

HAMPSTEAD HEATH, HIGHGATE WOOD AND QUEEN'S PARK COMMITTEE
Wednesday, 29 November 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee held at Committee Rooms, 2nd Floor, West Wing, Guildhall on Wednesday, 29 November 2023 at 4.00 pm

Present

Members:

William Upton KC (Chair)
Alderman Gregory Jones KC (Deputy Chairman)
John Beyer
Deputy Timothy Butcher
John Foley
Jason Groves
Caroline Haines (Ex-Officio Member)
Michael Hudson
Pauline Lobo
Wendy Mead

Officers:

Nathan Adjei	- Environment Department
Sadaf Anwar	- Comptroller and City Solicitor's Department
Emily Brennan	- Environment Department
Julie Fittock	- City Surveyor's Department
Clem Harcourt	- Chamberlain's Department
Joanna Hill	- Environment Department
Jack Joslin	- Bridge House Estates
William LoSasso	- Environment Department
Paul Maskell	- Environment Department
Jonathan Meares	- Environment Department
Bob Roberts	- Environment Department
Blair Stringman	- Town Clerk's Department
Charlotte Williams	- Environment Department
Edward Wood	- Comptroller and City Solicitor's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Arjun Mittra, Deputy Edward Lord and Alethea Silk.

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

There were no declarations.

3. MINUTES

3.1 **To agree the public minutes and non-public summary of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee meeting held on 17 July 2023**

RESOLVED – That, the public and non-public summary of the minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

3.2 ***To note the minutes of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee meeting held on 30 October 2023**

RESOLVED – That, the minutes be noted.

3.3 ***To note the Queen's Park Consultative Group Minutes held on 7 November 2023**

RESOLVED – That, the minutes be noted.

3.4 ***To note the Highgate Wood Consultative Group Minutes held on 13 November 2023**

RESOLVED – That, the minutes be noted.

4. **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Committee considered a report of the Town Clerk, concerning the approval of the Terms of Reference of the Committee.

Members noted that for the current civic year five management committee meetings had been scheduled. However, it was suggested that moving back to four would be better from a scheduling perspective. Following discussion the Town Clerk agreed to take Members feedback on the scheduling and number of meetings back to the next meeting.

RESOLVED – That, the terms of reference of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee, subject to any comments, be approved for submission to the Court of Common Council in April, and that any further changes required in the lead up to the Court's appointment of Committees be delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman.

5. **APPOINTMENT OF THE MEMBER OF HEATH HANDS TO THE HAMPSTEAD HEATH CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

The Committee considered a report of the Town Clerk, concerning the appointment of a new external Members of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee.

RESOLVED – That, Rachel Chapman, nominated by Heath Hands, be appointed as a Member of the Consultative Committee, in accordance with the London Government Reorganisation (Hampstead Heath) Order 1989.

6. **DIRECTOR'S UPDATE**

The Committee received a verbal update of the Natural Environment Director.

The Natural Environment Director covered several topics in the meeting, including a staffing update, operational property review, and natural capital

audit. The key highlights include welcoming the Superintendent and acknowledging the contributions of interim leadership. Additionally, the new Head of Operations, and, new Assistant Director for Charities and Commercials, were introduced.

In terms of recruitment, it was noted that progress has been made, with 28 staff recently appointed, and further recruitments in progress. Discussion then moved to the natural environment, vision, mission, and strategies development. The Natural Environment Director informed the Committee that the focus was on creating a shared vision and mission for the division, with proposed themes including nature conservation, community engagement, access and recreation, and culture, heritage, and learning. Members noted that the draft would be presented to the Natural Environment Board for approval in January, with a goal of wider dissemination thereafter.

In response to a question raised by a Member, officers noted that the update on leadership for North London Open Spaces indicated that about 90% of the roles had been filled, with one key position remaining. Members were informed that the recruitment process had seen significant progress, and most staff teams were in place or undergoing training and induction. It was noted that efforts were being made to implement a robust training and induction program, including general corporation training and tailored sessions for the North London Open Spaces teams.

RESOLVED – That, the update be noted.

