

City of London Corporation Committee Report

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| Committee(s): Epping Forest and Commons Committee - For decision | Dated: 29/05/2025 |
| Subject: Epping Forest Consultative Group Membership 2024-26. Renewal of applications and Review of the Terms of Reference (SEF 10/25) | Public For decision |
| This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes• provides statutory duties | Leading Sustainable Environment Flourishing Public Spaces: Diverse Engaged Communities |
| Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending? | No |
| If so, how much? | £ |
| What is the source of Funding? | |
| Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department? | N/A |
| Report of: | Katie Stewart, Executive Director Environment |
| Report author: | Juliane Heinecke, PA and Stakeholder Liaison - Epping Forest |

Summary

The Epping Forest Consultative Group Terms of Reference recommends that membership for the Epping Forest Consultative Group is reconsidered every three years. This report summarises the applications received and makes recommendations for the appointment of twenty members to the Epping Forest and Consultative Group, an increase from the recommended sixteen places.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Consider the applications as detailed in this report and in Appendix 1, and make appointments as recommended in Option 1 of this report.
- Extend thanks to the organisations that have applied, particularly those who have attended for the last three years but have been unsuccessful in their application this time round.

Main Report

Background

1. The Epping Forest Consultative Group (EFCG) was formerly known as the Epping Forest Consultative Committee and was established in January 2018.

2. Membership of the EFCG is reconsidered every three years. Membership was due for renewal in 2024 and the application process was widely advertised in August of that year. However, only 11 applications were received for the ideal 16 places.
3. Officers consulted members at their EFCG meeting in October 2024 and sent a follow up survey, to seek ideas of how the meetings could be improved to make membership of the EFCG more relevant and appealing to stakeholders.
4. Officers used the consultation feedback to revise the EFCG Terms of Reference (Appendix 2) which were approved in principle by your Committee in January 2025. Your Committee also agreed to hold over the then existing membership of the EFCG and delay the authorisation of the new membership until May 2025, to allow for further expressions of interest to be submitted.

Current Position

5. A further advertisement for membership of EFCG has subsequently taken place, this time with 24 applications received.
6. Four applications were not eligible (for the reasons discussed in paragraph 19 and 20 of this report). The remaining 20 applicants are listed in Appendix 1.

Options

Option 1 – To appoint all 20 recommended organisations to join the EFCG for the next three years. **This option is recommended.**

Option 2 – To appoint only a maximum of 16 organisations to join the EFCG over the next three years. This option would recommend using the priority order listing to select the top 16 organisations **This option is not recommended.**

Proposals

7. According to section 27 of the Terms of Reference, sixteen places are *ideally* made up from the following themes of interest:

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| Nature Conservation <i>Conservation groups in Forest, or with wider remit</i> | 3 |
| Friends/Voluntary <i>Formal working groups e.g., litter pickers groups, 'Friends of' etc.</i> | 3 |
| Heritage <i>Historical societies, rural preservation etc.</i> | 2 |
| Informal users <i>Schools, Youth groups, families' associations, local forums and interest bodies</i> | 2 |
| Recreation <i>Recreational user groups – e.g., walkers, riders, cyclists</i> | 3 |
| Sports | 3 |

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| <i>Formal organised sports on Forest e.g., Golf, Football, cricket running etc.</i> | |
| | 16 |

8. It is possible that organisations may arguably sit within two or more of these themes as their interests and activities may be broad, with particular crossover between sports and recreation categories. The applicants have been allocated to the theme or category considered most appropriate as set out in Appendix 1 and summarised in paragraphs 16 to 22 below.
9. Paragraph 28 of the Terms of Reference states, “Should more expressions of interest be received than can logistically be accommodated, selection will be made by members of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee by four criteria.
 - Size of membership
 - Geographical area of interest (i.e., area of Forest covered)
 - Theme of interest
 - Record of attendance (if existing attendee)”.
10. Accordingly, the applications in Appendix 1 have been placed in order firstly in terms of category and secondly in order of best fit with the criteria.
11. In this way organisations can be selected in priority order to achieve the total ‘ideal’ number of 16.
12. However, this number is not a cap and as the new terms of reference mean that the group will meet in workshops or on-site visits there is less need to limit numbers as in a traditional meeting. Therefore, your Committee may choose to appoint all 20 eligible applicants.
13. **Nature Conservation.** Four applications were received for three recommended places. It is recommended that The London Wildlife Trust, Butterfly Conservation, Cambridgeshire & Essex and Wren Wildlife & Conservation Group are appointed and that the River Roding Trust are appointed as an additional member.
14. **Friends/Voluntary.** Four applications were received for three recommended places. It is recommended that Epping Forest Heritage Trust, Friends of Wanstead Parklands and the Epping Forest Conservation Volunteers are all appointed and that the Higham’s Park Planning Group are appointed as an additional member.
15. **Heritage.** Two applications were received for two available places. It is recommended that West Essex Archaeological Group and the Chingford Historical Society be appointed.
16. **Informal Users.** Four applications were received in this category for two recommended places. It is recommended that Theydon Bois Preservation Society and the Woodford Green Amenity Group are appointed, and that the Chingford Residents Association and Bushwood Area Residents Association are also appointed as additional members.

17. **Recreation.** Three applications received for three available places. It is recommended that West Essex Ramblers, Epping Forest Riders Association and Epping Forest Transport Action Group are appointed.
18. **Sports.** Three qualifying applications received for three places. It is recommended that Orion Harriers, Royal Epping Forest Golf Club and Lee Valley Youth Cycling are appointed.
19. In addition, there were two applications that were considered to be ineligible in line with the factors set out in paragraphs 20 and 21 of the revised Terms of Reference. These applicants are considered to be either an organisation that meets the definition of a political party or a tier of local authority. In both cases, there are alternative avenues of engagement available to those groups through, for example, direct liaison forums.
20. A further two applications were received from individuals, also ineligible per paragraph 23 of the revised Terms of Reference as membership must be from a constituted organisation.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

21. Strategic implications – The EFCG supports the Corporate Plan - Leading Sustainable Environment Flourishing Public Spaces: Diverse Engaged Communities
22. 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.
23. 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 considered appropriate.
24. 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 for the EFCG generally satisfy that requirement.
25. Risk implications – The existing EFCG structure is ‘business as usual’ and considered low risk.
26. Equalities implications – The Equalities statements are incorporated into application requirements.
27. Climate implications – The UK Government has binding targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and hence global warming by 2050, with the EFCG 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.

28. Security implications – None

29. 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

30. The Epping Forest Consultative Group Terms of Reference recommends that membership for the Epping Forest Consultative Group is reconsidered every three years. This report summarises the applications received and makes recommendations for the appointment of twenty members to the Epping Forest and Consultative Group, an increase from the recommended sixteen places. The reason for recommending this increase in membership numbers is due to the change of format of the meetings, which are to be more subject focussed, strategic discussions, where only those relevant to those discussions need attend and therefore these additional members may help to provide a broader and more informed stakeholder engagement.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Epping Forest Consultative Group Applications
- Appendix 2 - Terms of Reference – revised January 2025

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