

**OPEN SPACES AND CITY GARDENS**  
**Thursday, 7 July 2022**

Minutes of the meeting of the Open Spaces and City Gardens held at Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Thursday, 7 July 2022 at 10.00 am

**Present**

**Members:**

Caroline Haines (Chair)  
Andrew McMurtrie (Deputy Chairman)  
Deputy Graeme Doshi-Smith  
Alderman Ian David Luder  
Catherine McGuinness  
Benjamin Murphy  
Oliver Sells QC  
William Upton QC (Ex-Officio Member)

**Observers:**

Catherine Bickmore  
Paul Morris

**Officers:**

Sally Agass	- Director, Natural Environment
Chloe Ainsworth	- Town Clerk's Department
Ben Dunleavy	- Town Clerk's Department
Joanne Hill	- Environment Department
Ian Hughes	- Director, Built Environment
Katie Lawman	- Environment Department
Juliemma McLoughlin	- Executive Director, Environment

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Alderman Greg Jones.

Wendy Mead was in attendance virtually.

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

There were no declarations.

**3. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** – The public minutes and non-public summary of the meeting held on 29 April 2022 were approved as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:

- Catherine Bickmore was recorded as attending the meeting as an observer.

### 3.1 **Matters Arising**

The Committee received an update from the Executive Director of Environment on the following points:

- a) Members were informed that it would not be possible to relocate the loading and unloading area for the construction site at the western part of Finsbury Circus. As an interim measure it was proposed that infrequently used public seating be relocated to allow vehicle access.
- b) In relation to the Finsbury Circus Crossrail scheme, Members were informed that discussions to secure additional funding to cover the increase in cost were underway and that Members would be provided with a progress update when this information is available.
- c) Members were informed that Postman's Park is not receiving any new additions to the memorial and that Officers were exploring alternative options. Members were also informed that Officers were developing a policy in relation to memorialisation to ensure a consistent approach.

In relation to the above, the Committee discussed the following points:

- a) That there may be greater demand for the public seating in the western part of Finsbury Circus when Finsbury Circus Park is closed for construction.
- b) A Member informed the Committee that he had been in discussions with the NHS and the Church about an NHS memorial and it was agreed that the Member should update the relevant officer on his progress.

## 4. **OPEN SPACES CHANGE OF NAME REPORT**

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director Environment concerning changing the name of the Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee.

Members agreed that the new name of the Natural Environment Board was a more accurate reflection of the work of the Committee.

In response to a question, Members were informed that there would be a charity review which would consider the position of West Ham Park under the new operational structure.

Members expressed concern about the future of the governance of the City's open spaces. A Member noted that the responsibilities of audit, HR and finance sit outside the remit of the Committee, and Members discussed the importance of carefully developing the new Terms of Reference to address the relationship of the Committee and those functions.

Members were informed that the Port Health and Environmental Services Committee's aim includes safeguarding the air quality and the quality of the environment in the open spaces of the City.

The Chair reminded the Committee that, today, Members were only asked to instruct Officers across the Environment Division to begin developing a new Terms of Reference and that the Committee would be asked to discuss the proposed new Terms of Reference in more detail at a future meeting.

**RESOLVED**, that –

- a) Members approved the change of name for onward approval by the Court of Common Council and notification to the Charity Commission for change of name on the Charity Register.
- b) Officers were instructed to develop new Terms of Reference in line with the emerging Natural Environment strategies and in accordance with the requirements of the Charity Commission for consideration at a future Committee.

5. **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director Environment providing Members with a draft events calendar and draft dashboard for the Natural Environment Division. The Committee agreed that the provided drafts were very helpful.

This report and the Revenue Outturn 2021/22 report were taken together and notes of the discussion can be found under Item 6.

**RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.

6. **REVENUE OUTTURN 2021/22**

The Committee received a joint report of the Chamberlain and Executive Director Environment concerning the revenue outturn for the services overseen by the Open Spaces and City Gardens' Committee. This report was taken together with the Director's Report at Item 5.

