

Committee(s): Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queens Park Open Spaces and City Gardens West Ham Park Epping Forest and Commons	Dated: 15 June 2022 7 July 2022 7 July 2022 11 July 2022
Subject: Open Spaces Departmental Business Plan 2021/22 – Year End performance report	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	N/A
Report of: Juliemma McLoughlin, Executive Director Environment	For Information
Report author: Joanne Hill, Business Planning and Compliance Manager	

Summary

This report provides Members with a review of the Open Spaces Department’s delivery of its 2021/22 Business Plan which was agreed by the Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee in December 2020. This report highlights the main achievements and progress that has been made against the Business Plan’s six major workstreams.

The report identifies the level of achievement against performance measures, recognising that in some instances it was impossible to set targets due to the changing opening restrictions required by Covid-19 regulations.

Financially, the services that fall within the remit of the Open Spaces Committees closely managed their budgets, such that at year end there was a 2% underspend against the net budget across City’s Cash and City’s Fund services that report through the various Open Spaces Committees.

With effect from 1 April 2022, the Open Spaces Department became the ‘Natural Environment Division’ of the new Environment Department. As this report relates to the 2021/22 financial year, it continues to refer to the ‘Open Spaces Department’. Future reports will fully reflect the new Department and Division names and structures.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. The Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee approved the [Departmental Business Plan 2021/22](#) on 2 December 2020.
2. The Department's Vision was: *to enrich people's lives by enhancing and providing access to ecologically diverse open spaces and outstanding heritage assets across London and beyond.*
3. The Department's Business Plan identified six major workstreams for 2021-22:
 - I. Implement the required savings to deliver a balanced budget within the reduced core funding envelope through a combination of reducing expenditure and increasing income.
 - II. Implement actions arising from the new Target Operating Model (TOM) and provide open and early communication to all employees.
 - III. Progress the landscaping of Finsbury Circus, the replacement playground at West Ham Park and all other RASC approved capital projects including the Climate Action Strategy.
 - IV. Working with City Surveyors, progress future use of the nursery site at West Ham Park.
 - V. Assess impact of expanded ULEZ on existing fleet, procurement and supplier capacity and available financial resources.
 - VI. Continue to cultivate the Burnham Beeches Gateway and biodiversity net gain project partnership with local landowners and make ready for grant/funding applications.
4. Updates on Business Plan performance in relation to services which sit outside the responsibility of Open Spaces Committees are reported separately.

Current Position

5. The table below sets out the progress made against each of the above main workstreams. In addition, Appendix 1 lists some of the other key achievements across the service areas.

Workstream	Progress at end of 2021/22
Implement the required savings to deliver a balanced budget within the reduced core funding envelope through a combination of reducing expenditure, increasing income.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• City's Cash net budget was achieved.• City Gardens (City Fund) was unable to achieve its savings targets. As referenced at the start of financial year, their savings can only be achieved from implementation of the TOM which will not have an impact until 2022/23 at the earliest.
Implement actions arising from the new Target Operating Model and provide open and early communication to	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The TOM implementation across the Environment Department was completed to timetable with Establishment Committee approval in January and formal staff consultation undertaken in February.• Regular staff newsletters have been distributed and staff updated at team meetings.

