

WEST HAM PARK COMMITTEE
Monday, 16 October 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the West Ham Park Committee held at Committee Room -
2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 16 October 2023 at 11.30 am

Present

Members:

Caroline Haines (Chair)
Andrew McMurtrie (Deputy Chairman)
James St John Davis
Wendy Mead
Benjamin Murphy
Oliver Sells KC
Catherine Bickmore
Rafe Courage
Richard Gurney
Councillor Joy Laguda MBE
Justin Meath-Baker
Councillor John Whitworth

Officers:

Emily Brennan	- Environment Department
Anna Cowperthwaite	- Comptroller and City Solicitor's
Simon Glynn	- Environment Department
Clem Harcourt	- Chamberlain's Department
William LoSasso	- Environment Department
Jack Joslin	- Bridge House Estates
Amba Nkundo	- Environment Department
Julia Pridham	- Bridge House Estates
Blair Stringman	- Town Clerk's Department
Edward Wood	- Comptroller and City Solicitor's

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Councillor Joy Laguda and Councillor John Whitworth declared their interests in connection to item 16, noting that they were Council Members for Newham Council.

The Chair informed Members that while the Newham Council Members could be present for the item and engage in the discussion, they would not be able to participate in the decision-making process.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED – That, the public and non-public summary of the minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING

The Chair provided a Vote of Thanks to Graham Doshi-Smith who had recently resigned from the Board.

I would like to extend, on behalf of Members our heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to Graeme, a dedicated and passionate member of the Natural Environment Board, for his outstanding contributions during his tenure. As we bid farewell to Graeme, we cannot help but reflect on his remarkable efforts and commitment to the cause.

Throughout his time on the board, Graeme has been a tireless advocate for the importance of open spaces in promoting public health. He has consistently highlighted the critical role that these spaces play in our physical, emotional, and mental well-being. Graeme's unwavering dedication to this cause has not only raised awareness but also inspired all of us to recognise the significance of these natural environments in our lives.

As we bid farewell to Graeme, we wish him the very best for his future endeavours. His commitment to the cause of open spaces and their impact on public health has left an indelible mark, and we are confident that he will continue to make a positive difference in other matters.

Graeme, your contributions have been invaluable, and we thank you for your service. We extend our warmest wishes for your future, with the hope that you continue to champion the cause you hold dear. Thank you and best of luck in the future.

4. **WELCOME TO NEW MEMBER - EAMMONN MULLALLY**

The Chair formally welcomed the new Member, Eamonn Mullally to the Natural Environment Board.

5. **INTRODUCTION TO ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF OPEN SPACES**

The Chair introduced and welcomed the new Assistant Director of Open Spaces, North London, William LoSasso to the Natural Environment Board.

The Assistant Director, North London Open Spaces expressed enthusiasm about joining the Corporation, highlighting experience in South London and the New York City Parks Department.

6. **INTRODUCTION TO ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, COMMERCIAL AND CHARITY GOVERNANCE AND FUNDRAISING**

The Chair introduced and welcomed the Assistant Director, Commercial and Charity Fundraising.

The Board welcomed the Assistant Director, Commercial and Charity Fundraising. It was noted that the Assistant Director would officially begin her role in mid-November. Members were informed that the Assistant Director had

over 30 years of experience in the environmental and charity sector, nothing their work at Epping Forest, handling strategy, compliance, income generation, and financial management. The Assistant Director expressed excitement about working with the Board and looked forward to collaborating on charity reviews and various other projects benefiting open spaces.

MATTERS ARISING

The Chair introduced and welcomed the Head of Operations and Parks.

The Board noted the new Head of Operation and Parks would start their role in mid-November and had over 30 years of experience in the environmental and charity sector and had worked at Epping Forest, handling strategy, compliance, income generation, and financial management.

7. *ASSISTANT DIRECTORS UPDATE

The Committee received a report of the Interim Executive Director, Environment concerning an update on management an operational activities at West Ham Park since July 2023.

