



OPEN SPACES DEPARTMENT

‘The Commons’

**Planning together, managing collaboratively,
delivering locally.**

Divisional Plan 2015 - 2018

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Superintendent's Foreword

The City of London Corporation has protected and managed parks, gardens and open spaces in and around London for over 135 years. In 1880 the City Corporation acquired Burnham Beeches near Windsor, an ancient woodland and medieval wood pasture of peerless splendour. In 1883 the City Corporation acquired the Coulsdon Commons, beautiful woods and downs located close to Croydon in South London. Later these four Commons were joined and enhanced by West Wickham Common then Spring Park, both near Bromley. More recently the fabulous ancient oak woodland of Ashted Common, near Leatherhead, was acquired and lastly in 2007, Stoke Common, a rare fragment of heath near Gerrards Cross.

'The Commons' Division was formed in 2015 bringing the management of these sites under a unified team of rangers, conservation specialists and support services staff, led by the Superintendent based at Burnham Beeches. This 'Divisional Plan' sits centrally within a hierarchy of Corporate, Departmental and local, site based plans and policies. Each has a clear link to the other and ensures that our work contributes to the aims of the Open Spaces Department and remains relevant to the City Corporation.

In many ways this document is aspirational as it sets out the direction of travel for the new Division rather than the detail of what we will deliver. Much of the detail of policy and working practice has yet to be identified and agreed and this will only come with the passage of time. As tempting as it might be to rush that process I am certain that only by allowing ourselves time to recognise and resolve and occasionally accept our inconsistencies, will we reap the largest dividends. Amongst those challenges is the relative remoteness of the nine individual sites from one another, their existence as four independent charitable trusts and their overall geographic spread across three counties. This Division Plan is our first, significant step on a journey that aims to deliver clear communications and effective management to bridge these barriers. The achievement of consistently high standards, wherever the sites are located and whatever the resources available, should be both our purpose and our litmus test.

Each site is a high quality, accessible and thriving open space managed by staff who form part of and are supported by, their local communities. In this manner each open space is provided 'in perpetuity' for future generations to enjoy and within which wildlife can thrive. This success can only be achieved through the dedication of our employees, volunteers, contractors and partner organisations. The aim of ensuring that these wonderful open spaces continue to provide for enjoyable recreation activities whilst ensuring that they remain wildlife rich appears at first sight to be quite simple. However, over the coming years there will be times when compromise will be needed and others where a clear line in the sand should be drawn. Such decisions will require close cooperation with our partners, local communities and the wider visiting public as it is only in this manner that we can hope to achieve their long-term understanding and support.

Andy Barnard.

Superintendent, 'The Commons'

Section 1. Plans, Policies, Links and Responsibilities.

‘The Gold and Silver Threads’

How ‘The Commons’ Plans and Policies fit with those of the Open Spaces Department and City.