<p>all employees.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A two phased approach to the TOM was agreed by Members. Changes were implemented in Phase 1 within The Commons and City Gardens. <p>A review of structures and working practices across Epping Forest and North London divisions is currently underway as Phase 2, with proposals planned to be presented to Members by the end of the calendar year.</p>
<p>Progress the landscaping of Finsbury Circus, the replacement playground at West Ham Park and all other RASC approved capital projects including the Climate Action Strategy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finsbury Circus – Tenders have been received and are being assessed and clarified. Site anticipated to be closed in July. • Tower Hill playground – Gateway 2 approval received (Nov 2021). • West Ham Park Playground – works successfully started on site in January and should be completed by July 2022, with the playground hopefully opening in time for the summer holidays. • Hampstead Heath ponds & lido access and security improvements – Project has progressed to RIBA stage 2 and currently developing RIBA stage 3-4. Planning submission is planned for 27 May and works on site will commence in late 2022. • East Heath car park – Project completed. • ParkLife – Limited progress, update report for January Committee. • Carbon Removal (Climate Action Strategy) – Gateway 5 sign-off for first habitat creation site completed (Patmore’s wildflower meadow); consultants commenced a study to identify further opportunities for carbon sequestration throughout the Open Spaces; plan development and stakeholder engagement for the Copped Hall wood pasture restoration and creation project.
<p>Working with City Surveyors, progress future use of the nursery site at West Ham Park.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project has continued to progress at pace this year, and in February Members voted in favour of their preferred developer, following a comprehensive tendering and evaluation exercise. A preferred developer has been selected. Officers and Members plan to work with the developer and engage the community to inform the design, both of the development itself and of the additional green space and facilities to be provided.
<p>Assess impact of expanded ULEZ on existing fleet, procurement and supplier capacity and available financial resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Ham Park - Only one vehicle in the fleet remains non-compliant. • Epping Forest - Vehicle replacement programme is underway, with a number of compliant vehicles received or on order. • North London Open Spaces - Procurement in place to replace non-compliant vehicles; some delays due to supply issues. Currently, seven compliant vehicles; four vans are still to be replaced. • City Gardens - Fleet is fully compliant. • The Commons - Compliant for occasional forays into the ULEZ
<p>Continue to cultivate the Burnham Beeches Gateway and biodiversity net gain project partnership with local landowners and make ready for grant/funding applications.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular meetings held with partner organisations. • Biodiversity surveys of adjacent land are all complete, final reports received. Initial results indicate it is a very special area and could be an effective buffer to Burnham Beeches. • Additional £10,000 funding offered to the project by Buckinghamshire Council to progress financial options. • Conservation Management Plan ‘need’ identified by National Trust and Dorney Wood Trust as next priority to best link conservation

	aims to CoL management of Burnham Beeches and ensure the project is 'grant application ready'.
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Key Data - Performance Measures

6. The Department identified fifteen performance measures to cover its range of services which are detailed in Appendix 2.
7. Due to Covid-19, it was not possible to set targets for all the measures as the impact of opening and closing restrictions was unclear for the year ahead. Some of the key achievements during 2021/22 are:
 - Retained all our Green Flag and Green Heritage Accreditations.
 - Coulsdon Common achieved Green Heritage Site Accreditation for the first time this year, upon first submission.
 - Exceeded the Corporate target (85%) for investigating health and safety accidents by 6% (achieved 91%).
 - Exceeded last year's tennis court bookings by 32%, with this year seeing 66,697 court hours booked.
 - Reduced our energy consumption.
 - Saw an increased number of visits to our website pages.
 - Continued to comment on local authority planning applications as reported regularly to Committees.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications

