

The Environment Department

Shaping sustainable future environments

The Environment Department is the largest in the organisation and provides a diverse range of services to London and the South East.

Within the ‘square mile’ we deliver many local authority and regulatory functions including planning and development; building control; highways and transportation; cleansing and waste; environmental health, licensing and trading standards.

Further afield, we manage over 4,500 hectares of green spaces; run the City of London Cemetery and Crematorium; operate the Heathrow Animal Reception Centre; provide animal health services London-wide; and, as the London Port Health Authority, undertake controls on imported food and feed through London’s ports. The Department’s aims, activities and vision are presented.

Due to the complexity and scope of the department, three separate High-Level Business Plans have been produced to reflect our three key Committee ‘clusters’. This plan covers the Natural Environment Division and City Gardens.



Natural Environment Division and City Gardens

Looking back: some of our achievements in 2022/23...

- The **new Environment Department** came into existence on 1 April 2022, bringing together two and a half former departments. The initial structures defined under the new Target Operating Model (TOM) were implemented and Phase Two of the TOM process was undertaken to define the **new structure of the Natural Environment Division**.
- The Senior Leadership Team began to embed **consistent working practices** across the new department and identify synergies and opportunities for collaboration and partnership working.
- The **Natural Environment Charity Review** commenced to review and amend, as appropriate, the governance structure and the financial model.
- All service areas continued to work in partnership with internal and external partners to **deliver excellent services**.
- Teams responded quickly and effectively to the effects of the **heat wave and drought**, dealing with challenges such as fires and hosepipe bans by adapting working practices and invoking contingency plans.
- All sites maintained their **Green Heritage Accreditation and Green Flag** awards and several won London In Bloom Awards.
- The **Queen's Green Canopy** initiative was supported and promoted with several tree planting events held across the green spaces. Burnham Beeches, Ashted Common and Epping Forest were chosen as part of a nationwide network of 70 ancient woodlands. The black mulberry tree at Keats House was designated as one of 70 ancient trees.
- £2m capital investment was secured for the resurfacing of the **Parliament Hill Athletics Track** at Hampstead Heath.
- Three **Playgrounds** (West Ham Park, East Heath on Hampstead Heath, and the Heath Extension) were refurbished. A local fundraising campaign raised £40,000 towards the Heath Extension Playground refurbishment.
- A new **Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software system** was implemented at Epping Forest to enable efficient and compliant handling of contact data, work requests, fundraising and other customer contacts.
- Epping Forest saw completion of safety work on the **Birch Hall Park small raised reservoir** and the launch of the new **'Golden Trail'** at Golding's Hill Pond in the ancient woodland at Loughton.
- Staff from Burnham Beeches, Ashted Common and Hampstead Heath undertook a study tour to the Basque Country in Spain and participated in a conference. Recognised as **industry experts**, they discussed and gave presentations on tree pollarding and the restoration of ancient trees.
- The **learning programme** achieved a return to pre-pandemic school participant numbers and met its targets for the number of participants in play centre activities at Hampstead Heath.
- The City Gardens Team played a **key role in the City's delivery of events** following the passing of HM The Queen, dealing with floral tributes as well as marshalling crowds at the service of commemoration at St Paul's Cathedral and the Proclamation of the King outside the Royal Exchange.

How we plan to develop our capabilities in 2023/24

1. Implement the **new divisional structure** defined by the TOM process.
2. Implement the four sections of the **Natural Environment Charity Review** to ensure each charity is fit for the future in terms of governance, finance, resources and strategy.
3. Develop our **people**, creating aspirational roles with genuine career progression and job satisfaction that retain and attract **talent**.
4. Invest in individuals' **professional and personal development** and build a sustainable, inclusive, resilient and agile workforce.
5. Embed **collaborative working** across teams, divisions and the wider department to share knowledge, expertise and experience.
6. Develop effective, collaborative, **business partner relationships** particularly with the HR, City Surveyor's, and Comptroller and City Solicitor's departments and with the Corporate Charity Review Group.
7. Review existing working practices and procedures to ensure **effective and efficient service delivery**.
8. Develop our use of **information** to support delivery of services that are intelligence led, data-driven and evidence based.
9. Strengthen **Partnerships**, including stronger links with third sector, businesses, community groups and local and national governing bodies (NGBs).
10. Address significant budget pressures; seek **external funding**.