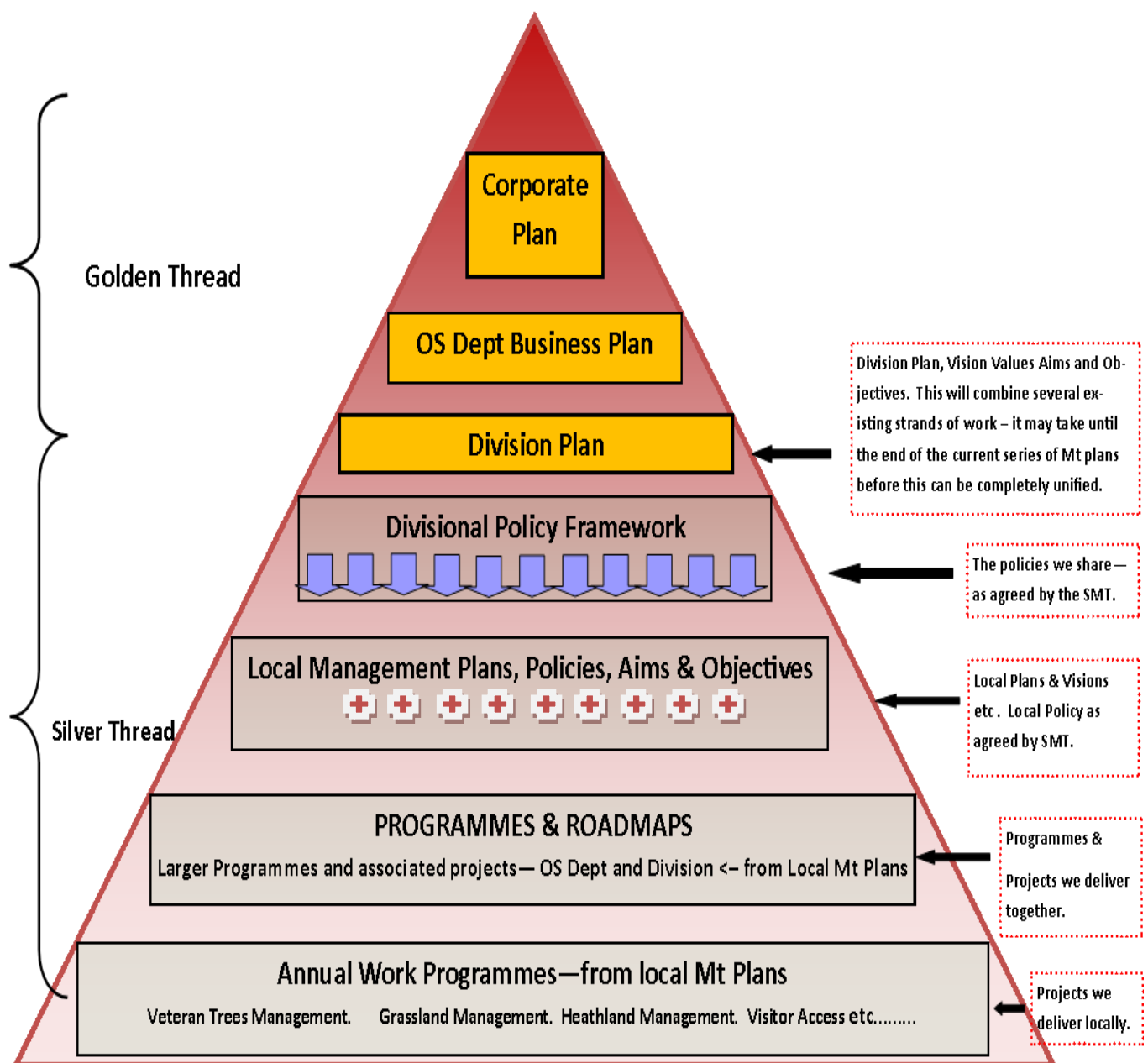


Diagram 1

Responsibilities

‘Where they sit and how they fit’

