

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Epping Forest & Commons Committee	Dated: 28 November 2024
Subject: Report of Action Taken	Public report: For Information
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes• provides business enabling functions	See background papers
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:	Town Clerk
Report author:	Callum Southern, Governance Officer

Summary

This report provides details of decisions taken under urgency procedures between Committee meetings.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the report.

Urgency Decisions under Standing Order 41A

Project Prioritisation Process (EF&C)

1. One of the key priorities for the Epping Forest and Commons Charities and for the wider Natural Environment Division was to develop and implement a more strategic and joined-up approach to business planning and project prioritisation. This was needed to ensure that charity objectives are being delivered and that charity resources are being used effectively and efficiently.

It was also necessary to align with the Corporation's strategic priorities, business planning and project management processes.

2. The Corporation operated on annual Departmental business plans which, for the Natural Environment charities, typically combined 'business as usual' (BAU) activities with projects. Projects with a value of greater than £50,000 must follow the Corporation's Project Gateway Process (Appendix 1); however, this process did not apply to BAU activities or to projects with a value of less than £50,000. There was no central process for prioritising projects; therefore, business plans were typically a combination of essential BAU plus a 'wish list' of projects, which could result in unrealistic expectations and/or inability to deliver some activities.
3. Some projects were essential for the services to be delivered safely and in a way that is compliant with legislation – for example those which relate to regulatory compliance, and health and safety – whilst others were not, but were seen as important to furthering the charity's aims. Capacity to deliver BAU and projects was limited, but there was no clear way of assessing and deciding which activities could be delivered within existing capacity and budget, and which activities would require additional capacity and/or budget. The Corporation is seeking to address this by including an estimation of the resources required to deliver each high-level activity in its new five-year Departmental Business Plans.
4. The proposed project prioritisation process for the Epping Forest and Commons Charities complemented this approach by providing a prioritisation framework, against which activities and projects could be assessed, which in turn will enable the production of a prioritised list of activities. This prioritised list can then be assessed against available staff and monetary resources to decide which activities will be included in the business plan for each charity.
5. Each activity would be scored against the criteria listed outlined in the main committee report. Scores have been weighted according to the relative importance of the criteria.
6. Where a project is necessary to comply with statutory requirements or health and safety, the project will be identified as a priority, without needing further assessment. Where this is not the case, the criteria place greatest weight on whether a project is essential, as well as project's contribution to strategic objectives for the Charity and Corporation. However, the criteria also assess a set of measures as to the sustainability and deliverability of the project, as well as its relationship to service performance.
7. A project prioritisation process was needed to inform the development, approval and implementation of effective and affordable five-year business plans for Epping Forest and Commons Charities. The proposed process

outlined in the main paper identified criteria which include delivery against Charity objectives. It was recommended that the process and criteria are approved by Epping Forest and Commons Committee, after which this process will be applied to proposed project activities to enable production of a prioritised list which will feed into the business plan for each charity. The five-year business plan for each charity would be brought to the Committee for approval and will be reviewed quarterly.

8. At Epping Forest and Commons Committee on 19 September 2024, the meeting was inquorate for The Commons element of the item to be considered as per the Court of Common Council's Court Order. While the Committee agreed to confirm the project prioritisation criteria and process for the Epping Forest charity, it was unable to do so for the following other four charities: Ashted Common, Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common, Coulsdon and Other Commons, and West Wickham and Spring Park. Therefore, a decision under urgency procedures was needed.
9. That the Town Clerk therefore approved, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chair of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee, the proposed project prioritisation criteria and process for Epping Forest and Commons Committee relating specifically to the following charities: Ashted Common, Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common, Coulsdon and Other Commons, and West Wickham and Spring Park.

Risk Management Update Report

10. The City of London's Risk Management Strategy, which forms part of its Corporate Risk Management Framework, required each Chief Officer to report regularly to Committees on the risks faced by their department.
11. The Charity Commission required Trustees to confirm in a charity's annual report that any major risks to which the charity was exposed had been identified and reviewed and that systems were established to mitigate those risks. These risks were to be reviewed annually.
12. Each Committee to which the Natural Environment Division of the Environment Department reports received an update on the risks of the charity or charities relevant to that Committee every quarter. This frequency aligned with the City of London's Risk Management Strategy and exceeded the requirements of the Charity Commission.
13. The Executive Director Environment assured the Committee that all risks held by the Natural Environment Division continued to be managed in compliance with the Corporate Risk Management Framework and the Charities Act 2011.
14. Each of the five charities for which the Committee was responsible held a risk register. All risks were regularly reviewed by management teams, in

consultation with risk owners, with updates recorded in the corporate risk management information system. Risks were assessed on a likelihood-impact basis, and the resultant score was associated with a traffic light colour. For reference, the City of London's Risk Matrix was provided at Appendix 6 of the main report.

15. The detailed risk registers for Epping Forest and each of the four Commons charities were summarised in the main body and provided in full at Appendices 1 to 5 of the main report. Officers undertook a range of actions to control each risk, as shown in the appended registers to the main report.
16. At Epping Forest and Commons Committee on 19 September 2024, the meeting was inquorate for The Commons elements of the item to be considered as per the Court of Common Council's Court Order. While the Committee agreed to confirm, on behalf of the City Corporation as Trustee, that the risk register appended to the report satisfactorily set out the risks to the Epping Forest charity and that appropriate systems were in place to identify and mitigate risks, the Committee was inquorate to do the same for the other four charities: Ashted Common, Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common, Coulsdon and Other Commons, and West Wickham and Spring Park. Therefore, a decision under urgency procedures was needed.
17. That the Town Clerk therefore agreed, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chair of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee, to confirm, on behalf of the City Corporation as Trustee:
 - that the risk registers appended to this report satisfactorily set out the key risks to each of the four remaining charities and that appropriate systems are in place to identify and mitigate risks. These are: Ashted Common, Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common, Coulsdon and Other Commons, and West Wickham and Spring Park.

Background Papers

Project Prioritisation Process report – Epping Forest & Commons Committee, 19 September 2024.

Risk Management Update Report – Epping Forest & Commons Committee, 19 September 2024.

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