

WEST HAM PARK COMMITTEE
Thursday, 16 May 2024

Minutes of the meeting of the West Ham Park Committee held at Committee Room -
2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Thursday, 16 May 2024 at 9.30 am

Present

Members:

Caroline Haines (Chair)
Andrew McMurtrie
Deputy Anne Corbett
James St John Davis
Wendy Mead OBE
Deputy Alpa Raja
Catherine Bickmore
Rafe Courage

In Attendance:

Eamon Mullally (Deputy Chair)
Benjamin Murphy
Councillor Joy Laguda MBE

Officers:

Emily Brennan	- Environment Department
Anna Cowperthwaite	- Comptroller and City Solicitor's
Simon Glynn	- Environment Department
Joanne Hill	- Environment Department
William LoSasso	- Environment Department
Bob Roberts	- Environment Department
Joseph Smith	- Town Clerk's Department
Pauline Mouskis	- Chamberlain's Department
Rob Shakespeare	- Environment Department
Simon Owen	- Chamberlain's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received by Eamon Mullally, who attended the meeting virtually.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT

There were no declarations.

3. *ORDER OF THE COURT OF COMMON COUNCIL

Members received to Order of the Court of Common Council dated 25 April 2024 appoint the board and setting its Terms of Reference.

4. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED – That, in accordance with Standing Order 30, Caroline Haines being the only Member indicating her willingness to serve be appointed as Chairman for the ensuing year.

5. **ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED – That, in accordance with Standing Order 29, Eamon Mullally being the only Member indicating his willingness to serve be appointed as Deputy Chairman for the ensuing year.

6. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED - That, the public minutes and non-public summary of the last meeting held on the 19 February 2024 be agreed as a correct record.

7. **RESOLUTION OF THANKS TO OLIVER SELLS**

The Board heard the Chairman.

We extend our sincere gratitude to Oliver, whose leadership on the previously named Open Spaces Committee and West Ham Park offered valuable clarity and guidance through a particularly arduous period.

During his time as Chairman he steered us through challenges - particularly post-Covid -with unwavering resolve.

His profound commitment and deep appreciation for the importance of outdoor spaces in fostering community health and well-being was self-evident with a standout achievement guiding the play area at West Ham Park through to completion. Another visit was the wonderfully vibrant visit of the Lady Mayoress, Lady Hilary Russell.

In the case of Finsbury Circus, a cherished City asset disrupted by Crossrail activity, Oliver's leadership saw the revitalisation of its gardens and the reclaiming the garden as a cherished green oasis.

As Oliver leaves the board, we extend heartfelt appreciation for his myriad accomplishments under his tenure and wish him continued success in his endeavours within the City of London Corporation and beyond.

RESOLVED – That Members, approve the resolution of thanks to Oliver Sells.

8. **RESOLUTION OF THANKS TO GRAEME DOSHI-SMITH**

The Board heard the Chairman.

The Natural Environment Board wishes to express gratitude and profound appreciation for Graeme's exceptional service as Chairman of the Natural Environment Board (formally called the Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee) from June 6th, 2016 until July 2019, Graeme's leadership was marked by remarkable achievements in challenging times, reflecting an open-minded, forward-thinking approach combined with a delightful sense of humour and enthusiasm.

As steward of the Strategic Committee overseeing the City's Open Spaces, Graeme steered the passage of significant legislation and provided strategic vision for the Department. His advocacy for environmental sustainability, community engagement, and technological advancement was instrumental in driving positive change.

The Board recognises Graeme's unwavering dedication, evidenced by the retention of prestigious awards and notable accolades during his tenure. We extend profound appreciation for his exceptional contributions and best wishes

for his future endeavours, with fond recollections of the substantial achievements realised under his leadership when he was Chairman.

RESOLVED – That Members, approve the resolution of thanks to Graeme Doshi-Smith.

9. **RESOLUTION OF THANKS TO BOB ROBERTS**

The Board heard the Chairman.

Bob has been a member of the Corporation's Executive Leadership Team for several years and in different guises including as Deputy Town Clerk and Executive Director of Communications and External Affairs. His encyclopaedic knowledge of the Corporation, combined with his outstanding communication and influencing skills, have been instrumental in raising the profile of the Natural Environment Division, in improving governance and management, and in leading the team through a period of significant change.