7. **ASSISTANT DIRECTOR'S UPDATE**

The Committee received an update of the Assistant Director, North London Open Spaces, concerning matters relating to Hampstead Heath since June 2023.

During the committee meeting, several updates were discussed, encompassing diverse aspects of Hampstead Heath's restoration project. The committee outlined plans for the soft launch of the refurbished athletic track on December 12th, pending approval and fencing removal, with a more extensive event scheduled for Spring. Notably, collaboration with Highgate Harriers and efforts to involve the Lord Mayor were discussed. Operational readiness for the track, including handling applications and managing events, was also addressed.

Progress on the Ponds Improvement Works, though facing delays, was reported, with discussion on potential events for the project's completion. The importance of publicising world-class facilities for both athletes and the community were highlighted, suggesting involvement of a celebrity athlete for the opening. Acknowledgments were also extended to the City of London for its investment, and concerns regarding public awareness of costs for free facility usage prompted suggestions for graphic representation.

Members expressed gratitude for the support and assistance provided by colleagues. They acknowledged the invaluable help in familiarising themselves with the activities in Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood, and Queen's Park over

the past three months. The committee extended thanks for the uninterrupted service and assistance during the transition between teams, especially considering an unusual summer.

A certificate of commendation was presented to the Committee for former colleague, Declan Gallagher, for his outstanding work in the City of London Corporation Environment Department, maintaining high standards in caring for open spaces in north London. The certificate highlighted his dedication, professionalism, positive attitude, extensive experience, kindness, generosity, and sense of humour. Members expressed sadness at his departure and emphasised cherishing his memory.

RESOLVED – That, the update be noted.

8. **HAMPSTEAD HEATH CONSTABULARY UPDATE**

The Committee considered a report of the Interim Executive Director, Environment, concerning an update on the Hampstead Heath Constabulary and its restructure as part of the new TOM process.

Members discussed various aspects of the Constabulary, including decisions pertaining to team structure, collaboration with Parkguard, and sought clarification on the Constabulary's role in addressing crime on the Heath. The discussion also touched upon the Constabulary's relationships with both the City of London Police and the Metropolitan Police. Notably, concerns raised by local residents were highlighted, particularly regarding similar uniforms and the potential confusion among the public and park visitors about the constabulary's role and authority. Members also voiced concerns about the lack of patrols and enforcement.

The acting Sergeant of the Constabulary provided details about the relationship with the Metropolitan Police including the frequency of meetings with specific officers at the Metropolitan Police, exchange of information and the provision of equipment and training.

Members discussed concerns about similar uniforms and potential reputational risks for the City of London Corporation. It was agreed that a report outlining the role and powers of the Constabulary and its relationships with both police forces be presented to the next Committee meeting.

RESOLVED – That, Members approved the proposal to revise the Hampstead Heath Constabulary Target Operational Model (TOM) restructure and agreed to revisit the role of the Constabulary at the next meeting.

9. **PARLIAMENT HILL MASTERPLAN PROPOSAL PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

The Committee received a report of the Interim Executive Director, Environment, concerning an update on the public consultation carried out in July on proposals for the Parliament Hill Masterplan.

The Committee discussed the near completion of the Hampstead Heath athletics track project, emphasising a commitment to enhancing services. They

reviewed public feedback from a recent consultation on potential improvement projects, aiming to refine proposals based on community input. Immediate steps include reviewing supportive comments on Parliament Hill facilities and seeking additional input from the Consultative Committee, involving local stakeholders. Members were informed that no decision was sought at this point, highlighting the need for more time to incorporate community feedback. Officers acknowledged the change in the initial expectation of seeking approval and welcomed additional comments or questions. David McAlpine from consulting firm MTW was present to receive comments.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

10. **NATURAL ENVIRONMENT CHARITY REVIEW - UPDATE**

The Committee received a verbal update of the Head of Corporate Charities Funding Unit concerning the Natural Environment Charity Review.

The Committee received an update on the Natural Charity Review with the Head of Corporate Charities, providing insights. It was noted that the focus was on scoping, document compilation, local legislation, and addressing funding challenges. Key issues for the review included funding models, revenue, fundraising difficulties, and an ongoing asset review. The Head of Corporate Charities outlined plans for a substantive report at the next meeting, seeking to continue the review next year with an implementation phase.