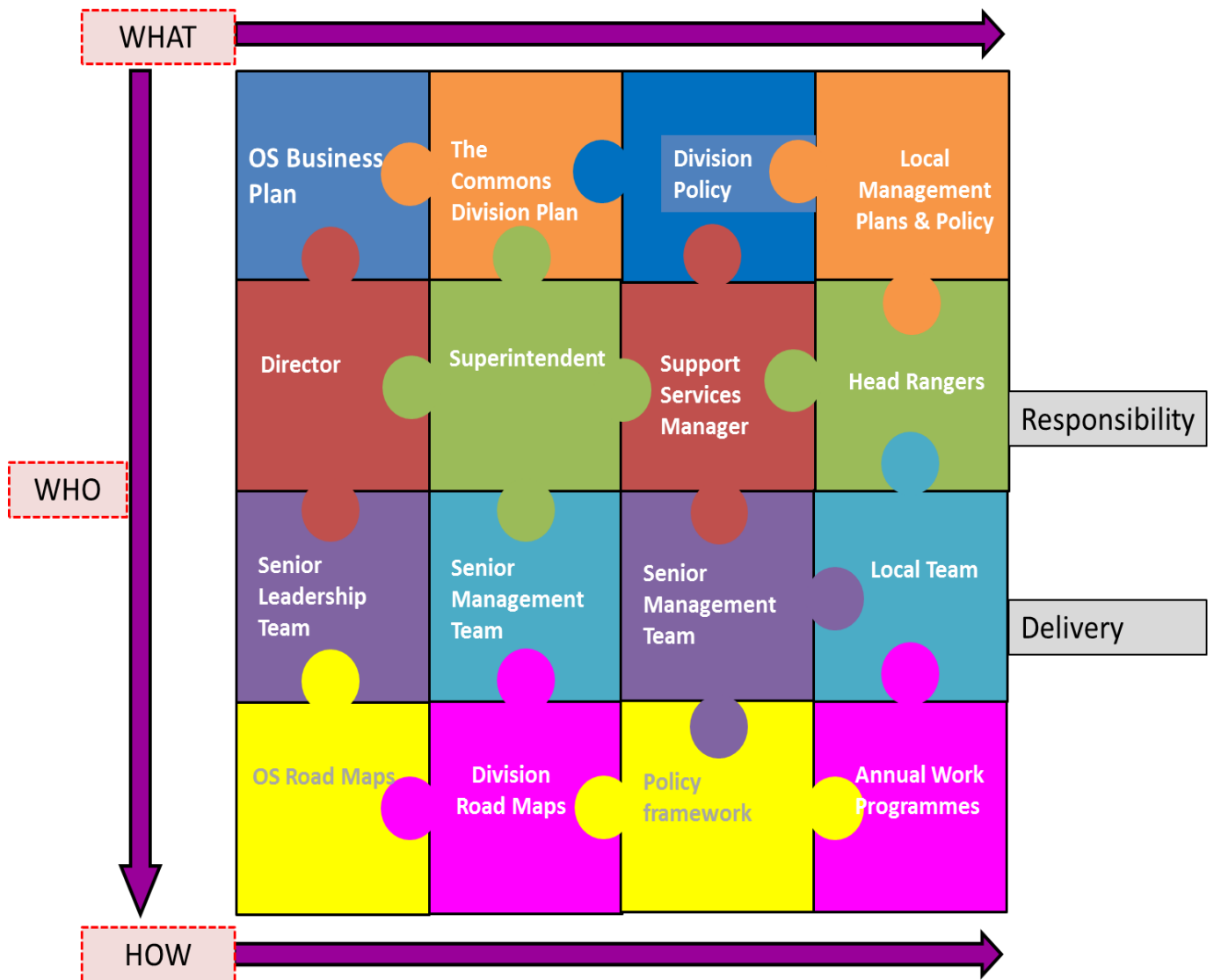


Diagram 2

The Commons Team

‘How the teams fit and support each other’