A Member requested more detail about the production of income in the City's open spaces. Members noted that some of this information is confidential and that financial oversight of the open spaces lies with the Finance Committee. Members were informed that they utilise a strategy for the generation of charity income.

A Member stated that while currently the Corporation operates on the basis of deficit funding, it is possible that this could change to grant funding in the future, and that, in these circumstances, the strategic financial oversight would move to this Committee.

Members were informed that as part of the charity review, Officers are looking at the use of deficit funding and capital funds going forward.

The Committee noted that at page 18 of the agenda the text reads that the development at the West Ham Park nursery site has been approved when it should read that the *option* has been approved.

**RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.

7. **QUEEN'S GREEN CANOPY REPORT**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director Environment concerning the management and operational activities for the Queen's Green Canopy, a tree planting initiative in the City.

In response to a question, Officers informed the Committee that they would explore whether the Corporation was eligible for carbon credits.

In response to a query from the Chair of the Hampstead Heath Committee, Members were informed that the plans for tree planting at Hampstead Heath were in the preliminary stages and that a proposal was being developed in conjunction with the Assistant Director of Hampstead Heath to determine whether the plan was possible. It was confirmed that a meeting would be set up with the Chair of the Hampstead Heath Committee at an appropriate point if the plans were to progress.

The Committee agreed that it would be important to obtain a wider policy perspective before progressing these plans.

**RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.

8. **SUMMARY OF NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AWAY DAY**

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director Environment which provided a summary of the first Natural Environment away day and shared the outcome of the discussions held on the five strategies that had been proposed.

The Executive Director Environment thanked Members for their participation in discussions during the away day, which provided firm direction for the strategies listed in the report.

The Committee agreed on the need to use SMART goals when drafting the strategies to avoid repetition.

In response to a query, Members were informed that Officers were developing an action plan to explain how the strategies will be delivered. Members were also informed that the action plan will feed into the Natural Environment dashboard.

A Member proposed that the visitor strategy should be changed to 'visitor experience strategy' and that 'community strategy' should be renamed to 'community and stakeholder engagement strategy' to reflect its large remit including internal communications, public communications and marketing. The

Member noted that a large part of conservation is planning and stated this should be reflected in the title of the conservation strategy.

**RESOLVED**, that –

- a) Members noted the summary of the away day held on 20 June 2022.
- b) Members instructed officers to develop the five draft strategies and to bring them back to a future committee for endorsement.

9. **OPEN SPACES DEPARTMENTAL BUSINESS PLAN 2021/22**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director Environment reviewing the Open Spaces Department's delivery of its 2021/22 Business Plan. This report and the Risk Management Update Report were taken together and notes of the discussion can be found under Item 10.

**RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.

10. **RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE REPORT**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director Environment detailing the risk management procedures in place within the Environment Department and how risk is effectively managed. This report was taken together with the Open Spaces Departmental Business Plan 2021/22 at Item 9.

Members were informed that they would receive a full risk register in the report in October.

A Member stated that the Natural Environment Cross-Divisional Risks table in Appendix 2 of the Director's Report should include three additional columns: target risk; target date to achieve this; and flight path, showing the history of the risk.

The Member was concerned that there had been little improvement to the Wanstead Park Reservoirs risk for an extended period of time and questioned whether the City Corporation was taking sufficient steps to address this. The Member noted that studies and modelling phases had taken place and stated that an action plan and timetable should now be established so that appropriate resources can be allocated.

The Committee noted that there had previously been an under-reporting of risks and shared the concern raised. A Member noted the current challenges facing the Natural Environment Department, including ambiguous reports from engineers, conflicting recommendations and the unpredictability of the natural environment.

The Committee was informed that full risk report would include the flight path of the risk, target date and details of the action currently being taken.

The Committee was also informed that they the Natural Environment Division have employed a staff member to conduct an audit of unknown risks.

**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 CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED**

There was no other business.

13. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED** - That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act.

14. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** – The non-public minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2022 were approved as a correct record.

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

There were no questions.

16. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED**

There was no other business.

**The meeting ended at 11.21 am**

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Chairman

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