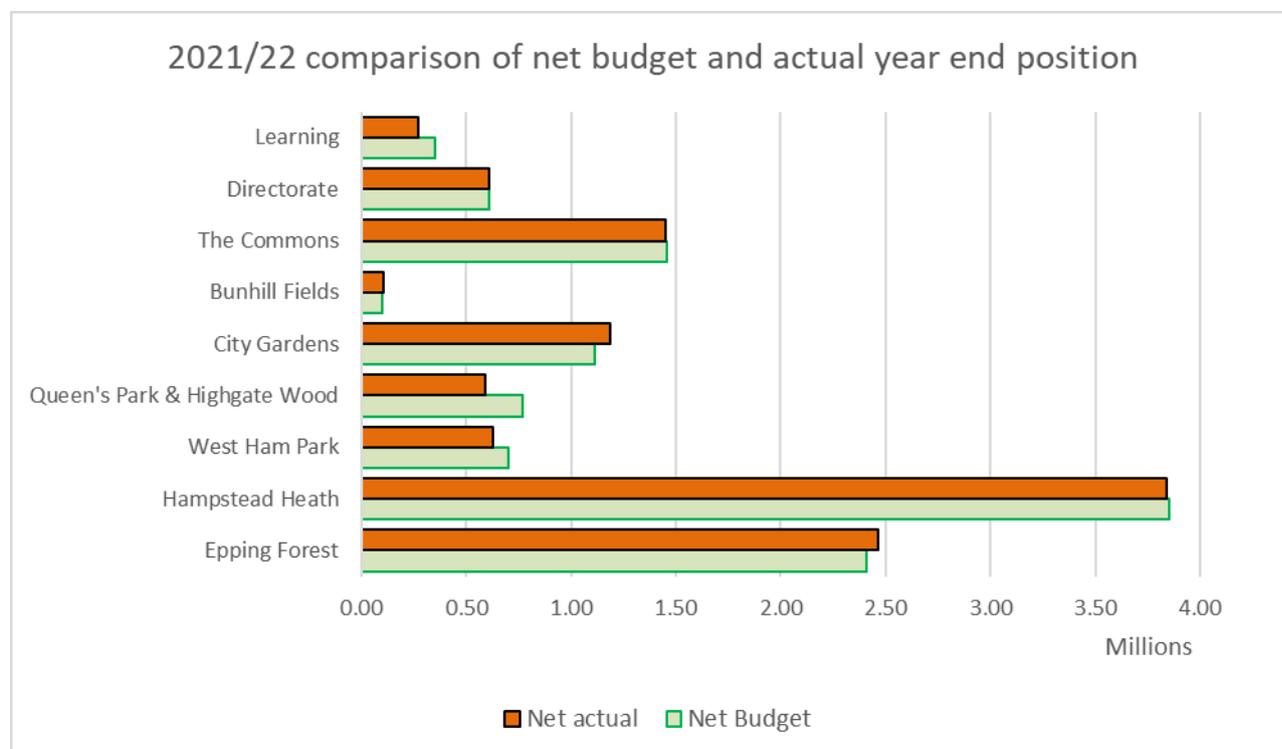
8. **The Corporate Plan** - The Open Spaces Department actively contributes to all three Corporate Plan 2018-23 aims:
 - Contribute to a flourishing society
 - Support a thriving economy
 - Shape outstanding environments
and ten of its twelve outcomes.
9. **Corporate Strategies** - The activity undertaken to deliver the Business Plan also helps achieve the outcomes of a range of Corporate strategies including:
 - Responsible Business Strategy
 - Climate Action Strategy
 - Sport and Physical Activity Strategy
 - Transport Strategy
 - Education, Cultural and Creative Learning and Skills Strategy

Financial implications

10. In relation to the budgets that are relevant to the various Open Spaces Committees, the year-end position shows that there was a net underspend of £218k with actual net expenditure at £11,150,350 compared to a budget of £11,368,000.

11. The actual income achieved (£7,036,733) was slightly (£23k) below the budgeted income target (£7,060,000)

12. The graph below visually shows the budget and actual year end net expenditure positions.



13. **Donations** – In 2021/22, eleven donation campaigns were promoted across the open spaces, enabling the public to donate online via the site specific websites. A total of 202 donations were made which raised £25,172. As this funding has been specifically identified for the eleven campaigns, the money will be rolled over into 2022/23.

14. **Property** – One property, The Park View Bungalow within Epping Forest, had been previously declared surplus as part of the Operational Property Review. This property was disposed of and generated a capital receipt for the CoL of £171,500 during 2021/22.

15. More detailed information regarding the year-end outturn financial position for each Service Committee is provided in the separate Revenue Outturn reports from the Chamberlain's Department.

