

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Epping Forest and Commons Committee – For decision	Dated: 26/01/2026
Subject: Licences, and produce income and charges for 2026/27 (SEF 02/26)	Public report: For Decision
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes • provides statutory duties • provides business enabling functions 	2,3,4
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
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Summary

This report updates your Committee on the performance of charges levied for licensed activities, formal sports, produce sales and car park charges in the last full financial year 2024/25.

This report also makes proposals for the setting of fees and charges for activities in Epping Forest for the forthcoming financial year of 2026/27.

In 2024/25 the licensing of activities and product sales on Forest Land raised a total of £508,736.

Car park charges raised a total of £489,238 net.

Charges for formal sports across 2024/25 raised a total of £618,423 with Association Football and Golf earnings income totalling £81,894 and £536,529 respectively.

All income from produce, licences and charges is fully reinvested in the management of Epping Forest with all income credited to the charity's (operational) local risk budget.

Proposals are presented for a price increase of **3.6%** for the financial year 2026/27 based on the CPI (Consumer Price Index) as released by the Office

for National Statistics for the month of October (2025.) This is a move away from using RPI, as this index is no longer widely used as an inflation measure by the government.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the income generated in 2024/25 from charged activities in Epping Forest and
- Agree the proposed licence fees for 2026/27 as itemised in Appendix 2.
- To reaffirm the delegation of powers to the Superintendent to make minor variation to these fees in respect of filming and other licensing where it appears to the Superintendent that the scale of the activity and impact upon the Forest indicates that a different fee is required in order to ensure an appropriate contribution towards the costs incurred.

Main Report

Background

1. This report encompasses several different activities on Forest Land for which a charge is levied. The charges generally seek to reflect the costs incurred by the City of London in administering and enabling the activity. All income is applied for reinvestment into the management of the Forest in accordance with the City Corporation financial regulations.
2. Licences are administered through a steering group of officers to ensure that all relevant sections and staff are consulted before a decision is made and to ensure there is an equitable decision-making process for any customer.
3. All relevant activities are regulated with due regard to the Conservators' duties under the Epping Forest Acts 1878 and 1880 and any other relevant statutory provisions.

Current Position

4. Licensing activity on Forest Land raised £486,080 in 2024/25 as detailed in Appendix 1. This is an increase of 103% from £238,938 for 2023/24 as detailed in Appendix 1. This increase was due to two large filming licences, and an increase in regulatory licenses for utility companies working on Epping Forest.
5. Car park charges raised a total of £489,238 net of commission.
6. £22,656 was made from the sale of produce (venison, beef and wood) in 2024/25. The sold produce is ancillary to the conservation work and management activities at Epping Forest conducted by the Conservators.
7. A total of £1,616,397 was generated through charging in 2024/25.

8. The value of these products is dictated by market forces, and the income is reported annually (Appendix.1).
9. Charges for formal sports across 2024/25 raised a total of £618,423 gross income. Of this, the golf course made a net profit of £123,000 on its local risk budget.

Options

Option 1

10. To increase licence fees by 3.6% as detailed in Appendix 2 (in line with CPI). **This is recommended.**

11. Agree to delegate powers to the Superintendent to make minor variation to these fees in respect of filming and other licensing where it appears to the Superintendent that the scale of activity and impact upon the Forest indicates that a different fee is required in order to ensure an appropriate contribution to the costs incurred. **This is recommended.**

Option 2

12. To keep charges as they are. This would be in effect a real terms price cut whilst inflationary increases would still apply to our own expenses, which would be a disbenefit to the Charity. This effective reduction in income would need to be absorbed by Epping Forest's operational local risk budget. **This is not recommended.**

Proposals

13. 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. Upon your Committee's approval these charges will be published on the City of London's website and be available by hardcopy from the Epping Forest Offices. When setting fees and charges officers considered the following factors:

- A figure of 3.6% has been proposed across Epping Forest and the Commons Charities based on the October 2025 CPI figure published by the Office for National Statistics.
- The benchmarking of the charges and quality of provision is with those of neighbouring facilities, which in many instances are our competitors.
- Charges are made as far as possible to attain full cost recovery, recognising that staffing, equipment, and material costs may have increased greater than 3.6% in some cases.

- Car parking charges were increased from 1st September 2025 and there is no proposal to increase for financial year 2026/27.

14. There are occasions where the scale of the activity and impact upon the Forest do not sit neatly with the licence guidelines, for example, major feature films which are only requiring small scale background shots or large-scale events which cross Forest but aren't contained wholly upon it so the impact is minor. On such occasions the delegation of powers to the Superintendent to make minor variation to the set fees is requested to ensure an appropriate contribution towards the costs incurred by the Conservators in connection with Epping Forest.