The Assistant Director, North London Open Spaces noted the following points:

- **Tree Management:** The tree team is actively supporting tree management and maintenance, using specialised equipment to check for tree decay and proactively manage tree health.
- **Sports and Wellbeing Strategy:** The division is working on a sports and wellbeing strategy, with a generous contribution from the London Cricket Trust for improving sporting facilities, including a non-turf cricket square.
- **Community Engagement Initiative:** A successful community engagement initiative involved local residents in arts projects, connecting them with green spaces. The project, supported by the City of London, resulted in artwork displayed across the park.
- **Learning Program:** The West Ham Park team, supported by the learning team and the Natural Environment division, conducted a school program with over 1,000 students participating. Plans include expanding the learning program for children with special education needs.
- **Green Flag Award:** West Ham Park received another Green Flag award, an international benchmark recognising well-managed parks and green spaces.

The Assistant Director, North London Open Spaces noted uncertainty about the effects of severe drought damage from the previous year on veteran trees. They highlighted the increased susceptibility of veteran trees to rapid climate changes. It was noted that the current challenge was assessing the impact, as some trees may appear healthy with leaves still on. The Assistant Director agreed to include an update on trees from the Fothergill and Gurney eras in the next report to the Committee. Members noted that the situation was likened to Epping Forest, facing similar issues with veteran oaks. The Committee discussed the importance of feedback on veteran trees and suggests providing updates in the future.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

8. **SPORTS STRATEGY**

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

Members were provided with an update on the sports strategy, noting its focus on health benefits and accessibility. Officers noted the early draft of the sports strategy for West Ham Park has been integrated into a new access and recreation strategy. This new strategy would be presented to the Committee in the future. Additionally, Members were informed that a broader natural environment division sports strategy and corporate sports strategy were being developed, highlighting the distinction between activities within and outside the Square Mile.

RESOLVED – That, the verbal update be noted.

9. **RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE REPORT**

The Committee considered a report of the Interim Executive Director, Environment concerning the risk management update for West Ham Park Charity.

A Member raised concerns regarding the corporate asset review and shortage of staff. They inquired about the reasons for the prolonged process and the current staff situation. Officers responded, indicating that the corporate asset review was underway, and the division were compiling a register of all properties and natural assets. Officers noted the complexity of the maintenance work across the City of London Corporation and assured that efforts were being made to move forward. Members were also informed that funding for the operational property portfolio has been approved but were awaiting funding confirmation from the Chamberlain.

Members were provided with an update on staffing, stating that there were currently no vacancies at West Ham Park. Officers added that three staff members had recently been appointed to roles, and overall progress in recruitment and inductions across the division was looking very positive. While there were still some roles to be filled, Officers stressed the announcement reflects the success in addressing staffing needs and enhancing the team at West Ham Park.

A Member noted the issue of recorded music being played loudly by football supporters on the western edge of the park, which had been troubling neighbours. Members were informed that the problem had persisted for some time but had now been resolved. The Members also noted the shortage of green space in Newham but said that there is not necessarily a shortage of potential building land, as many old industrial sites were now available.

RESOLVED – That,

- a) West Ham Park Risk Register: Members confirm, on behalf of the City Corporation as Trustee, that the register appended to the report

satisfactorily sets out the key risks to the charity and that appropriate systems are in place to identify and mitigate risks.

- b) Reporting format: Members agree to receive a detailed risk registers every six months and a summary risk register in the two interim quarterly reports, with individual risks being reported in detail by exception.

10. ***OPERATIONAL FINANCE PROGRESS REPORT (PERIOD 3 APRIL – JUNE 2023) 2023/24 – WEST HAM PARK**

The Committee received a report of the Chamberlain concerning finance progress from the period 3 April – June 2023.

The Committee discussed the change in the deficit funding model and its potential impact on open spaces. It was noted that the general trend was that if the deficit funding model changed, it could benefit open spaces, making them more self-sufficient. Members were informed that the new model allowed open spaces to raise more funds for their projects, but it could enable self-sufficiency.

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 one business of item considered urgent.

The Director of Natural Environment informed the Committee of the success of the City Corporation in achieving green flag status for 15 sites, including West Ham Park, and securing 5 London in Bloom Awards. It was noted that the achievement was attributed to the efforts of staff, volunteers, and Members.

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. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED – That, the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

15. **NATURAL ENVIRONMENT CHARITIES REVIEW**

The Board received a verbal update of the Managing Director of Bridge House Estates.

16. **WEST HAM PARK DEVELOPMENT PROJECT**

The Committee considered a report of the Interim Executive Director, Environment.

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

There were no questions.

18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

There was no urgent business.

The meeting ended at 1.30pm

Chairman

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