

Committee:	Date:
Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen’s Park Committee: For Information Natural Environment Board: For Decision West Ham Park Committee: For Information Epping Forest and Commons Committee: For Information	12 February 2024 19 February 2024 19 February 2024 21 March 2024
Subject: Draft High-Level Business Plan 2024/25 – Environment Department	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 11, 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
Report of: Bob Roberts, Interim Executive Director Environment	For Information
Report author: Joanne Hill, Business Planning and Compliance Manager	

Summary

This report presents the Environment Department’s draft high-level Business Plan 2024/25 for the Natural Environment Division and City Gardens (Appendix A). Due to the complexity and scope of the Environment Department, three separate high-level Business Plans have been produced to reflect our three key Committee ‘clusters’. Plans covering the other areas of the Department are being presented to the relevant service committees.

The draft high-level Business Plan 2024/25 for the Natural Environment Division and City Gardens is being presented to the Natural Environment Board for approval. Once approved, the Plan will be updated in line with any changes requested by the Natural Environment Board and will become the ‘final version’ adopted in April 2024.

The three Natural Environment Management Committees (Epping Forest and Commons Committee; Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen’s Park Committee; and West Ham Park Committee) are receiving the Plan for information.

Recommendation

Members of the Natural Environment Board are asked to:

- i. Note the factors taken into consideration in compiling the Environment Department Business Plan; and
- ii. Approve, subject to the incorporation of any changes sought by this Committee, the draft high-level Business Plan 2024/25 for the Natural Environment Division and City Gardens (Appendix A).

Members of the West Ham Park Committee; the Epping Forest and Commons Committee; and the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen’s Park Committee are asked to:

- i. Note this report.

Main Report

Background

1. As part of the new framework for corporate and business planning, departments were asked to produce standardised high-level, two-page Business Plans for the first time in 2017 for the 2018/19 year. Members generally welcomed these high-level plans for being brief, concise, focused and consistent statements of the key ambitions and objectives for every department.
2. For 2024/25, the high-level Business Plan has further evolved to describe the funding and people resources associated with each priority workstream. As a high-level plan, this document does not capture the granularity of departmental work but gives an overall picture of activity, priorities, stakeholder engagement, trends where applicable, and direction of travel. The Corporate Strategy and Performance Team is working closely with departments to ensure that all Departmental Business Plans are aligned with Corporate Plan 2024-29.
3. The high-level Business Plans of each department follow a corporately mandated format and set of contents. This enables cross-departmental comparison and identification of dependencies and silos. The Environment Department's high-level Business Plans have been reviewed by a corporate Strategic Planning Group and have been approved by the Executive Leadership Board before being presented to Committees.

Draft final high-level Business Plan for 2024/25

4. This report presents, at Appendix A, the draft high-level Business Plan for 2024/25 for the Natural Environment Division and City Gardens.

a. Prioritisation

The priority workstreams for 2024/25 were identified by the Environment Department's Senior Leaders and their management teams, in consultation with other members of staff. The establishment of these core workstreams enables management teams to set appropriate objectives and action plans to achieve the overarching goals during the year ahead.

Due to the high-level nature of this Business Plan, the workstreams do not include all elements of the teams' work; there is a significant amount of 'business as usual' activity that will continue alongside the priority workstreams. Where possible, workstreams link to corporate strategies and priorities, as well as statutory duties.

This year's Business Planning process included a pilot exercise to assign one of thirteen prioritisation categories to each workstream, as shown on pages 3 and 4 of the Plan. However, please note that the workstreams have not been ranked, or presented, in order of priority.

The Natural Environment Division's priority workstreams for 2024/25 are to implement and begin to deliver the Division's core strategies. As these strategies were still in draft at the time of writing the Business Plan, some of the workstreams are necessarily broad

with performance targets yet to be determined. When the strategies are finalised, more detailed objectives and performance measures will be developed and incorporated in the local management plan of each charity.

b. Resources utilised

As part of the pilot prioritisation exercise, in the 2024/25 high-level Business Plans, every City Corporation department was required to include an estimation of the budget and people resource associated with each workstream. These figures are expressed as percentages of the overall revenue budget and Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff.

It has not been possible to determine accurate allocation of financial or people resources for each workstream; very few are discrete projects with specific budgets, and very few members of staff spend specific proportions of their time on one workstream. Therefore, the figures shown in the Business Plan are very much estimates. Should this exercise be repeated in future years, accurate methodology will need to be designed and applied in order to ensure consistency across and within departments.

c. Performance measurement

Progress made against priority workstreams is measured by monitoring key performance indicators and achievement of milestones. Performance is reviewed regularly by Directors and their management teams and is reported to Committees every six months to enable Member scrutiny.

In addition, the top-level workstreams identified in this plan flow down to local team management plans and the individual performance plans of members of staff, which provide further methods of assessing progress. This also enables individual officers to fully understand how their work feeds into divisional, departmental and corporate activities, aims and objectives.

d. Synergies and combatting silos

Workstreams have been linked to corporate priorities wherever possible. Page 6 demonstrates how the work of the Natural Environment Division and City Gardens aligns with core strategies and policies, including the new Corporate Plan 2024-29.

Page 8, 'Our People' contains information which relates to the whole of the Environment Department. Colleagues across the department are working collaboratively to identify synergies and break down siloed working practices. The Department's Business Services Division works to align common processes and procedures to achieve consistency. This Division leads cross-departmentally on areas including business planning; risk management; health and safety; workforce planning; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; communications and engagement; information and data management; and GIS mapping.

Departmental Operational Property Assets Utilisation Assessment

5. The Environment Department's staff are based across 25 sites throughout London and the south-east. It holds approximately 340 physical assets, almost 270 of which are at its Natural Environment sites.

6. The Executive Director is represented by the City Operations Director on the Board for the Corporation's Operational Property Review Programme. As part of this Programme, the Department is undertaking a critical review of all its physical assets, including operational property. A Departmental 'Task and Finish' group has been established and meetings are taking place to progress this project.
7. 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.
8. Following this, officers 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.

Corporate and strategic implications – The Environment Department is working to align to the developing Corporate Plan, through continued engagement and participation in the Strategy Forum, Strategic Planning Group and so on. It will shape its strategies and services appropriately to ensure they support achievement of the City Corporation's outcomes. Future Business Plans will be fully informed by the mission, aims and outcomes in the Corporate Plan 2024-29.

The Business Plan lists other key City of London strategies that the Natural Environment Division and the City Gardens team are helping to deliver. Any new strategies will be reviewed as they are approved and consideration given as to how the services can and will support their delivery. This will include the new Corporate Plan and the People Strategy.

Financial implications - The high-level Business Plan has been produced in liaison with Chamberlain's Department and takes into consideration opportunities to reduce expenditure and increase income in order to make necessary savings.

Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) - The Department has established an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Working Group. The Group is currently developing a Departmental EDI Plan which will align with the Corporate EDI Plan. Members of the group will lead on a range of EDI actions, including those set out in the Business Plan, to ensure compliance with the PSED across the department.

Resourcing implications - Any changes to resources will be brought to the relevant Committee(s).

Security implications - None

Conclusion

This report presents the draft high-level Business Plan 2024/25 for the Natural Environment Division and City Gardens. Members are asked to approve or note the Plan, as indicated. Once approved, the Plan will be updated in line with any changes requested by the Natural Environment Board and will become the 'final version' adopted in April 2024.

Appendices

Appendix A – Draft Environment Department high-level Business Plan 2024/25: Natural Environment Division and City Gardens.

Joanne Hill

Business Planning and Compliance Manager
Environment Department

joanne.hill@cityoflondon.gov.uk