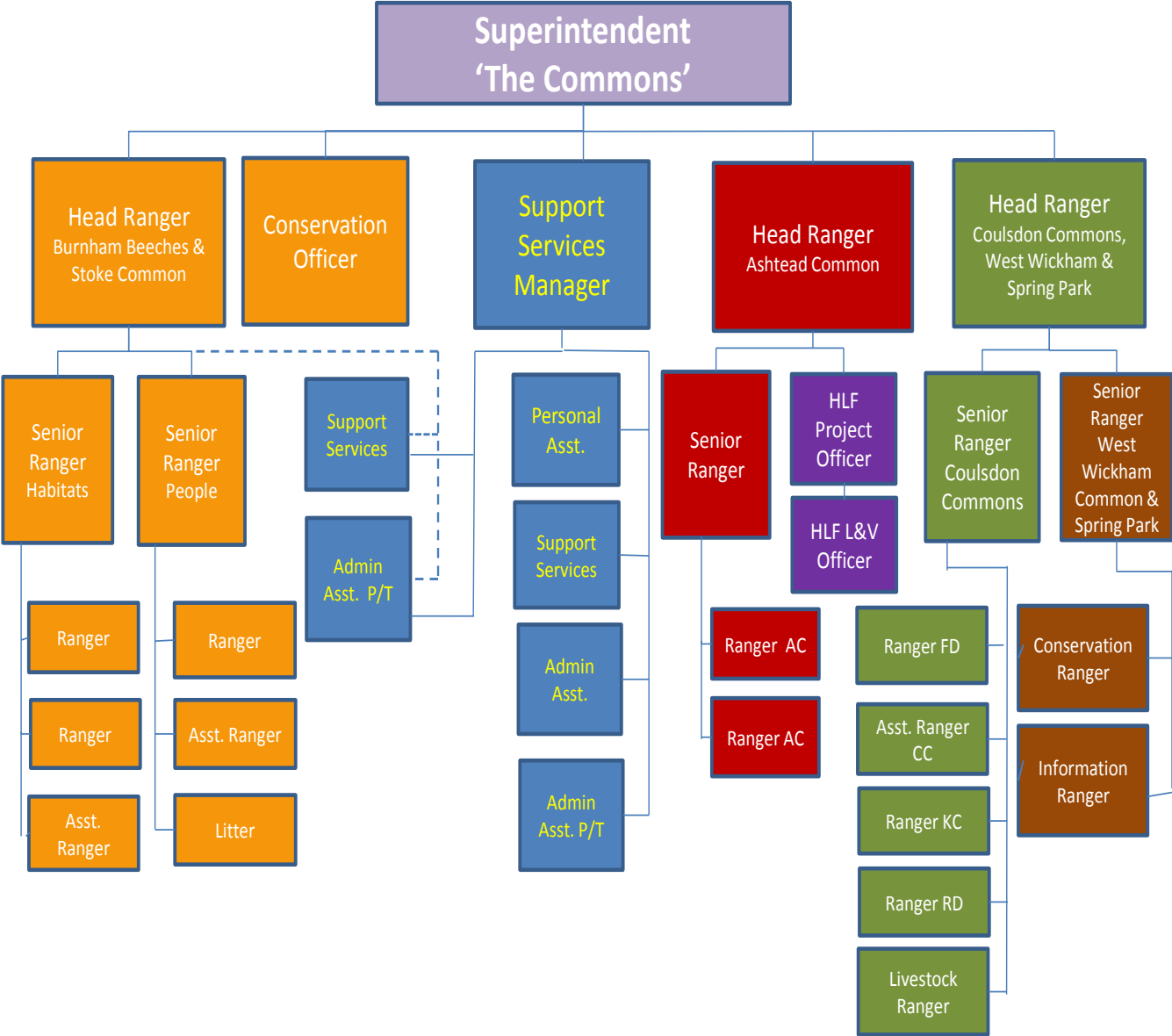


Diagram 3

Section 2 - Making sense of the plan and using it!

The purpose of this document is to remind us of our direction of travel and help to ensure that when the division is presented with choices, we don't inadvertently stray from the most sensible path.

Diagram 1

Sets out in simple terms where the Division Plan sits in terms of the 'plan hierarchy' of the Open Spaces Department and the City of London. For a further analysis please refer to the Open Spaces Business plan 2015-18 and the Corporate Plan 2015-19

It also sets the context for our strategic aims, values and behaviours and shows how these will be met by our shared plans, policies and programmes. It accepts that we may need to reflect these as general principals within more local plans, visions, objectives, policies and work programmes. This will be an ongoing challenge for the Senior Management Team.

A governing principal should be that overarching policies, plans etc. should be identified and agreed wherever possible by the SMT and developed and coordinated by the Support Services Manager.

Any differentiation to provide a local context will be with the agreement of the SMT, and developed by the appropriate Head Ranger, assisted as necessary by the SSM. Appropriate elements of these local documents will be shared wherever possible to maintain consistency across sites. Staff should be involved in this local decision making process wherever it is felt that benefit will accrue.

Diagram 2

Builds on the above by showing how the various local, divisional and departmental teams will work together to achieve the bigger picture for the Department.

Diagram 3

Indicates our current divisional working structure and who ultimately delivers the work described in the preceding diagrams.

Governing Principals

Whilst much can be said about plans and policies, of equal importance is the spirit in which we work together as a team to ensure that we are an operationally cohesive division capable of clear and timely communications. This is perhaps encapsulated in the following statement which should be used as both a reminder and measure of our success:

'Planning together, managing collaboratively, delivering locally'

Standards and KPI's

Behind each value or objective are our (often unwritten) standards. Sometimes we use KPI's and national approaches to achieve common standards. Green Flag and Investors in People are good examples of this. Occasionally the City or Open Spaces Department provides them for us e.g. through various policies, standing orders and audits such as finance, H&S and Sustainability.

However, we must also develop our own standards for many of our operational activities. As an amalgamation of three separate 'divisions' we have, over many years, developed

slightly differing approaches to the same issues and we must, as a priority, begin to identify and agree what should be adopted for all sites and what should be dealt with more locally. This process will be led by the Superintendent and the Support Services Manager who, with the help of the SMT will identify priorities, provide timetables, encourage progress and monitor outcomes. This will be a 'work in progress' to be concluded by the end of this plan.

To 'us' these issues may appear to be purely bureaucratic or perhaps taken for granted as 'common practice'. From a customer point of view they may well be 'expectations' to which is attached great importance and sensitivity. As a demonstration:

CV1. 'Provide welcome, safe and secure sites for people and wildlife'.

This speaks of our ultimate aim but 'unwritten & beneath' sit both the common and differentiated standards in use across the division for the two audiences mentioned i.e. people and wildlife. A brief analysis produces:

- Habitat/conservation work programmes
- Provision of uniformed and appropriately resourced staff
- Rotas to provide cover during operational hours, 365 days a year
- Emergency contact numbers to ensure staff are available outside of standard operational hours
- Policies such as those covering Health and Safety and our patrolling activities
- Monitoring and research to that we can better understand and adapt to the needs of visitors and wildlife.

All of the above can be further analysed to reveal similarities and differences in approach across the Division and it will be for the SMT to slowly unravel these and develop a more standardised approach whilst accepting the need to acknowledge local diversity. Any desire to move independently should be openly discussed and challenged and outcomes agreed by the SMT. Ultimately this sort of local detail should be expressed in the site management plans at their next drafting.

A legal duty to manage

The City of London's open spaces are protected under their own Acts of Parliament, brought in to acquire land for the recreation and enjoyment of the public and to protect these sites from development and enclosure. The Corporation of London (Open Spaces) Act 1878 empowers us to raise funds and appoint people to protect and manage our open spaces.