16. **Capital Funding Requests** - The Chairs and Deputies of the various Open Spaces Committees prioritised proposals for three projects to be funded from capital. All three requests were approved by Court of Common Council in March:

- i. Hampstead Heath Athletics Track (£2m)
- ii. Epping Forest Path Restoration (£250k)
- iii. Queens Park Playground and Sandpit (£55k)

17. **Resource implications** – None

18. **Legal implications** – None

19. **Risk implications** – none

20. **Equalities implications** – none

21. **Climate implications** - A very brief update on the Carbon Removals project is provided at Paragraph 5.

22. **Security implications** – None

Conclusion

23. During 2021/22, the Open Spaces Department continued to perform well both in terms of finances, achievement of performance targets and progress of its activities that help achieve the objectives and outcomes set out in the Business Plan.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Additional Achievements 2021/22

Appendix 2 – Performance Measures 2021/22

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Additional achievements 2021/22

Additional achievements at City Gardens

- **Climate resilient planting** - Delivery of a trial climate resilient planting, sustainable scheme on the north side of the Thames, trialling new plants, planting mediums and mulches. The scheme has removed the automatic irrigation and is drought-tolerant, incorporating soil moisture monitors, with the aim of only carrying out targeted watering. This scheme was designed and delivered in whole by the City Gardens team.
- **Biodiversity Action Plan** – Following a public consultation process, a new Biodiversity Action Plan for the next four years has been published.

Additional key achievements at West Ham Park

- **Sports Partnerships** - The charity has continued to work with sporting partners in order to maintain or increase active participation through sport at West Ham Park. Sporting partners include Capital Kids Cricket who were successful with City Bridge Trust funding 'Enjoying Green Spaces and the Natural Environment.' This funding has enabled the development of links with local people and West Ham Park through Cricket.
- **Learning in West Ham Park** - Despite the “stop/start” nature of lockdown regulations at the beginning of 2021/22, the departmental Learning Team continued to deliver quality learning materials for teachers, virtually or with socially-distanced sessions on site.

Additional achievements at Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood And Queen's Park

- **Events** - A programme of events to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the passing of the Hampstead Heath Act (1871) was successfully delivered during 2021. The 2022 English cross country championship was successfully hosted at Parliament Hill in February 2022, the first large event following Covid-19 restrictions
- **Biodiversity Interpretation boards** - A new series of biodiversity boards for 2022, themed on Hampstead Heath as 'London's Wildest Place', has been created in partnership with the Heath and Hampstead society. The boards focus on the Heath's mosaic of habitats and their wildlife and how they have changed over time.
- **Covid-19 Impact Recovery Programme** – Works to address compaction and erosion continued during 2021/22. A number of veteran trees have been fenced to aid recovery.
- **Playground Improvements** – works at the Parliament Hill Adventure Playground and East Heath Playground have been completed and the playgrounds reopened.
- **Queen's Park Woodland Walk** – Gained local community backing from the Area Residents' Association which formed a working group to support the ongoing management and maintenance of the Woodland Walk. This supports the implementation of the Management Plan.

Additional achievements At Epping Forest

- **Car Parking** - Charging phases one and two are complete, with charging introduced at 38 car parks during 2021.
- **Lodges** - Renovation of the lodge at Rangers Road is close to completion of an extensive overhaul to become a second holiday let, following the success of the first at Baldwins Hill. Other lodges are in the process of renovation to staff or domestic lets, depending on review during TOM.
- **Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS)** – A work programme has begun, including final stage procurement of several felling contracts, under 100% capital grant aid, for work across two years from 2021 to 2023.
- **New Cattle Grazing System** - New GPS-driven invisible fencing for cattle is proving successful. New areas for grazing are being considered following a successful trial at Wanstead Park.
- **ULEZ compliance** - A number of vehicles with much improved environmental performance have been sourced to achieve compliance with the recently extended ULEZ.

