

HAMPSTEAD HEATH, HIGHGATE WOOD AND QUEEN'S PARK COMMITTEE
Monday, 17 July 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee held at Committee Rooms, 2nd Floor, West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 17 July 2023 at 4.00 pm

Present

Members:

William Upton KC (Chair)
John Beyer
Councillor Marcus Boyland
Timothy Butcher
John Foley
Caroline Haines (Ex-Officio Member)
Michael Hudson
Pauline Lobo
Deputy Charles Edward Lord
Wendy Mead
Andrew McMurtrie (Ex-Officio Member)
Councillor Arjun Mittra

Officers:

Nathan Adjei	- Environment Department
Emily Brennan	- Environment Department
Ellen Fouweather	- Town Clerk's Department
Julie Fittock	- City Surveyor's Department
Clem Harcourt	- Chamberlain's Department
Joanna Hill	- Environment Department
Stefania Horne	- Environment Department
Elisabeth Hannah	- Environment Department
Jack Joslin	- Bridge House Estates
Jonathan Meares	- Environment Department
Bob Roberts	- Environment Department
Blair Stringman	- Town Clerk's Department
Edward Wood	- Comptroller and City Solicitor's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Alderman Gregory Jones, John Absalom, Jason Groves, Wendy Mead and Alethea Silk.

2. MEMBERS DECLARATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

3.1 **To agree the public minutes and non-public summary of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee meeting held on 17 May 2023**

RESOLVED – That the public minutes and non-public summary of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee meeting held on 17 May 2023 be approved as an accurate record

3.2 **To note the minutes of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee meeting held on 19 June 2023**

RESOLVED – To note the minutes of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee meeting held on 19 June 2023.

4. **INTRODUCTION OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT DIRECTOR**

The Committee received a verbal update of the Natural Environment Director.

The Natural Environment Director informed the board that she had been in post just over a month and had seen firsthand the fantastic variety of work that was being undertaken by colleagues in the Natural Environment Department. The Director explained that she had already visited several sites and looked forward to visiting and meeting colleagues from other areas.

The Director informed the board of her previous work, noting how she had trained previously as an ecologist and had worked for a range of nature conservation organisations such as the London Wildlife Trust, the Butterfly Conservation, and the Zoological Society in London.

The Director noted that her top priority in the first month was to familiarise herself with the Target Operating Model which was taking place and reach out to all those staff affected to ensure consistency across the Corporation.

MATTERS ARISING

The Committee received a verbal update of the Interim Executive Director, Environment.

The Interim Executive Director, Environment noted he would bring institutional knowledge and experience to help navigate the complexities of the organisation and would work effectively with Members when dealing with governance issues. He highlighted his commitment to ensuring the department's voice was heard at the highest levels of the organisation, believing this to be essential to address challenges and recognise the exceptional services provided by colleagues. He noted his aims were straightforward: collaborate with members, ensure proper governance, support with institutional knowledge, and ensure the department gain the recognition that they rightfully deserve.

RESOLVED – That, the verbal update from the Natural Environment Director and the Interim Executive Director, Environment be noted by the board.

5. **ASSISTANT DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment providing Members with an update on matters relating to Hampstead Heath since May 2023.

The Assistant Director, North London Open Spaces updated the Committee noting that the projects on a specific page were primarily meant for informational purposes. Notably, the swimming facility and the access and security project were currently marked in red due to issues identified by contractors on the site. The project management team, led by City Surveyor's, was closely monitoring, and addressing the challenges to mitigate any potential timeline and budget delays. It was noted that although the project remains in the red category as these solutions were still in progress.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

6. HAMPSTEAD HEATH BATHING PONDS AND LIDO ANNUAL REVIEW 2022/23

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment providing Members with a review of the Swimming season during 2022/23 at the Bathing Ponds and the Parliament Hill Lido.

The Committee received information regarding a substantial surge in the utilisation of both the ponds and the Lido, with particular attention drawn to the growing popularity of cold-water swimming. It was noted that there had been approximately 600,000 swims recorded throughout the year, signifying a significant 22% increase in comparison to the previous year. Furthermore, officers emphasised encouraging developments, such as the increased usage of the booking app, even during less favourable weather conditions. It was also revealed that the department was currently in the process of developing a new booking system to gain a more comprehensive understanding of user behaviour and emerging trends.