Our major workstreams in 2023/24 will be...

- Refine the elements of the **Natural Environment Charity Review** for approval, working with the Comptroller and City Solicitor and the Corporate Charity Review Group to ensure each charity is fit for purpose. As part of the review, deliver **Charity Training for Members**.
- Embed the transformation plans for Phase Two of the **Target Operating Model**.
- Ensure the safety of our buildings and assets by collaborating with City Surveyor's Department on the **Operational Property Review** to prioritise and carry out essential repairs and maintenance.
- Further develop, and commence implementation of, the six **Natural Environment strategies** in line with Corporate strategies.
- Continue to provide **learning programmes** for schools and for children with special educational needs which build wellbeing and nature connection.
- Develop **income generating activities** and continue to investigate further opportunities for funding.
- Continue to progress the **Carbon Removals** project.
- Review **digitalisation of services** to achieve efficiency gains.
- Develop a **Gift Aid** system for the Natural Environment charities.
- Support the development of volunteer skills, networks and confidence, and improve **volunteer wellbeing**.
- Work with local partners on the inclusion of Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common within an extended Chilterns **Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty** (AONB) and The Coulsdon Commons within an extended Surrey Hills AONB.
- Continue to work closely with stakeholders on the Burnham Beeches landscape scale **habitat management programme**.
- The Burnham Beeches Team will work with Buckinghamshire Borough Council to deliver the agreed **Strategic Access Management and Monitoring program**; and with Slough Borough Council to deliver **Section 106** agreements.
- At Epping Forest, undertake a review of the **Byelaws** and complete the **Countryside Stewardship Scheme** application for remaining Forest Buffer Lands and Wanstead Park.
- The City Gardens Team will deliver the Biodiversity Action Plan; deliver improvement schemes along **biodiversity routes** as part of the Climate Adaptation Strategy; develop a **Climate-resilient planting** catalogue; and deliver a **street tree development programme** under the Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund.
- Replace the City Gardens Team's existing diesel fleet with fully **electric vehicles**.

How we will measure our performance

Key Performance Indicators	2023-24 Target
Green Heritage Accreditation	Retain 13
Green Flag Awards	Retain 14
Volunteer work hours	Increase
Number of Ranger days spent interacting with visitors in Burnham Beeches with regards to SAMM commitments and s106 agreements	>100 days by year end
Number of visitors to The Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge and the Temple at Epping Forest	Increase
Number of visitors to Keats House	Increase
Number of visits recorded at the Bathing Ponds and Lido at Hampstead Heath	Increase
Self-reported perception of wellbeing by Learning Programme participants	Sustain/increase
Progress toward achieving net zero (carbon) (improvement against baseline)	Increase
Health & Safety investigations completed within 21 days (corporate target)	85%

Our strategic commitments

The Corporate Plan outcomes we have a direct impact on are...

Contribute to a flourishing society

2. People enjoy good health and wellbeing.
3. People have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and reach their full potential.
4. Communities are cohesive and have the facilities they need.

