



Epping  
Forest

Registered Charity

# Epping Forest Consultative Group – Terms of Reference

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## **Purpose of Group**

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1. The Epping Forest Consultative Group (EFCG) considers and debates management proposals or areas of concern at Epping Forest.
2. EFCG will meet annually in an Annual General Meeting (AGM) to review previous reports of the EF&CC and provide feedback. EFCG may also propose issues to be considered in more depth by the EF&CC in further meetings during the year.
3. Members of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee (EF&CC) will be in attendance to listen to views expressed by consultees, and to represent them back to the EF&CC where necessary and appropriate.
4. Minutes from EFCG Annual General Meetings will be presented to the following EF&CC in a public report.
5. The EF&CC Acts for and on behalf of the City of London Corporation ("City Corporation") in its capacity as Conservators of Epping Forest and trustee of the Epping Forest Charity, and is mandated to make management policy and spending decisions in relation to deficit grant arrangements. The EFCG is not a formal decision-making body, however, EFCG's views will be noted and considered in formal reports to the EF&CC as relevant.
6. A link to the published agenda and reports, will be shared in advance of the EF&CC meetings to standing members of the EFCG.

## **Conduct, attendance and other principles**

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7. The City Corporation Member's Code of Conduct 2018, associated guidance, declarations appendices establish the principles of behaviour and conduct expected by Members of this Group.
8. Members should attend or send a delegate to the AGM. Failure to attend more than one AGM, could forfeit their position on the Group, subject to EF&CC approval.
9. Although not a decision-making Group, deliberations should be sufficiently well attended for advice to the EF&CC to be considered representative. For those reasons, minimum attendance of four representatives of locally interested organisations is required.
10. EFCG members are representatives of their organisation, affiliates and theme of interest, but Code of Conduct and other legal and

administrative requirements apply to individuals. Every effort will be made to accommodate attendance by nominated proxy in unavoidable circumstances, but such substitutions may not always be possible and must not be considered routine.

## **Scheduling, location and public access**

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11. There will be an Annual General Meeting to be held in the Autumn each year. Further meetings will be scheduled during the year, to a number not less than two further meetings, to allow for detailed consultation on matters in a timeframe that is applicable to the matter.
12. Such further meetings may take the form of a meeting or workshop which will be held at The Warren or alternative suitable premises, or a site visit depending on the theme to be discussed.
13. The AGM will be hybrid, held in person at The Warren and on Teams, and will be recorded by Microsoft Teams™ to be shared for 12 months after the meeting, as a recording held for public access on YouTube® online video sharing and social media platform.
14. The Annual General meeting will be held on a weekday evening, avoiding school and public holidays.

## **Allocation of positions**

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15. The EFCG has representation from Members of the EF&CC including Verderers. The Chairman and Deputy Chairman may attend according to availability and agenda.
16. The AGM is to be chaired by an Epping Forest Verderer nominated by the EF&CC Chairman, or another EF&CC Member or other nominated Officer in their absence.
17. Other City Corporation officers will attend as required.
18. The meetings are administered by the Environment Department's Epping Forest Support Services Team.
19. Attendants are nominated members of groups that hold a specified interest in Epping Forest, and that have a comparably large membership, and/or a broad geographically spread membership from across the Forest and with knowledge or interest in the themes of heritage; recreation/sport; conservation; general/informal use or voluntary and friends' groups.

20. Tenants, business partners or other organisations with commercial interest in Epping Forest (or wider City Corporation Open Spaces) are not invited to attend as other routes exist for such input. Local authorities of all tiers also have access to direct liaison forums and are not invited to attend.
21. In the interests of impartiality and equality, political parties and religious groups are not invited to attend. In these terms of reference, a 'political party' means a party registered under [Part 2 of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000](#).
22. Organisations with or supportive of extremist policies or views including supporting, planning or carrying out criminal activity motivated by a political or ideological viewpoint are prohibited.
23. Groups nominating a representative must be formal, constituted organisations. This may include rule books, articles of association, standing orders or other formal agreement to which members sign-up to and adhere. This must include their own definitions of formal membership and their subscription terms, meetings and voting rights.
24. Groups must also ensure that their constitution (or equivalent) includes or makes reference to that group's Equality Statement or policy, which must be provided to the City Corporation on request.
25. Invitations to express interest and to nominate representatives are advertised through press release, social media, email and direct correspondence by City Corporation.
26. Applications require details of how the nominating organisation meets the above criteria and must include:
- The theme of interest the organisation wishes its application to be considered under.
  - A brief (maximum 150 words) explanation of the purposes and aims of the organisation.
  - Number of members at time of application (see definition at 29 below)
  - Name and contact details of nominated representative.
  - Copies of Constitution, Equality Statement and other relevant documentation.
  - Any other relevant and necessary information requested by Officers at the time of application.
27. A balance of themes of interest is ideally met as follows:

Nature Conservation <i>Conservation groups in Forest, or with wider remit</i>	3
Friends/Voluntary	3

<i>Formal working groups e.g., litter pickers groups, 'Friends of' etc.</i>	
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 <i>Formal organised sports on Forest e.g., Golf, Football, cricket running etc.</i>	3
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28. Should more expressions of interest be received than can logistically be accommodated, selection will be made by decision of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee by the following (not in order of importance):

- Size of membership
- Geographical area of interest (i.e., area of Forest covered)
- Theme of interest
- Record of attendance (if existing attendee)

29. Where membership numbers are declared by an applying organisation or group, these must be active members – i.e. those who have actively subscribed or joined providing full name and contact details; agree to a constitution or similar as aforementioned, including invitation to attend and vote at annual general meetings; and requirement to renew periodically (typically annually), most usually with an associated fee. Members must be counted as individuals subject to such terms, and not households or groups. 'Membership', for the purposes of this definition does not include customers paying for goods or services or 'passive' subscriptions or sign ups to mailing lists either electronic or hard copy, or followers or group members to social media broadcasts, chats and communications.

30. Work planning will be undertaken to report on improvements to the diversity and inclusion of the membership of the EFCG.

31. Epping Forest and Commons Committee may appoint further members or co-opt representatives (for example subject matter experts) to attend where it deems appropriate.

32. The Consultative Group serves as established for three years (starting in 2018), after which the invitation and nomination process outlined above is repeated.

## Requirements and responsibilities

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33. Nominated representatives must meet criteria similar to those set out by the Electoral Commission for eligibility for local government election:

- At least 18 years old
- Not employed by the City Corporation, or another organisation holding a commercial interest in Epping Forest or other City Corporation open spaces.
- Have not been sentenced to a term of imprisonment of three months or more (including suspended sentences), without the option of a fine, during the five years before nominations close.
- Not disqualified under the terms of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (which covers corrupt or illegal electoral practices and offences relating to donations).

34. Representatives must commit to representing the views of their organisation and members. Organisations that have applied but could not be accommodated will be advised to communicate with members representing their theme of interest either formally (e.g., affiliation) or informally and such communication is encouraged.

35. Representatives must share agenda and documentation internally within their organisation (subject to confidentiality) as well as minutes and outcomes of discussions.

36. Any representative or organisation found to contravene any of the terms herein may be excluded from the Consultative Group permanently and without notice by order of the Chairman of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee.

37. A regular skills audit of group members will be undertaken to allow the experience and skills of individual members and organisations to be fully leveraged by the Epping Forest Charity.