024.

During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- a) Members enquired into why volunteer numbers had decreased. Officers assured that volunteer numbers were still very healthy, and they did tend to fluctuate.
- b) Members expressed concern about the budget overspend. Officers confirmed that the forecast budget overspend presented to the last committee had been managed back to within the budget envelope for year-end reporting.
- c) The Committee questioned data showing that there had been a sustained period of reporting accidents in the Commons, followed by a sudden halt of all accidents and considered whether there might be a backlog. Officers assured this was not the case; there were no accidents in the previous quarter and the next report would contain the figures for the new year.
- d) The Hill Fort mobile application celebrated Burnham Beeches' role in the Second World War and, given the forthcoming eightieth anniversary of the Battle of Britain, the Committee enquired whether it was a good time to promote the application.
- e) The Committee considered whether usage data on the Hill Fort mobile application could be extracted and presented as part of the next Assistant Director's report; Officers indicated they would investigate it.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

12. **RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE REPORT**

The Committee received the Business Planning and Compliance Manager's report which provided the Committee with assurance of risk management procedures in place within Environment Department and its Natural Environment Division.

During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- a) Officers, discussing ENV-NE-EF 017: Tree failure, informed they had been given a date from UK Power Network to fell the trees along the M25.
- b) Clarity was sought on the impact of the cyclical works programme and local risk on asset maintenance. Members were keen to understand the level of risk from funded and unfunded remediation.
- c) It was confirmed that the visitor pressure to Epping Forest was picked up in the risk register but was not included in summary as it had not changed.
- d) Officers indicated they would provide a detailed response on why ENV-NE-EF 012: Loss of Forest land and buffer land/or concession of prescriptive rights was flagged as RED on the risk register.

RESOLVED – That Members confirm, on behalf of the City Corporation as Trustee, that the risk registers appended to this report satisfactorily identify the

key risks to each of the five charities and that an appropriate risk management process is in place.

13. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**
There were no questions.
14. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**
There was one item of urgent business concerning the establishment of a SharePoint site for Members relating to Epping Forest with committee reports, operational structure charts, media releases and corporate information which would be updated monthly. Access to the site would be granted to Members shortly.
15. **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.
16. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**
RESOLVED, that – the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 21st March 2024 be approved.
17. **MATTERS ARISING**
Members received the actions log.
18. **DEER MANAGEMENT REPORT (SEF 12/24)**
The Committee received a report of the Natural Environment Director and the Interim Executive Director, Environment.
19. **EPPING FOREST WAYLEAVES SEF 09/24**
The Committee received a report of the Interim Executive Director, Environment.
20. **BURNHAM BEECHES AND THE COMMONS HANDGATES**
The Committee received a report of the Interim Executive Director, Environment.
21. **LANDSCAPE SCALE WORKING AROUND BURNHAM BEECHES**
The Committee received a report of the Interim Executive Director, Environment.
22. **CARBON REMOVAL - PRE-GATEWAY 5 PROJECT CLOSURE**
The Committee received a report of the Town Clerk's Department.
23. **NON PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**
There were no questions.

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

There was one item of urgent business.

The meeting ended at 11.34 am

Chairman

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