Support a thriving economy

5. Businesses are trusted and socially and environmentally responsible.

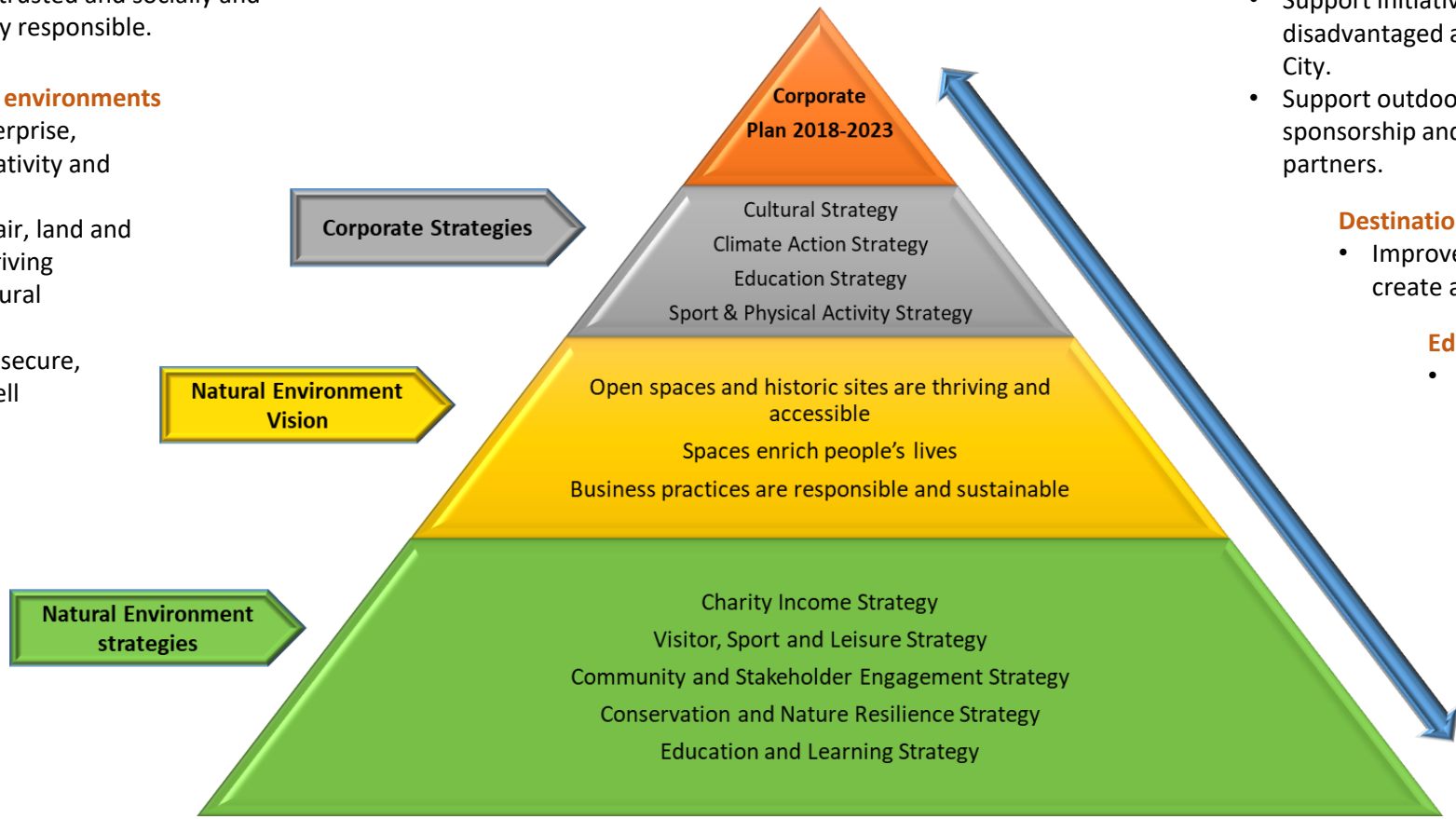
Shape outstanding environments

10. We inspire enterprise, excellence, creativity and collaboration.
11. We have clear air, land and water and a thriving sustainable natural environment.
12. Our spaces are secure, resilient and well maintained.

Natural Environment Strategies

Several strategies for the Natural Environment Division are being developed, subject to Committee approval. When approved, these strategies will support the aims and objectives of the Corporate Plan, other Corporate strategies and policies, as well as the Charity Objects and the Environment Department’s vision and aims.

The diagram below illustrates how the elements will support and link with one another.



The key Corporate strategies we support are...

Climate Action Strategy

- Enhance carbon removal in our open spaces.
- Advocate the importance of green spaces and urban greening as natural carbon sinks, and their contribution to biodiversity and overall wellbeing.
- Deliver further climate resilient planting schemes in City Gardens.

Cultural Strategy

- Develop, enhance and animate open and green spaces.
- Support initiatives that encourage London schools, especially in disadvantaged areas, to engage with the cultural life of the City.
- Support outdoor programmes to grow, and actively encourage sponsorship and participation from neighbouring commercial partners.

Destination City

- Improve the quality of green spaces in the City to create a more attractive and welcoming public realm.

