

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Epping Forest and Commons – For Decision	Dated: 17/07/2025
Subject: Epping Forest and The Commons Governance Proposals (SEF 16/25)	Public For Decision
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes • provides statutory duties • provides business enabling functions 	Diverse Engaged Communities Dynamic Economic Growth Leading Sustainable Environment Vibrant Thriving Destination Providing Excellent Services Flourishing Public Spaces
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:	Katie Stewart, Environment Executive Director
Report author:	Jacqueline Eggleston, Assistant Director, Epping Forest and Geoff Sinclair, Assistant Director, The Commons

Summary

This report proposes changes to the format of the meetings of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee along with the introduction of new member oversight groups.

Recommendation(s)

Having regard to the City of London Corporation's (CoLC) trustee responsibilities for each of the Natural Environment charities listed in paragraph 32 and in that case being satisfied that it is in the best interests of each relevant charity and its beneficiaries, Members are asked to:

- approve the retention of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee (EF&CC) meetings on a bimonthly basis, holding six meetings each year, however, moving to four formal quarterly meetings for Committee business for decision making with two further meetings focused on strategy and policy development held on site at Epping Forest and / or The Commons.
- endorse the principle of three Epping Forest and Commons Committee Saturday Visits annually, (March, July and November) on the Saturday preceding each Committee meeting that follows in the next week
- Appoint representative members to the proposed oversight and steering group meetings and Wanstead Parkland Steering Group.

Main Report

Background

1. The Epping Forest and Commons Committee (EF&CC) governance arrangements were last reviewed in 2023.

Current Position

2. Since this review there are areas that may now benefit from some revisions.
3. Current reporting arrangements for the Superintendents Update have not effectively met the intentions for business reporting aligned to the financial quarters. This is partly due to lack of detailed business plans to report against, business information being 'owned' elsewhere in the Corporation, and a lack of appropriate tools / resource to collect information.
4. There is also a desire to report more current news updates to meet Members' interest, and role on behalf of the Conservators and trustee, meaning that the reporting dates covered are often mixed within one report.
5. Action Logs have not necessarily aligned with business plan objectives and priorities.
6. In relation to Epping Forest, Local Authority Liaison Group meetings could be further refined to be specific about scope and purpose.
7. 'Lead Member' arrangements are in place to enable greater involvement and best use of individual Members' expertise ahead of matters being reported to the formal Committee. This could be expanded to gain additional benefit.

Options

8. Refine the governance arrangements for the Epping Forest and Commons Committee as outlined in the proposals section of this report. This option is recommended for the reasons set out within the proposals section.
9. Provide comment on the proposals, with some amendments, seeking a further report mapping out the implications of those proposals (if required).

10. Leave governance arrangements as they are currently. This will not make the business improvements intended in the proposals for this report by creating more opportunities for in depth scrutiny and partnership working. This option is not recommended

Proposals

Epping Forest & Commons Committee

11. The arrangements of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee (EF&CC) meetings are currently on a bimonthly basis, holding six meetings each year. Four operate as formal quarterly meetings for Committee business to allow for decision making and the other two are informal meetings. Of these, one is a 'Deep Dive' enabling deeper scrutiny of particular topics, to take place in September, the other an Away Day focused on strategy and policy development to take place in May. The latter two meetings would not have any formal papers.

12. These are proposed to be held, effective from 2026, as follows:

<i>January</i>	Committee meeting covering Q2 (July to September)
<i>March</i>	Committee meeting Q3 (October to December)
<i>May</i>	Away Day off-site
<i>July</i>	Committee meeting Q4 - End of Year
<i>September</i>	Deep Dive
<i>November</i>	Committee meeting Q1 (Apr-June)

13. The EF&CC meetings are to be moved from a Thursday back to a Monday at 11.00am, where at all possible (noting various factors such as clashes with other Committees, the Chair's and senior officer diaries).

14. Committee Members are invited to attend visits to the respective sites three times per year on the Saturday preceding the March, July and November meetings.

<i>March</i>	Epping Forest
<i>July</i>	The Commons
<i>November</i>	Epping Forest

15. Members are requested, as far as possible, to submit questions on for information papers 48 hours in advance of meetings so that officers can obtain a fuller response.

Epping Forest Consultation & Stakeholder Engagement Groups

Epping Forest and Commons Oversight Groups

16. It is proposed that three 'oversight' groups are established for Epping Forest and one oversight group for The Commons. These will replace the previous lead member structure.
17. The aim of these groups is to provide focus on priority areas, allowing for strategic oversight and, where required, more detailed scrutiny of key subject or project areas.
18. The oversight groups will have no decision-making powers but may choose to make recommendations to the Epping Forest and Commons Committee, or to provide more detailed insight into subjects under discussion during the Committee's meetings. They will be managed and co-ordinated by officers within the Environment Department.
19. Members are invited to nominate themselves for one or more of these groups, according to their interest or expertise. The Chair and Deputy Chair will be invited to attend each group.

Oversight Groups	Lead Officer(s)
<i>EF Act 150th Celebrations (EF)</i>	Head of Engagement and PA/Stakeholder Officer
<i>Nature Resilience and Landscape (EF)</i>	Head of Conservation / Conservation Manager
<i>Engagement and Accessibility (EF)</i>	Head of Learning and Access & Development Manager
<i>Nature Resilience and Landscape (The Commons)</i>	Assistant Director (The Commons)

Deer Management Oversight Group.

20. The DMOG was inaugurated in 2022 focusing on the Deer Management Strategy Review to provide oversight of the management of deer across Epping Forest and the Epping Forest Buffer Land. This group will remain until Members consider all objectives have been achieved. The Chair and Deputy Chair will be invited to attend.

Stakeholder Engagement

21. The Epping Forest Local Authority Liaison Group will be removed and replaced with proactive site based or authority-based meetings to target more specific issues and encourage partnership work.
22. Epping Forest Consultative Group revisions have previously been reported to this Committee.

23. Further Project Boards or steering group meetings may be set up to provide additional insight into more complex areas of work. In relation to Epping Forest, a Wanstead Parkland Plan steering group will be set up and it is recommended that a Member of the EF&CC chairs this group.

Corporate and Strategic Implications

Financial implications

24. All the proposals can be met within local risk / grant budgets.

Resource implications

25. The TOM Phase II proposals included provision for a Stakeholder Engagement Officer to support the administration of the new governance arrangements beyond the work of the EF&CC which will continue to be managed by the Town Clerks Department. This post was reviewed and with the majority of the meetings under Epping Forest the work was absorbed into the post of PA and Support Services Officer at Epping Forest.
26. There is no additional resource at The Commons for committee and stakeholder engagement, so this work is delivered by the Superintendent.

Legal implications

27. None

Risk implications

28. None

Equalities implications

29. None

Climate implications

30. None

Security implications

31. None

Charity Implications

32. Epping Forest (number 232990), Ashted Common (number 1051510), Burnham Beeches & Stoke Common (number 232987), West Wickham Common & Spring Park Wood (number 232988) and Coulsdon and other Commons (number 232988-1) are registered charities. Charity Law obliges Members to ensure that the decisions they take in relation to the Charity are taken in the best interests of the Charity.

Conclusion

33. Committee reporting and business arrangements for the Epping Forest and Commons Committee and associated consultative and liaison activity have been

reviewed recommending changes that will enable Members to better monitor activity and progress, while providing stakeholders and beneficiaries more in-depth opportunities to engage with the relevant charities.

Background Papers

Stakeholder Engagement & Lead Member Proposals – Epping Forest and Commons Committee, 13 July 2023

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