

Committee(s): Epping Forest and Commons Committee - For Decision	Dated: 23/01/2025
Subject: Epping Forest Consultative Group Review of the Terms of Reference (SEF 04/24)	Public
This proposal a) delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes Leading Sustainable Environment Flourishing Public Spaces: Diverse Engaged Communities b) provides business enabling functions	
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	£
What is the source of Funding?	n/a
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	n/a
Report of:	Katie Stewart, Environment Department
Report author:	Juliane Heinecke, Epping Forest

Summary

This report proposes additional changes to the Terms of Reference for the Epping Forest Consultative Group, primarily to reflect the outcome of a recent consultation with the current members of that group regarding frequency of meetings.

Renewal of the group membership is due but will be delayed until May 2025 to allow for additional advertising of the vacancies in the light of the revised Terms of Reference.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Agree, in principle, the revised Terms of Reference for the Epping Forest Consultative Group.
- Authorise the Superintendent, in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee, to finalise the Terms of Reference.
- Agree to hold over the current membership of the Epping Forest Consultative Group until May 2025.

Main Report

Background

1. The Epping Forest Consultative Committee (EFCG) 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, with sixteen places available according to the agreed Terms of Reference.
2. In 2017 nineteen applications were received, three of which did not meet selection criteria, the remaining sixteen were therefore appointed.
3. In 2021, thirty-eight applications were received, with your Committee approving a total of seventeen appointments including one co-opted appointment, Theydon Bois & District Rural Preservation Society.
4. In 2022, a further co-opted appointment, Epping Forest Conservation Volunteers, was approved.
5. A series of changes to the Terms of Reference were approved at your November 2023 Committee to reflect administrative changes and learning points for previous membership applications and admissions processes, as well as including the new name of EFCG.
6. Under the Terms of Reference (Appendix 1) membership is established for three years, after which the application and appointment process is begun anew. Invitations for Expressions of Interest in the next three years of the Consultative Group were therefore launched in August 2024.

Current Position

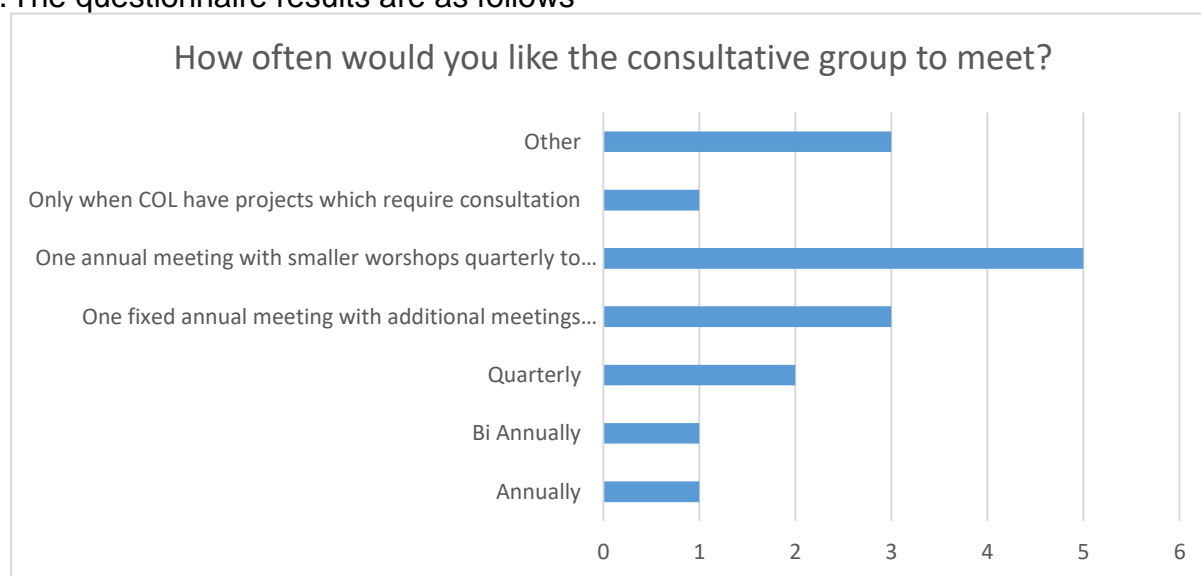
7. The opening of the application process was broadcast through City of London Social Media, Forest Focus, direct mailing and through existing membership, starting w/c 12 August with a closing date 20 September 2024.
8. Due to the lack of applications, the deadline was extended. However, there were still insufficient applications to fill the proposed 16 places as outlined in the Terms of Reference.
9. Officers initiated discussion at the following EFCG in November 2024, to ascertain what changes could be made to the way the Group operates that may make membership more appealing.
10. The Group felt that, particularly subsequent to the changes made in the Terms of Reference in 2023, that EFCG was not performing effectively as a consultative body. As the group no longer saw papers prior to the Epping Forest and Commons Committee, it was felt the Group had reduced ability to comment and

were not being effectively consulted. A follow up questionnaire was then sent to members.