Education Strategy

- Contribute to delivering the strategy actions, particularly under the aim to: *Ensure that the Square Mile’s outstanding cultural, historical and open spaces resources enrich the creative experience of London’s learners.*

Sport & Physical Activity Strategy

- Contribute to deliver the strategy actions, particularly under the outcome: *People enjoy good health and wellbeing and health inequalities are reduced.*

Risk Management

Our business risks are managed in accordance with the Corporate Risk Management Framework and, where applicable, with the Charities Act 2011. Risks are routinely reviewed and updated by management teams in consultation with risk owners. Committees receive regular updates on the risks held by the charities/services within their remit to provide them with necessary assurance that risks are being managed and mitigated effectively, and to enable Members to fulfil their oversight and scrutiny role.

During 2022/23 an initial review of all risks was carried out to improve consistency, align risks with the new departmental structure, and create a separate risk register for each Natural Environment charity. A further detailed review, rationalisation and quality assurance exercise will be undertaken in 2023/24 to ensure all risks are identified, written, managed and mitigated consistently and compliantly across the department.

The matrix below shows the business risk profile of the Natural Environment Division and the City Gardens Team. Appropriate mitigating actions are in place for all risks. These details were correct at January 2023 but are subject to continual review and change.

		Impact			
		Minor	Serious	Major	Extreme
Likelihood	Likely		23	22	
	Possible	1	11	21	5
	Unlikely		6	29	
	Rare				

Natural Environment and City Gardens business risk profile – January 2023

Stakeholder engagement

We have a wide range of stakeholders and delivery partners (including, but not limited to the key ones listed here) and will ensure we continue to communicate with them appropriately.

Our staff	Diocese of London
Volunteers	St Paul’s Cathedral
Members of the public	Third sector organisations and NGBs
Committee Members	The emergency services
Charity Trustees	Charity Commission
Local residents	Regulators
Local businesses	Historic England
Other CoL departments	Natural England
Contractors	Defra
Developers	GLA
Neighbouring boroughs	

Operational Property requirements

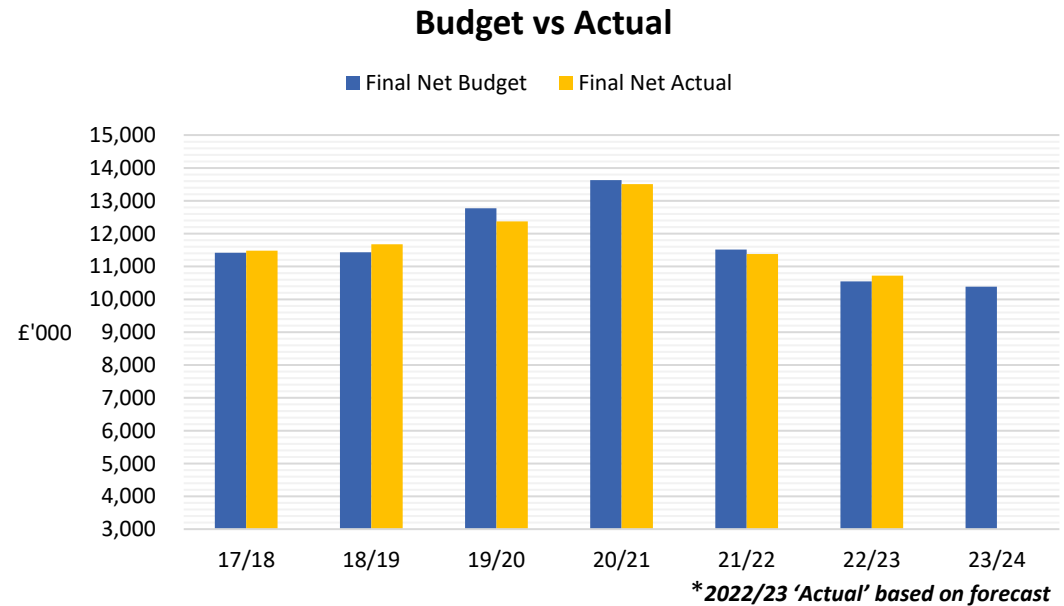
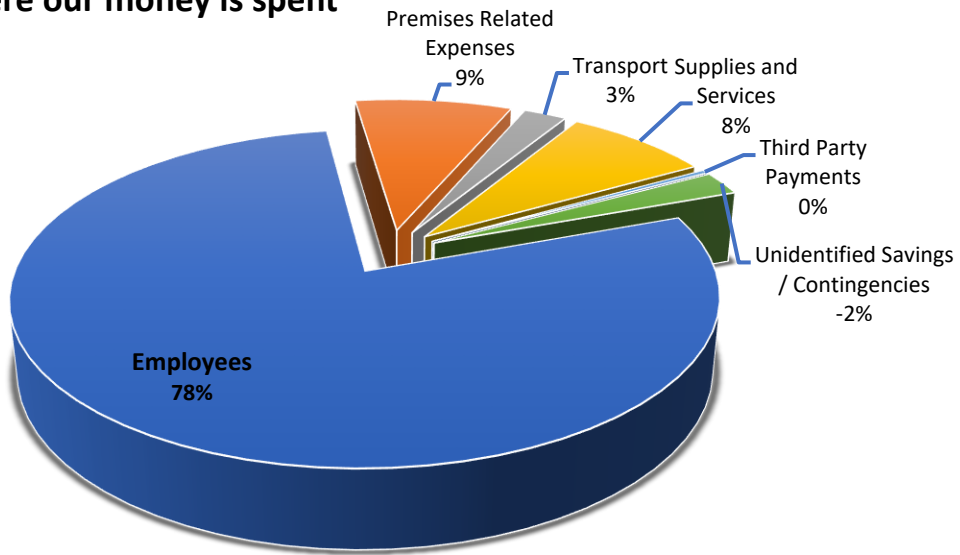
The Environment Department’s 850 staff are based across 25 sites throughout London and the south-east. We hold approximately 400 physical assets, almost 300 of which are at our Natural Environment sites.