As a public body the City Corporation is required by law to comply with certain duties relating to conservation, as set out in the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006. These require us to take reasonable measures to enhance the aesthetic, cultural, historic and biological interest of its open spaces.

Section 3 - Vision, Objectives, Values and KPI's

1. A Shared Vision

A progressive, thriving division that excels in the protection and conservation of exceptional sites for wildlife whilst providing high quality open spaces for local and wider communities to enjoy.

2. Shared Strategic Aims/Objectives

SA1	Protection and conservation of biodiversity and heritage of the Commons through the projects and programmes contained in local management plans
SA2.	Provision of accessible sites that bring benefit to and are valued by, local and wider communities who play an active part in their management
SA 3	Develop stakeholder relationships to promote the Commons in the context of their wider landscapes whilst seeking to balance conflicting demands
SA 4	Embed innovative financial sustainability across our activities

3. Shared Core Values

i) For the Community

CV1	Providing welcome, safe and secure sites for people and wildlife
CV2	At the heart of the local community
CV3	Working with others to maximise benefit to the Commons and surrounds

ii) For the Team

CV4.	Outward facing, forward looking
CV5.	Ready to challenge and wherever possible mitigate, environmental threat
CV6.	Maintaining multifunctional staff, valued for their skills and knowledge

4. Shared Core Behaviours

CB1.	Lead
CB2.	Empower
CB3.	Trust

5. Shared Key Performance Indicators

These necessarily reflect the KPI's set by the Open Spaces Department as well as those of The Commons division. Where possible this overlap is shown in **Table 1** below. At the time of writing the Departmental KPI's (**shown in brown**) are also under review so it may be necessary to review and rationalise the table below in the near future to reflect any changes are known.

Table 1

Departmental Objective Division Objective/Value	KPI for The Commons - 2015/16
Preserving the ecology and biodiversity of our sites SA1. SA4. CV1. CV5.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Sites with current management plan • All nominated Sites with Green Flag awards • All nominated sites with Green Heritage awards • All SSSI conditions – improving or favourable • No heritage assets on the 'at risk' register • No loss of open space to unauthorised encroachment • Monitor annually all sites for invasive species • Meet conservation targets for each habitat as defined in 'Nature of the City'
Customer satisfaction SA2. SA3. CV1. CV2. CV3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of 100, 60 second surveys per annum for each charity • Volunteers satisfaction rating of 97% • 2 x Consultation group meetings per year for each charity • Min 2 x 'meet the ranger days' at each charity per annum • Delivery of monthly 'E-news' across the Division
Finance SA4. SA1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SBR Road map financial targets met • OS financial KPI's met • Meet all RPA grant compliance requirements
Developing our staff CV4. CV6. CB1. CB2. CB3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OS Personnel KPI's met • Minimum 33% of staff to attend knowledge sharing/organised visits to other Commons within the division each year • Minimum 25% of staff to attend knowledge sharing/organised visits other Dept/ external Open Spaces each year • Achieve and apply the key principals of IIP.

Energy efficiency and sustainability SA4. CV5.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce utility energy consumption by 2.5% per annum • Reduce fuel consumption by 5% per annum • Generate between 100 - 150kw electricity generation or similar
Annual Work Programmes and roadmaps SA1. SA4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver roadmap programmes and projects according to the agreed timetable • Deliver 95% of priority 1 projects as detailed in the annual work programme for each Common