Bob's affection for the outdoors began in his childhood growing up in South Africa and continued when he moved to Essex as a teenager to study at Loughton College. Epping Forest was on his doorstep and Bob spent many enjoyable hours in and around the Forest. His work for the Corporation enabled him to develop extensive knowledge of all the Corporation's open spaces, often in the context of having to respond to crises! Taking up the role of Environment Director gave Bob the opportunity to raise the profile of the Corporation's natural environment work in a positive and proactive way, supporting the new Natural Environment Director to lead the development of a new vision and strategies for the Division. He also championed the Natural Capital Audit of the Corporation's Open Spaces, a piece of work which gained a huge amount of positive media coverage for the Corporation and which has been instrumental in raising the profile of the Natural Environment Division and of the wider Environment Department.

His political, communication and influencing expertise has been put to excellent use in the Environment Department. Bob continued to build strong relationships with Members and significantly improved governance processes across the Department including in the Natural Environment Division. The support and guidance he provided to the Natural Environment Director, Emily Brennan, has been particularly crucial as Emily had only recently joined the Corporation. He's given Officers extensive guidance on Corporation governance, policies and processes, helping them successfully navigate these to get the best outcomes

for the Division. For example he helped shape the NE Charities Review, focusing on identifying sustainable future funding options for the NE Charities.

His knowledge of the Corporation's governance, project management and funding processes and mechanisms has enabled projects such as the new world-class athletics track at Hampstead Heath to be completed. He's also influenced the future and governance of major assets such as the planned transfer of The Monument, and has helped identify and secure funding for major events such as the West Ham Park 150th anniversary.

Bob led the Environment Department's input into the new Corporate Plan, ensuring that the work of the Natural Environment Division, City Gardens and wider Environment Department assets and priorities were appropriately reflected. He has also elevated key departmental risks, such as tree-related risks, to the Corporate Risk Register.

Bob's engaging manner, outstanding leadership and management skills, and extensive knowledge about the Corporation, including its Open Spaces, will make him a very hard act to follow. He leaves the Natural Environment Division in good shape and we thank him, most sincerely, for consistently going above and beyond the call of duty and wish him all the best for his future plans.

RESOLVED – That Members, approve the resolution of thanks to Bob Roberts, Interim Executive Director, Environment.

10. **RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE REPORT**

The Committee received a report of the Interim Executive Director, Environment concerning the risk management procedures for West Ham Park.

The following points were noted:

- The committee received a report on the risk management update for West Ham Park, which highlighted the main risks and actions to mitigate them.
- The committee discussed the issues of repairs and maintenance, resource availability, and stakeholder engagement, and asked for more clarity on the progress and direction of these risks.
- The Natural Environment Director and assistant director explained the steps they were taking to address the risks, such as working with city surveyors, hiring a head of development, and conducting a natural capital audit.
- The committee also asked about the security and safety of the park, and the assistant director assured them that they were working closely with the police and park guard to provide a safe environment for visitors and staff.
- The committee approved the risk management update report.

RESOLVED – That, 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.

11. ***ASSISTANT DIRECTOR'S UPDATE**

The Committee received a report of the Interim Executive Director, Environment concerning an update on matters relating to West Ham Park since the last Committee meeting on 19 February 2024.

The following points were noted:

- The assistant director highlighted the main achievements and activities of the park staff and partners.
- The assistant director thanked the learning team, the Friends of West Ham Park, and the park staff for their hard work and dedication.
- Officers provided a brief presentation with some photos of the park and the events.

12. ***NATURAL CAPITAL AUDIT**

The Committee received a report of the Interim Executive Director, Environment concerning the recently commissioned Natural Capital Audit of its Open Spaces.

The following points were noted:

- The Director of Natural Environment presented the main findings of the natural capital audit for West Ham Park, which showed that the park provides £9.9 million worth of benefits to society every year.
- She explained how the audit measured the value of the park's services, such as access, recreation, health and well-being, wildlife habitats, and carbon sequestration.
- She highlighted that West Ham Park attracts 1.3 million visitors every year, provides important green space for disadvantaged communities.
- She outlined the ways that the audit results will be used to support income generation, publicity, reporting, governance, and partnerships for the park.
- She said that the next steps will be to meet with officers and Members to discuss the options and opportunities for the park, and to share the feedback with the public in July.

