

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Epping Forest and Commons Committee – For decision	Dated: 26/01/2026
Subject: The Commons: Licences, wayleaves and produce fees and charges for 2026-27	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flourishing public spaces
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	NA
What is the source of Funding?	
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	NA
Report of: Katie Stewart, Executive Director Environment	For Decision
Report author: Andy Thwaites, Head Ranger of Ashted Common	

Summary

This report presents proposals for an increase in charges levied for activities, produce sales and formal sports. The proposed increase is based on the Consumer Price Index for October 2025 of **3.6%**. If agreed, the increase will take effect on April 1 2026 and cover the 2026-27 financial year.

Recommendation

Members are asked, acting for and on behalf of the Trustee of each of the charities listed in paragraph 25, to:

- Agree the proposed licence fees and sports charges for 2026-27 as itemised in Appendix 2.

Main Report

Background

1. In 2024/25 the licensing of activities and product sales at the Commons raised a total of £152,877. This was a reduction of 20.22% on 2023/24, mainly due to filming income being down by 19.68% at Burnham Beeches and a reduction in licence income.

2. License income returned to normal levels in 2024-25 following an exceptional one-off transaction at Ashtead Common in 2023-24.
3. Sales of produce were 86.46% up, driven mainly by the sale of livestock at the West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons. Animals are sold at auction, so there is no related charge shown on the schedule.
4. Car park charges raised a total of £155,770, an increase of 1.1% on 2023/24.
5. All income from produce, licences and charges is fully reinvested in the management of The Commons with all income credited to the relevant charity's local risk budget.
6. This report presents proposed charges for several different activities across a portfolio of sites. All income received is reinvested into the management of The Commons in accordance with the City Corporation financial regulations. These charges are separate to income received from donations, grants and property rents.
7. The use of The Commons for the siting of equipment or for certain activities requires a licence.
8. All activities are regulated with due regard to the Corporation of London Open Spaces Acts of 1878 and 2018 and any other relevant statutory provisions and, where relevant, the adopted Schemes and Policies.
9. Decisions taken in relation to recommendations in this report need to be made by the City of London Corporation in its capacity as trustee of each of the following charities: Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common, West Wickham and Spring Park Wood, Coulsdon and other Commons and Ashtead Common. The Trustee must be satisfied that the action proposed is in the best interests of each particular charity.

Current Position

10.

Income Activity	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Licensing	£5,209	£31,074	£6,504
Produce Sales	£19,924	£15,282	£28,495*
Filming	£174,485	£136,557	£109,676
Wayleaves	£8,012	£8,721	£7,197
Room Hire	Included above	Included above	£1,005
TOTAL Excl Car parking charges	£207,630	£191,634	£152,877
Car Parking Income	£155,938	£154,049	£155,770
TOTAL Incl Car parking charges	£363,568	£345,683	£308,647

*Relates mostly to livestock sold at auction

11. The 20.22% reduction in income, excluding car parking charges, generated in 2024/25 compared to 2023/24 was partly due to a 19.68% reduction in filming income at Burnham Beeches. Filming income is highly variable.
12. All the licencing information, pricing, terms, and conditions are publicly available, and this process ensures appropriate licences and charges are administered in a fair and transparent manner.
13. Wayleaves are currently charged for private motor gate, and commercial premises access.

Options

1. Option 1 – To increase licence, sports and produce charges (Excluding locally benchmarked charges for car parking) at a figure of 3.6% as detailed in Appendix 2. **This is recommended.**
- a. Option 2 - To keep charges as they are as detailed in Appendix 1. This would be in effect a real terms price cut whilst inflationary increases would still apply to our own expenses. **This is not recommended**

Proposals

14. Proposed charges for 2026-27 are itemised in detail in Appendix 2. The list of charges has been made as complete as possible to ensure all areas of charging are included. When setting fees and charges, officers in the natural environment charities considered the following:
 - a. The CPI rate in October is now used to set the increase percentage, with the 2025 figure of 3.6% being used across the Epping Forest and the Commons charities.
 - b. The budget requirement to generate additional income and to reduce the need to make savings to remain within each charity's core operational grant for 2026-27 from City's Estate.
 - c. The benchmarking of the charges and quality of provision with those of neighbouring facilities, which in many instances are our competitors. In some instances, we will therefore not benchmark against our own properties.
 - d. Work towards attaining full cost recovery, recognising that staffing, equipment, and material costs may have increased greater than 3.6% in some cases.
15. Car parking charges are revised periodically due to the cost of changing signage and other similar operational needs. The next revision is scheduled for December 2026 and work to progress this will be undertaken during 2026. A further update will be presented to Committee following the review.