11. It was generally agreed by members that it would be preferable to meet on occasions as a response to issues that may arise that require consultation and an informed discussion. There was still a desire to have at least one formal meeting every year, such as an AGM, to ensure the group had the opportunity to meet and discuss a formal agenda.

12. Members also favoured a workshop approach to improve engagement from all members with papers and information sent well in advance of meetings.

13. The questionnaire results are as follows



14. A full summary of the questionnaire is contained in Appendix 2.

Options

15. Option 1 – Agree, in principle, to the revised and clarified EFCG Terms of Reference, and authorise the Superintendent, in consultation with the Chair and Deputy, to make further amendments, prior to finalising the Terms of Reference. In addition to hold over existing membership pending further advertisement of the vacancies and bring the new applications for membership of the EFCG to your Committee in May 2025 for decision. **This option is recommended.**

16. Option 2 – Do not agree to revision of the EFCG Terms of Reference. Select membership of the EFCG for the next three years from the currently available submitted applications. This does not respond to the wishes of the existing members and will result in several vacancies. **This option is not recommended.**

Proposals

17. The EFCG Terms of Reference in Appendix 1 have been updated to reflect the views of the members of the EFCG with regard to meeting frequency and format. They propose an annual general meeting and a further minimum of two in-person

meetings a year that may take the form of a workshop and detailed discussion and / or on-site visits to consider issues in more depth. Members would then make recommendations or feedback to the Epping Forest and Commons Committee for their consideration.

18. An additional clarification in clause 20 has been added regarding the meaning of a 'political party'. Previously this term was not expressly defined, and this has been clarified by including reference to whether a party is registered under [Part 2 of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000](#). There is at least one member of the group likely to come within this definition and not be eligible for membership at the next appointment round. However, this organisation would then be eligible to attend an alternative engagement forum held with local authority representatives.
19. If agreed in principle by your Committee, it is proposed that the revised EFCG Terms of Reference be circulated to members of the EFCG before being finalised by the Superintendent, in line with the authorisation being sought in the recommendation.
20. Officers will then do further advertisement for membership of the EFCG, using the Revised Terms to describe the role and format of this group in future. This may help to generate more applications. Any existing applications already submitted would be retained and not required to make any further application. It is envisaged that the recommendations for acceptance of the new membership of the EFCG would then be brought to your Committee for decision in May 2025.
21. In the meantime, the existing members would continue to be the representatives on EFCG. The formal meeting that would normally take place in February will not occur, but officers will instead schedule a site meeting with the group to have a detailed discussion on the subject of paths, as has already been requested by members.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

22. Strategic implications – The EFCG supports the Corporate Plan - Leading Sustainable Environment Flourishing Public Spaces: Diverse Engaged Communities
23. Financial and resource implications – The resources required for room hire, light refreshments, the publication of agendas; reports and minutes will be provided by the support staff at Epping Forest.
24. Legal implications – The EFCG 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, provided that meetings are convened appropriately throughout the year to allow meaningful consideration of relevant matters.

26. Risk implications – The existing Consultative Group structure is ‘business as usual’ and considered low risk.
27. Equalities implications – Due regard has been given to potential equality implications which includes taking into consideration any impact on groups with protected characteristics. After consideration of the same it has been concluded there are no equality implications arising from the particular proposals in this report. Equalities statements are incorporated into application requirements for prospective EFCG member groups.
28. Climate implications – The UK Government has binding targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and hence global warming by 2050, with the Consultative Committee 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.
29. Security implications – The EFCG Terms of Reference require a number of conditions to be met by member groups that provide a suitable level of protection.
30. 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

31. The revised terms of reference and format of EFCG meetings are proposed to better serve the desires and purposes of the group.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference – revised December 2024
- Appendix 2 – Consultation Responses Summary.

Background Papers

Juliane Heinecke

PA and Support Services Officer (Stakeholder Liaison)

T: 020 8532 1010

E: juliane.heinecke@cityoflondon.gov.uk