13. ***REVIEW OF CURRENT DESIGNATED, UNRESTRICTED, AND RESTRICTED INCOME FUNDS HELD AND PROPOSED CHANGES**

The Committee received a joint report of the Chamberlain and the Interim Executive Director, Environment concerning the complete list of the current designated, unrestricted, and restricted income funds held for West Ham Park with the recommended future usage and changes required for these funds.

The following points were noted:

- Officers presented the report on the current status of the income funds and explained the proposed changes to align them with the corporate fund policy.
- It was noted that the unrestricted funds were mainly used for operational costs and the restricted funds were mainly used for specific projects or purposes.
- The committee Members asked some questions about the details of the proposed changes and the implications for the budget and the financial reporting.

14. ***MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES FOR FY' 2024-25 (BUSINESS PLAN)**

The Committee received a report of the Interim Executive Director, Environment concerning an overview of the planned key management activities and initiatives at West Ham Park for financial year 2024-25.

The following points were noted:

- Officers presented the report on the management priorities for the natural environment division, which included West Ham Park and other open spaces.
- It was noted that the priorities were aligned with the corporate plan objectives and the natural environment strategy, and that they focused on four areas: heritage, education and learning, community access and stakeholder engagement, and income generation and sustainability.
- Members were informed that some of the key projects and initiatives that were planned or underway, such as the natural capital audit, the 150th anniversary celebrations, the former nursery site development, and the fundraising strategy.
- The committee Members asked some questions and made some comments on the report, such as the importance of engaging with local communities and partners, the need to balance the ecological and recreational value of the open spaces, the potential for generating more income and attracting more visitors, and the opportunities for collaboration and innovation across the division and the corporation.
- Officers said that they would provide regular updates on the progress and performance of the division and the open spaces.

15. **WEST HAM PARK FORMER NURSERY SITE**

The Committee received a report of the Interim Executive Director, Environment concerning an update on West Ham Park charity's community and stakeholder engagement activities in relation to the former nursery site.

The following points were noted:

- Officers presented an update on the public engagement process for the future of the former nursery site and the feedback received so far.
- It was noted that over 400 people had been reached through various methods, such as online surveys, pop-up events, school and community group engagement.

- Members were informed that officers would continue the engagement until the end of June and then report the findings to the committee before the sharing event in July.
- Officers showed some examples of the events delivered and the data collected and invited members to visit the dedicated web page for more information.
- Upcoming events, such as the third pop-up event on the 19th of May and the involvement of West Ham Football Club and the English Cricket Board on the 21st of July were also mentioned.
- The Chair thanked officers and their teams for their hard work and asked Members to spread the word and encourage participation in the engagement process.

16. **PLANNING FOR THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY FOR WEST HAM PARK**

The Committee received a report of the Interim Executive Director, Environment concerning an update on matters relating to the 150th anniversary celebration of West Ham Park's transfer to the City of London Corporation since the last Committee meeting on 19 February 2024.

The following points were noted:

- The event manager gave an update on the preparations for the two-day celebration on 20th and 21st July, which will include music, sports, funfair, circus, and other activities.
- He thanked the steering group, the Friends of West Ham Park, the learning team, and other officers for their support and contributions.
- He highlighted some of the attractions and partners for the event, such as West Ham Football Club, the English Cricket Board, Capital Kids Cricket, and local community groups.
- He also mentioned the security arrangements and the licencing issues that were being addressed with Newham Council and ISS.
- The cultural heritage manager presented the plan for the outdoor exhibition, which will showcase the history and heritage of the park and its diverse communities.
- He explained the theme of "a world in a park" and the use of monoliths to display the content.
- He said that the exhibition will start in Guildhall Yard and then move to the park before the event.
- The chair thanked officers for their work and asked the Members to spread the word and promote the event.
- The Chair also thanked the promoter, Dani Stephenson, for his generosity and involvement.

17. ***DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY OR URGENCY POWERS**

The Committee received a report of the Town Clerk concerning action taken by the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, in accordance with Standing Order Nos. 41(a).

There were no questions or points raised.

18. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**
There were no questions.
19. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT.**
There was no urgent business.
20. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**
The public were not excluded.
21. **MINUTES**
RESOLVED – That, the non-public minutes of the meeting held on the 19 February 2024 be agreed as a correct record.
22. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**
There were no questions.
23. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**
There was no urgent business.

The meeting ended at Time Not Specified

Chairman

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