

Committee(s)	Dated:
Natural Environment Board	10 July 2023
West Ham Park Committee	10 July 2023
Epping Forest and Commons Committee	13 July 2023
Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queens Park Committee	17 July 2023
Subject: Open Spaces Business Plan 2022/23 – Year End Performance Report	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	Outcomes: 2, 3, 5, 10, 11, 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
Report of: Executive Director, Environment	For Information
Report author: Joanne Hill, Business Planning and Compliance Manager	

Summary

This report provides Members with a review of the delivery of the 2022/23 high-level Open Spaces Business Plan which was approved by the Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee in December 2021. As the 2022/23 Business Plan was written prior to the formation of the new Environment Department, it referred to the ‘Natural Environment Division’ as ‘Open Spaces’.

The Business Plan set out the major workstreams and key performance indicators (KPIs) for 2022/23. This report summarises the progress made against those workstreams and performance indicators.

An update on the end-of-year financial position is provided in the separate Chamberlain’s Revenue Outturn Report also presented to this Committee.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the content of this report and its appendices.

Main Report

Background

1. The Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee approved the Open Spaces high-level Business Plan 2022/23 (Appendix 1) on 7 December 2021. The Business Plan set out the major workstreams and key performance indicators (KPIs) for 2022/23.
2. Under the Corporation’s new Target Operating Model, with effect from 1 April 2022 the former Open Spaces Department became the Natural Environment Division of the new Environment Department. As the 2022/23 Business Plan was

written prior to the formation of the new Environment Department, it refers to the Natural Environment Division as 'Open Spaces'.

3. To ensure Committees are kept informed, progress made against the high-level Business Plan is reported to you every six months. This approach allows Members to ask questions and have input into areas of particular importance to them.

Current Position

Major workstreams

4. Throughout the year, your Committee has been kept informed of progress made against the major workstreams included in the 2022/23 Business Plan by way of regular Assistant Director Update reports and/or separate detailed reports. A summary of progress made during the year is presented below.
5. **Finalise the new open spaces vision and 5-year improvement plan and progress its implementation.**
 - Work to finalise the new vision and 5-year Improvement Plan will continue during 2023/24. Members will be consulted and kept informed of progress.
 - The high-level Business Plan for 2023/24, sets out the key priorities for the coming year, and was approved by the Natural Environment Board in May 2023.
6. **Progress the landscaping of Finsbury Circus, the access and security improvements at the Heath's swimming facilities, and the replacement playground at West Ham Park.**
 - The project to redevelop the Finsbury Circus site progressed. The contract was awarded and contractors will commence work on site in autumn 2023.
 - The project to improve safety, access and security at the three Bathing Ponds at Hampstead Heath has progressed through the project Gateway process and is expected to be delivered to timescales, with completion due in August 2023.
 - The new playground at West Ham Park was completed and opened in August 2022.
7. **Progress the Carbon removal projects to deliver the open spaces element of the Climate Action Strategy.**
 - This work continued throughout the year.
 - Carbon sequestration and storage calculations were completed by consultants who also produced a report on opportunities for increasing sequestration.
 - As opportunities in terms of kiloton (kt) of carbon are small, and following the heatwave of summer 2022, consultants are working on a habitats climate vulnerability assessment and mitigation plan.
 - Initial stakeholder engagement on the plan for Epping Forest's Copped Hall was undertaken in autumn 2022.

8. Actively engage in the review of Chilterns and Surrey Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) boundaries

- Natural England is responsible for considering which areas in England meet the criterion, set down in law, for being included in an AONB, and whether to proceed with their designation.
- Natural England did not consider Coulsdon Commons, Kenley Common or Riddlesdown to meet the criterion required for an AONB. However, part of Farthing Downs was considered suitable.
- In May 2023, the Epping Forest and Commons Committee agreed to support the inclusion of part of Farthing Downs in the proposed Happy Valley extension to the Surrey Hills AONB.

Key Performance Indicators (KPI) 2022/23

9. Performance against KPIs has been monitored throughout the year. A summary of performance during 2022/23 is presented below.

Performance Measure Description	Target 2022/23	Performance 2022/23 (Full year result)
Retain our Green Heritage Site Accreditation	13 Awards	13
Retain our Green Flag Awards	14 Awards	14
Increase the number of 'visitors' to our web pages. <i>(in comparison to 2021/22 performance).</i>	>954,063 'visits'	921,079
Increase the number of hours of tennis court usage across all sites <i>(in comparison to 2021/22 performance).</i>	Total >66,697 hours <i>West Ham Park >23,610 Parliament Hill >22,075 Golders Hill Park >8,131 Queen's Park >12,881</i>	Total: 73,489 hours <i>West Ham Park: 22,364 Parliament Hill: 24,969 Golders Hill Park: 9,504 Queen's Park: 16,652</i>
Health and safety accident investigations completed within 21 days.	85% <i>(Corporate target)</i>	85.1% <i>(Due to implementation of new management system, figure covers the period from 23/12/2022 only.)</i>

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications – The monitoring of key improvement objectives and performance measures links to the achievement of the aims and outcomes set out in the Corporate Plan 2018-23.

Financial Implications – Financial implications are addressed in the separate Chamberlain’s Revenue Outturn Report presented to this Committee.

Resource implications – The Natural Environment Division continues to progress through the Target Operating Model (TOM) process.

Risk implications - Risks to achieving the objectives set out in the Business Plan are identified and managed in accordance with the City of London Risk Management Framework and Charity Commission requirements. Risk Registers are reported to Members quarterly.

Climate implications – The work of Natural Environment Division supports the delivery of the Corporate Climate Action Strategy through its Carbon Removals Project, and a range of other workstreams.

Charity implications - Many of the Natural Environment sites are registered charities. Any decisions must be taken in the best interests of the relevant charity.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Open Spaces high-level Business Plan 2022/23

Background Reports

‘Open Spaces Business Plan for 2022/23’

Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee, 7 December 2021

West Ham Park Committee, 7 December 2021

Epping Forest & Commons Committee, 17 January 2022

Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen’s Park Committee, 9 February 2022

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