Additional achievements At The Commons

- **Woodland Management Plans** - Two Woodland Management Plans (West Wickham Commons and Coulsdon Commons) were approved by the Forestry Commission in 2021.
- **Countryside Stewardship Scheme** – A grant application to the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) was confirmed in December 2021 for funding for the next five years of grassland habitat management plans. A similar grant application was confirmed in September 2021 at Ashted Common to cover 10 years of veteran tree and other habitat works.
- **Rental of vacant properties** -Two vacant properties were successfully let in 2021/22, one commercial and the other residential.
- **Kenley Revival Project** - Concluded the final elements of the Kenley Revival Project, which was funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and resolved conservation issues with the built heritage assets and signage.
- **Protection of Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common from Impact of development** - Worked closely with Buckinghamshire Council and Natural England to enforce the mitigation strategy to prevent damage from recreation pressure which includes no additional dwellings within 500m of Burnham Beeches SAC.
- **Veteran Trees** – 67 ancient trees were worked on, and around, as per the 10-year work programme. Squirrel control continued to ensure reduction in damage on old pollards which are the most important habitat feature at Burnham Beeches and of international significance. 31 veteran trees were worked on at Ashted Common as per the 10-year work programme.
- **Pond Dam Wall repairs** – Repairs were undertaken to a leaking dam wall of one of the ponds at Burnham Beeches. The repair work was completed in March 2022.

Performance measures 2021/22

	Performance Measure Description	2021/22 Target (annual)		2021/22 Actual (annual)
1	Green Heritage Site Accreditation	Retain 13 Awards		Achieved 14 Awards (including the Cemetery & Crematorium) New accreditation for Coulsdon Common
2	Green Flag Awards	Retain 15 Awards		Achieved 15 Awards (including the Cemetery & Crematorium)
3	Improving the condition of our Sites of Special Scientific Interest	All SSSI's that are re-assessed by Natural England are rated as being in 'favourable' or 'unfavourable recovering' condition.		SSSI's have not been re-assessed by Natural England
4	Reducing our environmental footprint	Reduction in utilities, increase in generated electricity in comparison to 2020.		Electricity consumption: 11.13% reduction Gas consumption: 7.8% reduction Electricity generation: 1.98% increase
6	Active management of our ancient trees as part of the Stewardship Schemes at Epping Forest and Burnham Beeches.	Epping Forest: 354 Burnham Beeches: 67 Ashtead Common: 31		Epping Forest: 320 Burnham Beeches: 59 Ashtead Common: 31
7	The number of 'visitors' to the Open Spaces webpages.	Increase on 2020/21 actual (806,000)		954,063
8	Volunteer programme measures	The number of directly supervised volunteer work hours.	No target set as changing impacts of Covid-19 restrictions	15,161
		The number of indirectly supervised volunteer work hours.		13,113
		The number of unsupervised volunteer work hours.		7,173

Appendix 2

	Performance Measure Description	2021/22 Target (annual)		2021/22 Actual (annual)
9	Learning & volunteer programme measures	Increase in positive and very positive responses to the 'learning impacts'.		7% increase in feelings of connection to nature. 92% participants felt connected or very connected to nature after taking part.
10	Increase the number of visits to our heritage visitor attractions (this includes Monument, Keats House, The Queens Hunting Lodge hub and The Temple)	No target set due to Covid-19 risk assessments limiting number of visitors.		Keats House: 2,575 (Reduced opening. House visitors only) Queen's Hunting Lodge hub: 17,737 Total: 20,312
11	Increase the number of hours of tennis court usage	Maintain the number of visits achieved in 2020/21 (50,663).		WHP: 23,610 Parliament Hill: 22,075 Golders Hill Park: 8,131 Queen's Park: 12,881 Total: 66,697
12	Average number of days per FTE short term sickness	3.00		0.23 average April to July. Not available from August onwards as amalgamated into Environment Department data only
13	Health and safety accident investigations	85% Corporate target		91%
14	Open Spaces Department (all) Net expenditure (OS Director local risk only) for Open Spaces Committees only.	£11,368,000		£11,150,350
15	Open Spaces Department (all) Income generated (OS Director local risk) for Open Spaces Committees only	£7,060,000		£7,036,733