RESOLVED - That, the update be noted.

11. **RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE REPORT**

The Committee considered a report of the Interim Executive Director, Environment, concerning the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee risk management procedures in place within the Environment Department and its Natural Environment Division.

The committee discussed addressing concerns related to building maintenance and equipment, with actions outlined to reduce risks by the end of the next year. Members noted the need for financial support and collaboration with the Resource Allocation Sub-Committee to allocate resources effectively. The committee expressed satisfaction with the report, acknowledging the ongoing efforts to manage risks.

RESOLVED – That, Members confirm, on behalf of the City Corporation as trustee, that the registers appended to the report satisfactorily set out the key risks to the charities and that appropriate systems are in place to effectively identify and mitigate risks.

12. ***BUSINESS PLAN 2023/24 – PROGRESS REPORT (MID-YEAR, APRIL-SEPTEMBER 2023)**

The Committee received a report of the Interim Executive Director, Environment, concerning an update on progress against the Environment Department's high-level Business Plan 2023/24.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

13. ***OPERATIONAL FINANCE PROGRESS REPORT (PERIOD 6 APRIL - SEPTEMBER) 2023/24 – HAMPSTEAD HEATH, HIGHGATE WOOD AND QUEEN'S PARK**

The Committee received a report of the Chamberlain, concerning an update on the operational finance position as of period 6 (April – September) 2023/24 for local risk revenue budget to date and projected year-end outturn position, current live capital projects and outstanding debt position.

Officers provided an update on local and central risk budget performance, projecting an underspend of £468,000 on the Committee's local risk budget for 2023/24 as of September 2023. Discussion was raised on the report which included outstanding debts, charity reserve funds, and the deficit funding model. Members requested a regular financial update and a deeper understanding of the impact of external funding on the budget.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

14. **REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS 2024/25**

The Committee considered a joint report of the Chamberlain and Interim Executive Director, Environment concerning approval of the revenue and capital budgets for the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee for 2024/25, for subsequent submission to the Finance Committee.

Members discussed several key points regarding the budget. In the Budget Overview, it was highlighted that the proposed net expenditure budget for 24/25 was £5.356 million, reflecting a reduction of £277,000 compared to the previous year's original budget. The total local risk resource base for 24/25 was £5.295 million net expenditure, accounting for inflation and other factors. In response to a question raised by a Member, officers noted that the budget intricately included pay award adjustments, staffing budget transfers, and central risk items, such as income from the Hampstead Heath Trust. The distinction between local risk, central risk, and recharge budgets was clarified, and concerns were expressed regarding understanding Hampstead Heath's budget within the overall context.

In relation to the recommendations, Members agreed that recommendation iv as outlined in the report be amended to delegate authority to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman and not the Chamberlain.

RESOLVED – That Members,

- a) Note the latest revenue budget for your Committee for 2023/24;
- b) Review and approve the Committee's proposed revenue budget for 2024/25 for submission to Finance Committee
- c) Review and approve the Committee's capital and supplementary revenue project budgets for 2024/25 for submission to Finance Committee.

- d) Agree that amendments for 2023/24 and 2024/25 budgets arising from changes to recharges or for any further implications arising from corporate contracts, energy price increases, changes to the Cyclical Works Programme (CWP) and capital charges during budget setting be delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman.

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

There were no questions.

16. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

There was no other urgent business.

17. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED – That, the following matters relate to business under the remit of the Court of Common Council acting for the City Corporation as charity Trustee, to which Part VA and Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 public access to meetings provisions do not apply. The following items contain sensitive information which it is not in the best interests of the charity to consider in a public meeting (engaging similar considerations as under paragraphs 3 and 5 of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Act) and will be considered in non-public session.

18. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

RESOLVED – That, the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

19. ***REPORT OF ACTION TAKEN**

The Committee received a report of the Town Clerk.

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

There were no questions.

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

There was no other urgent business.

22. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED – That, the confidential minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

The meeting ended at 7.22pm

Chairman

Contact Officer: Blair Stringman
blair.stringman@cityoflondon.gov.uk