As part of the Corporation’s Operational Property Review Programme, the Environment Department is undertaking a critical review of all its physical assets, including identifying ownership. A Departmental ‘Task and Finish’ group will be established early in 2023/24 to undertake this project. The initial stage of the project will be to identify the resources required to undertake a full analysis and in-depth review of all physical assets held by the department, including baselining operational requirements, financial position and state of repair.

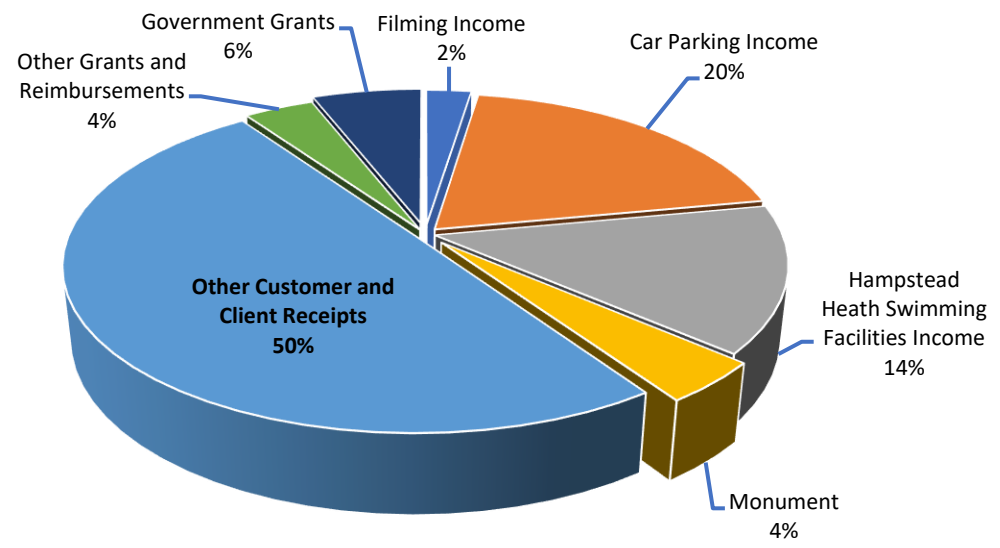
Following this, we will work with the City Surveyor’s Department to establish a detailed project plan and realistic timeline. An update on the status of the assets relevant to this Committee will be reported, including any that are identified as surplus to requirements.

