

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT BOARD
Thursday, 16 May 2024

Minutes of the meeting of the Natural Environment Board held at Committee Room -
2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Thursday, 16 May 2024 at 11.00 am

Present

Members:

Caroline Haines (Chair)
Andrew McMurtrie (Deputy Chairman)
Deputy Anne Corbett
Wendy Mead OBE
James St John Davis
William Upton KC (Ex-Officio Member)
Deputy Alpa Raja
Catherine Bickmore (Observer)

In Attendance:

Eamon Mullally
Benjamin Murphy
Paul Morris (Observer)

Officers:

Emily Brennan	- Environment Department
Anna Cowperthwaite	- Comptroller and City Solicitor's
Simon Glynn	- Environment Department
Jo Hurst	- 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
Paul Maskell	- Environment Department

1. APOLOGIES

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

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

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. **APPOINTMENT OF A REPRESENTATIVE TO THE STREETS AND WALKWAYS SUB-COMMITTEE**

RESOLVED – That, Eamon Mullally being the only Member indicating his willingness to serve be appointed as a representative to the Streets and Walkways Sub-Committee.

8. **NON-VOTING EXTERNAL REPRESENTATIVE APPOINTMENT(S) TO NATURAL ENVIRONMENT BOARD**

The Board considered a report of the Town Clerk concerning the appointment of non-voting external Members.

Prior to their appointment(s), the external representatives introduced themselves and noted their areas of expertise, which included naturalism, parks, events, international forestry, and income generation. The board welcomed the new Members and expressed their enthusiasm for working with them on the natural environment strategies and projects.

RESOLVED – That, Member approve the appointment of the candidate(s) shortlisted for the following terms:

- a) For a term of one year, Dr Heather Barrett-Mold OBE
- b) For a term of two years, Tony Leach
- c) For a term of three years, Vladislav Dobrokhotov & Dani Stephenson

9. **CITY OF LONDON NATURAL ENVIRONMENT YOUTH BOARD**

The Board considered a report of the Director of Natural Environment, concerning establishing a City of London Youth Natural Environment Board as part of the ongoing efforts of the City of London Environmental and Outdoor Learning Project.

The board heard a presentation from officers about the proposal to establish a City of London Natural Environment Youth Board, which would involve young people from the city family of schools and beyond in engaging with the natural environment and influencing the board's decisions and strategies.

The board expressed its support and enthusiasm for the proposal, which aligned with the board's vision and the new natural environment strategies. The

board also recognised the importance of youth voice and participation in environmental sustainability and climate action.

The board agreed to receive regular updates from the youth board and to invite representatives to attend future meetings and events. The board also suggested some potential projects and initiatives that the youth board could get involved in.

The board thanked officers, and the students from King Edward's School, who had prepared a video to introduce the youth board concept. The board also thanked officers for their update on the learning and heritage programmes and the positive outcomes for the participants.

RESOLVED – That Members, endorse the establishment of the City of London Youth Natural Environment Board as per outlined in the accompanying report

10. 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.

11. 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.

12. **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.

13. ***DRAFT HIGH-LEVEL BUSINESS PLAN 2024/25**

The Board received a report of the Interim Executive Director, Environment concerning the revised version of the high-level Business Plan with the requested changes incorporated.

The board received a revised version of the Environment Department's high level business plan, which had been updated to reflect the new corporate plan outcomes.

The board noted that detailed business plans for each of the natural environment charities were being developed in consultation with the various environment committees, and that these would set out the specific priorities, activities, and performance measures for the next five years.

14. **RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE REPORT**

The Board considered a report of the Interim Executive Director, Environment concerning The Natural Environment Cross-Divisional Risk Register includes risks which are managed by the Natural Environment Director at a higher, strategic, level.

RESOLVED – That Members, confirm, on behalf of the City Corporation as Trustee, that the Natural Environment Cross-Divisional Risk Register (contained in Appendix 1 of the report) satisfactorily sets out the key top-level risks to the charities and that appropriate systems are in place to identify and mitigate risks across the charities.