Section 4 - Background Information

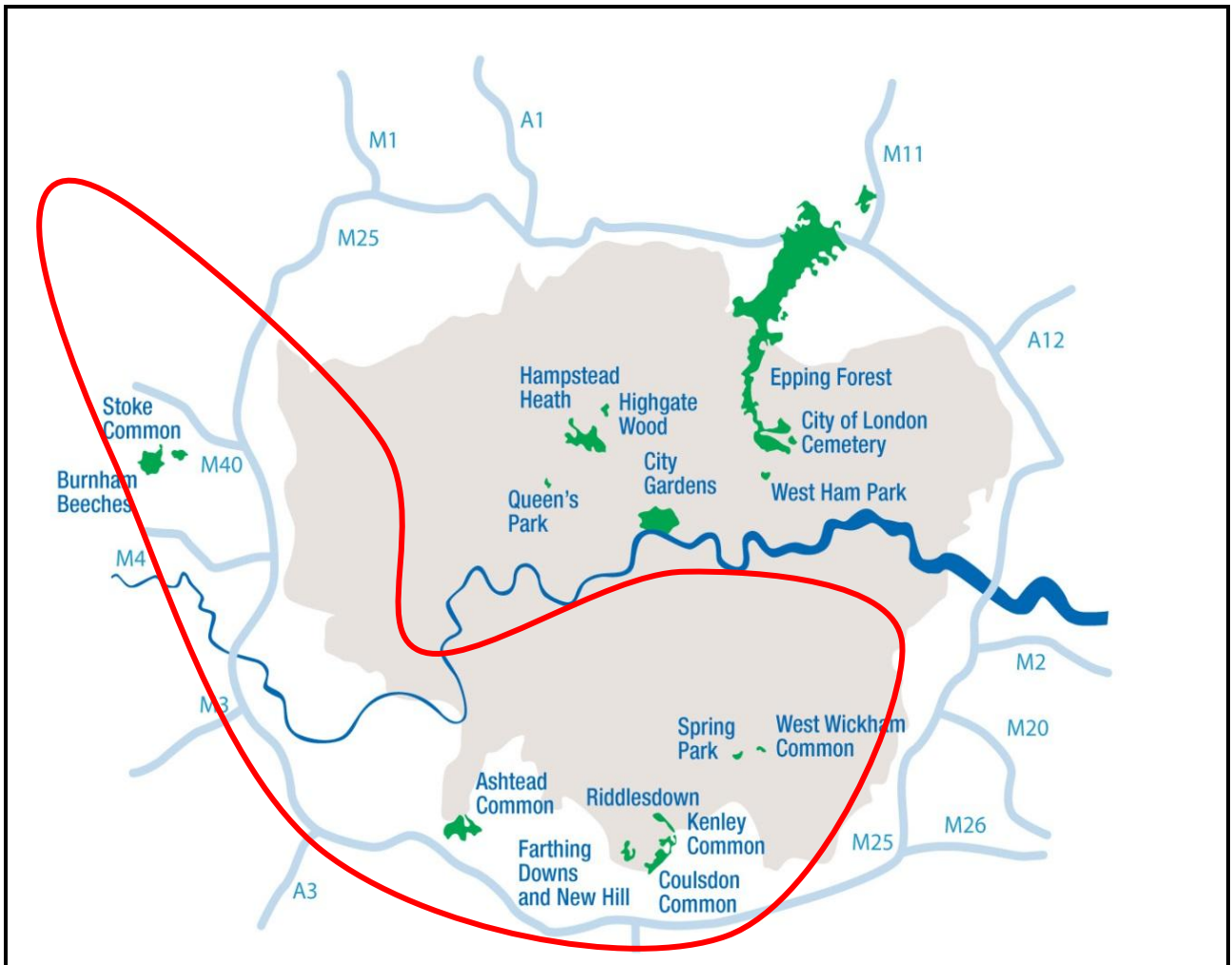
‘The Commons’ - ‘Planning together, managing collaboratively, delivering locally’.

The Commons is an area comprised of nine open spaces extending as an arc from Burnham Beeches to the west of London and culminating finally at West Wickham Common to the South East of London.

- Ashted Common – 202 hectares. This is a National Nature Reserve and SSSI site. It is a wooded common with two scheduled monuments and over 1,200 ancient oak pollards. In addition to these veteran trees, the site supports a wide diversity of habitats and wildlife. The mosaic of ancient woodland, scrub grassland, meadow, ponds and brook means there is much to discover.
- Burnham Beeches – 220 hectares. This is recognised as an ancient wood pasture and is a SSSI, NNR and a Special Area of Conservation, a European designation. Recognised internationally for its collection of beech pollards, wood pasture and heathland which in turn supports a dynamic population of various mosses, lichens, insects and other invertebrates that thrive in such surroundings.
- Coulsdon Common – 51 hectares. This site is located in the London Borough of Croydon and is an area of wooded common and valuable chalk grassland which supports a thriving flora and butterfly population. Used locally for walking it is also an amenity space for a local football team. Additionally it also has a small Archaeological Priority Zone
- Farthing Downs and New Hill – 95 hectares. This is a SSSI site and has the most extensive area of semi-rural natural downland in Greater London. This supports a diverse mosaic of pockets of ancient woodland, historic hedgerows and scrub. All of which promote a wide variety of plant and animal species.
- Kenley Common – 56 hectares. This site is the best preserved example of a World War II fighter airfield in Great Britain. It also boasts a diversity of habitats that include pockets of ancient woodland, hedgerows and scrub as well as unusual variety of grassland types within a small area.