Key Data

16. Overall earned income, grants and rents raised £1,239,897 for The Commons in 2024-25. This includes income received from neighbouring authorities for mitigation of development pressures within 5.6 km of Burnham Beeches Special Area of Conservation.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications

17. These charges support the Corporate Plan Policy aims and priorities to promote flourishing public spaces

Financial implications

18. City Corporation financial regulations provide that 'When determining fees and charges to persons or external organisations, all departments should recover full costs or submit reasons to the appropriate service Committee when that objective is not met. The Duty to recover costs must be subject to any other overriding statutory provision.'

Legal Implications

19. **Charity Law:** In its role as Trustee of the Ashted Common, Burnham Beeches & Stoke Common and West Wickham Common & Spring Park Wood and Coulsdon and Other Commons registered charities (numbers 1051510, 232987, 232988 and 232988-1) the City Corporation is under a duty to act in the best interests of each charity individually.
20. **Produce Sales:** The City Corporation's charity trustee duty will normally mean obtaining the best price for produce that can be achieved in the market. However, it may be appropriate in some cases to donate produce, or sell it at a discount, where this is an effective way of using the charity's resources to further its charitable purposes or is otherwise in the charity's best interests.
21. **Events and Filming:** Section 7 of the City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Act 2018 provides additional powers to hold and charge for events (including filming) on The Commons having regard to an agreed events policy.
22. **Sports Pitches:** Section 76 of the Public Health Acts Amendment Act 1907 (applied to the Commons by Section 4 of the City of London (Various Powers) Act 1933) allows for areas for cricket, football and games to be set apart. Section 56 of the Public Health Act 1925 (applied to the Commons by Section 4 of the City of London (Various Powers) Act 1933) allows for reasonable sums to be charged for their use.
23. **Car Parking:** Section 9(2) of the City of London (Various Powers) Act 1977 allows for areas of parking to be provided for the purpose of providing or improving opportunities for the enjoyment of the open spaces by the public. Under section

9(4) of the 1977 Act, reasonable charges may be made for any facilities under section 9

Property Implications

24. Licensing various third-party temporary activities that the City Corporation is willing to permit across The Commons should ensure that the City Corporation retains full and proper control of the sites and able to prevent misuse or damage.

Charity Implications

25. Ashtead 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 relevant Charity are taken in the best interests of that Charity. However, it may be appropriate in some cases to donate produce, or sell it at a discount, where this is an effective way of using the charity's resources to further its charitable purposes or is otherwise in the charity's best interests.

Resource Implications

26. Fees and charges reflect the whole cost to the charities and seek as a minimum to achieve whole cost recovery.

Risk Implications

27. Raising fees by the proposed 3.6% may attract negative publicity for the City of London Corporation possibly mitigated by the car park charges remaining unchanged.

Equalities Implications

28. Charitable and not for profit organisations receive a 50% discount on most fees and charges. This allows smaller and large charitable organisations and community groups to use The Commons at a lower cost whilst still meeting the core costs to The Commons's charities from the impact of that activity.
29. Providing consistency in charging and decision making through the licencing of activities provides equality of opportunity to individuals and groups applying to use The Commons.

Climate implications

30. Licences seek to control the number, location and suitability of activities on The Commons to protect its environment. Sustainability criteria are included in heads of terms for larger events.

Security implications

31. Licences ensure that activities held on The Commons comply with all health, safety and other relevant legislation and enables basic due diligence to be undertaken on the licensee.

32. The Natural Environment Department Events Policy does not allow:

- i. Events which could be damaging to community relations
- ii. Events associated with extremist organisations or proscribed organisations
- iii. Events which are considered discriminatory or offensive
- iv. Illegal activities

Conclusion

33. The charging proposals ensure that each of The Commons charities, where possible, recoups expenses incurred due to third party use of their land and resources.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – 2025/2026 charges

Appendix 2 - Proposed charges 2026/27

Appendix 3 - The Commons, Open Spaces Departmental Events Policy (Part Two) with minor revisions to the Burnham Beeches elements to match better mitigation actions

Background Papers

1. The Commons - Licences, sports, wayleaves and produce fees and charges
EF&CC Report January 2025
2. Open Spaces Departmental Events Policy (Part One) undated

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