15. **ENJOYING GREEN SPACES AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT – 2023-24 GRANT AWARDS AND FUNDING CRITERIA REVIEW**

The Board considered a report of the Managing Director of City Bridge Foundation concerning grant awards and funding criteria.

The board received an annual report on the programme, which outlined the decision making process and the details of the six grant awards for 2023-2024, totalling £49,000.

The board also considered a review of the funding stream criteria and some recommended amendments, which were based on consultation with applicants, assessors and officers. The proposed changes included clarifying the eligibility and assessment criteria, increasing the maximum grant amount to £15,000, and aligning the fund more closely with the natural environment strategies and outcomes.

RESOLVED – That Member, approve the proposed amendments to the current Enjoying Green Spaces and the Natural Environment funding criteria as referenced in paragraph 12 of the report and that the criteria for grant making would be circulated to all members of the Committee.

16. ***COOL STREETS AND GREENING – PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Board received a report of the Interim Executive Director, Environment concerning an update on the delivery of the Cool Streets and Greening programme (CSG), which is structured around four Phases.

The board received an update on the progress of the initiative, the plans for future sites such as Aldgate Square and St Paul's churchyard. The board also discussed the challenges and opportunities of delivering the initiative, such as the need for collaboration with other departments and stakeholders, the impact of climate change and air quality, and the potential for attracting more visitors and businesses to the city. The board expressed their support for the initiative and thanked the City Gardens team for their work.

17. ***LEARNING AND HERITAGE ANNUAL REVIEW, 2023 -24**

The Board received a report of the Interim Executive Director, Environment concerning the key activities undertaken by the Learning and Heritage teams in 2023-24.

Officers presented an overview of the learning programme, which included school, play, youth and special educational needs provision at Epping Forest, Hampstead Heath and West Ham Park. The board noted the achievements and impacts of the programme, such as reaching over 40,000 participants, building

nature connection, engaging children from deprived boroughs and delivering grant-funded projects.

The Head of Heritage presented an overview of the heritage programme, which included managing and promoting the heritage assets of the corporation, such as Keats House, the monument, the grotto and the hill forts. He highlighted the challenges and opportunities of the programme, such as securing external funding, developing conservation management plans, increasing visitor numbers and income, and collaborating with the learning team.

The board expressed their appreciation and support for the learning and heritage team and their work.

18. ***LEVELLING UP AND REGENERATION ACT 2003**

The Board received a report of the Remembrancer concerning an overview of the provisions of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (“the Act”) that are relevant to the City’s cultural, heritage and environmental interests.

19. ***CITY GARDENS UPDATE**

The Board received a report of the Interim Executive Director, Environment concerning an update to Members of the Open Spaces & City Gardens Committee on current management and operational activities across the City Gardens section.

The following points were noted:

- The City Gardens Manager, reported on the recruitment process for the keeper of Bunhill Fields, the cancellation of the Aldgate Live event (which had now been reinstated via the Aldgate Connect BID), the status of the Cheapside, Jubilee Gardens and Finsbury Circus projects, the Meet the Gardeners event, and the upcoming walk for Members.
- He also mentioned the corporate volunteering programme and the partnership with the Net Zero festival.
- Officers also provided an update on the asset condition surveys and the cyclical works programme, and how they are working with City Surveyors to prioritise and deliver the maintenance and conservation of the City Gardens assets.

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**

There was no urgent business.

22. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED – That, That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act.

23. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

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

24. ***DEBT ARREARS - NATURAL ENVIRONMENT DIVISION PERIOD ENDING 31 MARCH 2023**

The Board received a report of the Interim Executive Director, Environment.

25. ***NATURAL ENVIRONMENT CHARITIES – INCOME ANALYSIS AND PRIORITIES**

The Board received a report of the Interim Executive Director, Environment.

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

There were no questions.

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

There was no urgent business.

28. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED – That, the confidential minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2024 be agreed as a correct record.

The meeting ended at Time Not Specified

Chairman

**Contact Officer: Blair Stringman
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