Our financial information

Where our money is spent

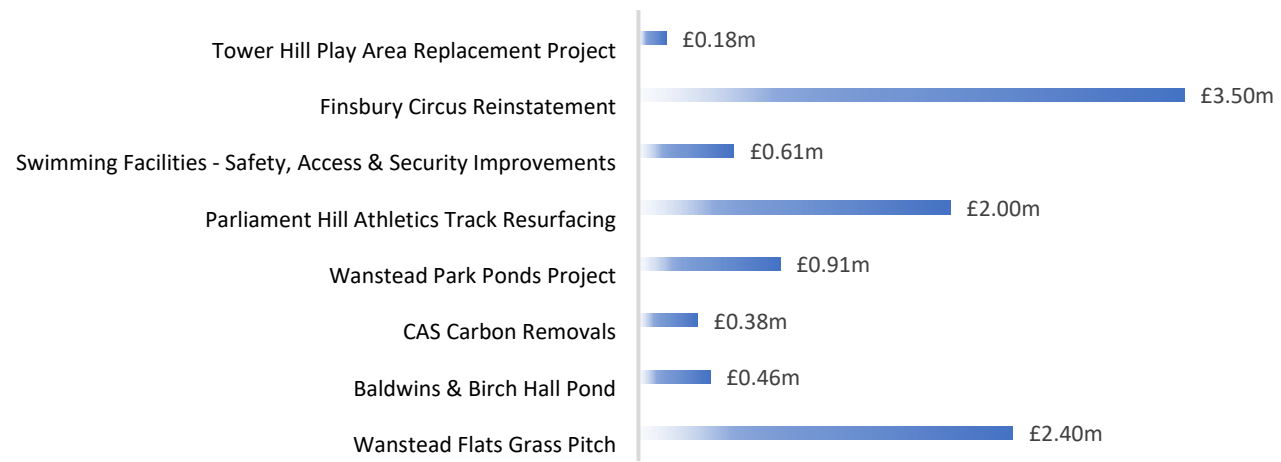


Where our money comes from



Capital Projects - 2023/24 forecast

Total estimated spend is £10.44m



Our people*

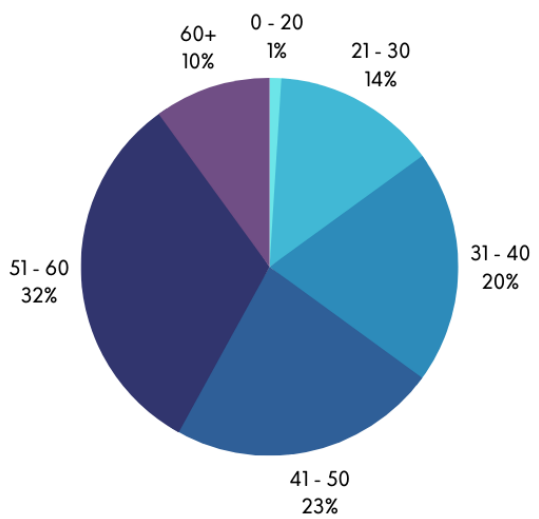
As a new department Equality, Diversity and Inclusion will be a key piece of work, and will include:

- ➔ Undertaking an audit on EDI across the new department
- ➔ Increased training and development for staff
- ➔ Encouraging staff to complete 'sensitive' HR information
- ➔ Looking at recruitment practices to expand staff diversity
- ➔ Encouraging staff to join and participate in staff networks

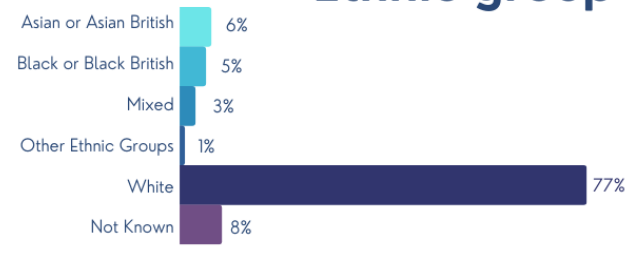
Gender



Age range



Ethnic group



*N.B. The information on this page relates to the whole of the Environment Department, not just to the services covered by the rest of this Business Plan. All data correct at time of most recent staff survey.