- Riddlesdown – 43 hectares. Another SSSI site because of its largest single expanse of long established calcareous scrub in Greater London and also for its rich herb land. There is also evidence of thousands of years of human activity with earthworks, track ways and a Roman road.
- Spring Park – 20 hectares. This is a relatively small site but has been designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation for its ancient woodland and is enhanced additionally by its numerous springs and pools, meadows, scrub edges and hedgerows.
- Stoke Common – 80 hectares. This is a SSSI site and the largest area of open heathland in South Buckinghamshire which supports an abundant and diverse population of heathland plants, reptiles and amphibians. Although much of the site is a large open space it is bordered by secondary woodland utilised by a thriving bird population
- West Wickham Common – 10 hectares. This small site has also been designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation for its mosaic of ancient woodland, including oak pollards, acid grassland and surprising heathland in the centre. Although a relatively small site it's diversity in turn is reflected in diverse flora and fauna.

Location of 'The Commons'



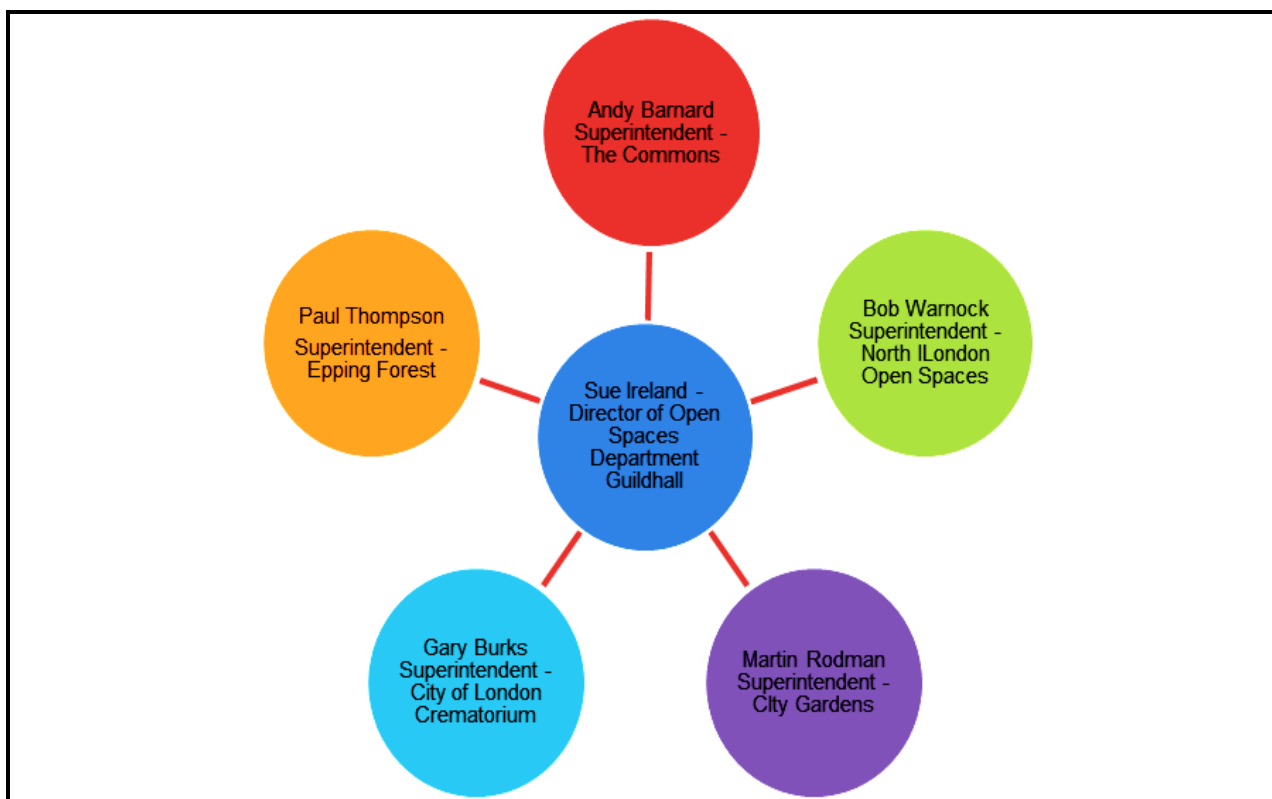
The Open Spaces Department

All management of City owned open spaces is carried out by the City Of London Corporation's Open Spaces Department which is centrally managed from the Irish Chamber at Guildhall and then further divided into five Divisions:

- The Commons
- Epping Forest
- North London Open Spaces – Hampstead Heath, Queen's Park and Highgate Wood
- Parks and Gardens – including City Gardens and West Ham Park
- City Of London Corporation Crematorium

The sites, managed by the Department, that lie outside of the City are legally protected as permanent open spaces and on which building development is not allowed under statute.