Key Data

Corporate & Strategic Implications **Corporate Plan**

15. Flourishing Public Spaces

Natural Environment Prospectus

16. Charity Income Strategy

Financial implications

17. 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 e.g. Freedom of Information Act 2000 or in the case of any charities for which the City Corporation is Trustee subject to any decision taken by the Trustee where it is determined after proper consideration to be in the best interests of the charity in furthering the charity's objects for the public benefit not to seek full cost recovery.'

Legal Implications

18. Horse riding on Epping Forest is regulated under sections 9 and 10 of the City of London (Various Powers) Act 1990 and by the Additional Byelaws for the Regulation of Horse Riding allowed on 14 May 2003. The Conservators may make reasonable charges for the riding or exercising of horses, by reference to the reasonable cost of the maintenance of ways designated for horses, and the reasonable cost of providing the regulatory regime. Any increases to the charges are limited to no more than the increase in the Retail Prices Index for the period that has elapsed since the charges were last fixed. The Conservators shall take all reasonable steps to notify the public of the revised charges not less than fourteen days before they take effect.

19. Section 33(1)(i) of the Epping Forest Act 1878 empowers the Conservators, "To fell, cut, lop and manage in due course the timber and other trees, pollards

and underwoods, and to sell and dispose of the timber cuttings and loppings, and to receive the proceeds..."

20. In its role as trustee of the Epping Forest Charitable Trust, the City Corporation is under a duty to act in the best interests of the charity. This 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. Section 33(1)(xiii) of the Epping Forest Act 1878 empowers the Conservators to set apart such parts of the Forest as they think fit for the use of the inhabitants to play at sports. Section 76(1)(b) of the Public Health Acts Amendment Act 1907 allows the Conservators to set apart any such part of the Forest as may be fixed for the purpose of any game or recreation, and to exclude the public from the part set apart while it is in actual use for that purpose; and under section 56(5) of the Public Health Act 1925 the Conservators may charge reasonable sums for the use thereof.
22. Under section 8 of the City of London (Various Powers) Act 1977 the Conservators may provide facilities and services for the purpose of providing or improving opportunities for the enjoyment of the Forest by the public, which would include the provision of instructors or guides, and parking places for vehicles, and may make reasonable charges for those facilities and services.
23. Section 7 of the City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Act 2018 provides additional powers to hold and charge for events on Forest Land, including film production, having regard to the agreed events policy.

Property Implications

24. The granting of personal licences does not constitute alienation of Forest Land for the purposes of the Epping Forest Act 1878 and is not therefore prohibited so long as the Forest is preserved. Regulating such temporary uses is considered to be the best way of preserving the Forest and avoids any possibility of any prescriptive rights being acquired. As above, the Conservators must generally ensure that any licence granted is on the best terms reasonably obtainable for the Epping Forest charity or is otherwise in the charity's best interests.
25. Licensing various 3rd party temporary activities that the City Corporation is willing to permit upon the Forest should ensure that the City Corporation retains full and proper control of the Forest and able to prevent misuse.

Charity Implications

26. 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.

Resource Implications

27. Fees and charges, with the exception of football which remains subsidised, reflect the whole cost to the charity and seek to as a minimum whole cost recovery.

Risk Implications

28. The alteration of the charging structure for compounds and trenching will in some cases be a significant additional cost to, in the main, utility providers. However, the charges reflect the true cost to the charity of work done on the land by private commercial utility companies.

Equalities Implications

29. The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. People with protected characteristics should not be discriminated against including when using any service, provided publicly or privately, whether that service requires payment or not. The 2010 Act defines protected characteristics as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. Having due regard to the essential principle that people with protected characteristics should not be discriminated against and in contemplation of the proposals set out in this report overall consideration has been given in respect of equalities implications. As a result of this screening and the conclusion reached, a full Equality Analysis is not recommended at this time.

30. Providing consistency in charging and decision making through licencing of activities provides equality of opportunity to individuals and groups applying to use the Forest. The proposals as set out in this report do not adversely impact, substantially disadvantage or unlawfully discriminate against any protected characteristics.

Climate implications

31. Licences seek to control the number, location and suitability of activities in Epping Forest to protect its environment. Sustainability criteria is included in heads of terms for larger events.

Security implications

32. Licences ensure that activities held on Epping Forest land comply with all health, safety and other relevant legislation and enables basic due diligence to be undertaken on the licensee.

33. The Open Spaces 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

34. Epping Forest continues to provide excellent value for money recreational opportunities. The charging proposals ensure that as a charity where possible our expenses incurred due to third party use of our land are recouped and reinvested into the maintenance of the Forest and that activities can be checked to ensure relevant safety and legislative measures are met.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Income generated 2024/25

Appendix 2 – Proposed charges 2026/27, with 2025/26 figures alongside for reference.

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