The Committee was additionally briefed on a recent issue that transpired at the Lido, involving a substantial and concerning leak. Officers expressed optimism that the measures undertaken would effectively rectify the situation, thereby reinstating the Lido's normal operational status very soon.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE REPORT

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment concerning risk management update regarding Hampstead Heath and Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Kilburn.

Concern was raised by Members about the maintenance of buildings and equipment risks, with requests for more information on required works and the potential impact on the City's reputation due to building conditions. It was noted that detailed lists of works were not available yet but were being prepared as part of the Operational Property Asset Review.

Additionally, discrepancies in risk levels were mentioned, particularly plant and tree diseases, with some cross-divisional risk registers indicating higher risks due to variations in the charities' risk scores. Members expressed their dissatisfaction with the high-risk levels regarding maintenance of buildings and urged for a sense of urgency, proposing an earlier report rather than waiting for the next committee meeting. The Chair noted the importance of having this report before a specific upcoming meeting to argue for an increased budget to address the risks.

The discussion concluded with the acknowledgment of the urgency, and the officers were encouraged to provide the report as soon as possible while allowing them some leeway in determining the exact timing. The newly appointed officers were also urged to understand the gravity of the situation and act promptly.

Members agreed to remove the phrase "and mitigate" from the recommendation, as it was suggested that effectively identifying the risks was more appropriate at this stage, with a future report focusing on mitigation.

RESOLVED – That, Members confirm, on behalf of the City Corporation as Trustee, that the registers appended to the report satisfactorily identified the key risks to the charities and that appropriate systems are in place to effectively identify risks.

8. **REVENUE OUTTURN 2022/23 - HAMPSTEAD HEATH, HIGHGATE WOOD AND QUEEN'S PARK**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment.

The Chamberlain's Department presented the final revenue outturn for the committee's 2022-2023 budget. The report compared the final revenue position for the year with the final agreed budget. The report also highlighted three local risk carry-forward bids related to the committee.

Officers clarified that one of the bids was approved, while the remaining two were not, as they would go through the cyclical works program managed by city surveyors instead. The Committee discussed the underspend and the reasons behind it, with a focus on vacancies and additional income generation, discussion revolved around the implications for the next year's budget.

RESOLVED – That, the report and the proposed carry forward of local risk underspending to 2023/24 be noted.

9. **OPEN SPACES BUSINESS PLAN 2022/23 - YEAR END PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment providing 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.

Officers updated on the progress of implementing the strategic framework and annual plan. While there were some actions that were not yet initiated due to the need to fill key positions in the department's structure, it was noted that significant progress had been made. An emphasis was placed on the branding efforts for the zoo, aiming to improve facilities and generate more income. This included creating an online presence with adoption schemes, birthday party options, animal feeding experiences, and a focus on donations to enhance sustainability. The discussion also touched on managing the transition of key personnel and the development unit, with the hope that these roles would be filled soon to further accelerate progress.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

10. **SENIOR OFFICER RECRUITMENT**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment concerning the senior officer recruitment procedure for the Assistant Director, North London Open Spaces.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

11. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

There were no questions.

12. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

There was no urgent business.

13. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED: The following matters relate to business under the remit of the Court of Common Council acting for the City Corporation as charity Trustee, to which Part VA and Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 public access to meetings provisions do not apply. The following items contain sensitive information which it is not in the best interests of the charity to consider in a public meeting (engaging similar considerations as under paragraphs 3 and 5 of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Act) and will be considered in non-public session.

14. **MARKETING APPROACH TO RETENDER CAFES AT HAMPSTEAD HEATH, HIGHGATE WOODS, QUEEN'S PARK AND GOLDERS HILL PARK**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Natural Environment.

15. **HISTORICAL INCOME REPORT (2017/18-2023/24) FOR HIGHGATE WOOD AND QUEEN'S PARK**

The Committee received a report of Executive Director, Environment.

16. **HISTORICAL INCOME REPORT (2017/18-2023/24) FOR HAMPSTEAD HEATH**

The Committee received a report of Executive Director, Environment.

17. CORPORATE CHARITIES REVIEW SCOPING EXERCISE TO SUPPORT THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT CHARITIES REVIEW

The Committee received a joint report of Managing Director Bridge House Estates and Natural Environment Director.

18. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

There were no questions.

19. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED

There was no urgent business.

20. TOM PHASE II UPDATE

The Committee received a verbal update of the Interim Executive Director, Environment.

The meeting ended at 6.20pm

Chairman

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