With the exception of the City of London Corporation Cemetery and Woodredon and Warlies Farm estate all of the open spaces outside of the square mile are funded from the City's own resources and at minimal cost to the public. The Director of Open Spaces is responsible for overseeing the overall management of the Department with the assistance of five Superintendents:



Section 5 - Roadmaps and Annual Plans

Department and Division strategy is not only demonstrated in the Open Spaces Business Plan and local management plans but is additionally illustrated and ultimately delivered by a number of 'Roadmaps'.

These demonstrate the programme and project process and include objectives and time scales to achieve them. Roadmaps and plans are reviewed periodically.

The primary Roadmap for both Department and Division for the next two years is known as Service Based Review or 'SBR'.



Master OS Roadmap,
07.08.15.xlsx

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Although savings were initially a major stimulus in driving this programme, the new approach for the Department is far more wide reaching and is now, additionally, much more focused on opportunity, outcomes, our customers and Departmental long term sustainability.

Following on from this primary objective are a number of other initiatives which include local Management Plans for The Commons that are drafted in consultation with and the cooperation of local communities. These plans are usually for a 5-10 year period but are reviewed annually or as demand requires.

The Management Plans are specifically drafted and tailored for each site and consideration is given to the needs of each to encourage public access and enhance biodiversity with the available resources.

This is achieved with the assistance of an additional plan or 'Annual Work Programme' to deliver the objectives identified. Large or 'one off' projects within the Annual Work Programmes may sometimes be reflected in the Local and Departmental road maps.

This programme, once approved by the Superintendent, is managed locally by the Head Ranger and their operational staff which includes a team of Rangers and is also reinforced with the business assistance of the Support Services Team.

The Commons – Objectives

Objective – SA1	Objective – SA2	Objective – SA3	Objective – SA4
Protection and conservation of biodiversity and heritage of the Commons through the projects and programmes contained in local management plans.	Provision of accessible sites that bring benefit to and are valued by, local and wider communities who play an active part in their management.	Develop stakeholder relationships to promote the Commons in the context of their wider landscapes whilst seeking to balance conflicting demands.	Embed innovative financial sustainability across our activities.
How we will do this:	How we will do this:	How we will do this:	How we will do this:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All sites with current management plan • All nominated sites with Green Flag awards • All nominated sites with Green Heritage awards • All SSSI conditions – improving or favourable • No heritage assets on the ‘at risk’ register • No loss of open space to unauthorised encroachment • Monitor annually all sites for invasive species • Meet conservation targets for each habitat as defined in ‘Nature of the City’ • Creating and maintaining ponds and scrapes • Maintaining and restoring watercourses • Surveying and monitoring wildlife, soils and water • Maintaining and restoring woodland • Maintaining and restoring wood pasture • Maintaining and restoring species rich grassland • Cutting and laying hedgerows • Managing vegetation in freshwater and wetland habitats • Maintaining and restoring heathland • SAMs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniformed patrol of sites 365 days per year ensuring site and public security and enforcing byelaws • Volunteer satisfaction rating of 97% • Manage sites to ensure they are accessible to all • Monitor planning applications that may adversely influence site enjoyment • Reporting incidents, accidents and dangerous occurrences • Managing boundaries and entrances • Keeping the site clean and well maintained • Installing and maintaining gates and posts • Controlling development • Working with emergency services • Issuing licence agreements • Maintaining ditches and banks • Keep Rights of Way open • Constructing and maintaining surface tracks as access for all • Installing and maintaining countryside furniture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two Consultation Group meetings for each charity per year • Two ‘Meet the Ranger’ days at each site per year • Delivery of monthly E-news across the Division • Completion of 100, 60 second surveys for each charity per year • Working with local countryside management projects • Liaising with statutory agencies, authorities and utility companies • Sharing information about the site • Facilitating educational activities and school visits • Attending and hosting seminars, conferences and forums • Providing and maintaining facilities • Maintaining amenity grassland • Promoting strategies and initiatives for the protection and conservation of green space through regional partnerships e.g. All London Green Grid and Green Infrastructure Task Force 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver Roadmap projects and programmes according to the agreed timetable • Reduce fuel consumption by 5% per year • Reduce utility energy consumption by 2.5% per year • Generate 100-150Kw electricity or similar • Meet all Rural Payments Agency requirements • Open Spaces financial KPI’s met • Investing in people’s performance at work • Controlling local risk budgets income • Managing livestock husbandry records • Inspecting and maintaining vehicles, machinery and equipment • Implementing the Local Sustainability Plan • Preparing and reviewing project requirements and contract specifications • Preparing and reviewing management and business plans • Promotion of our services • Flexible and multifunctional people