

Ashtead Common

Annual Report and Financial Statements for the
year ended 31 March 2024

Charity registration number 1051510

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ORIGINS OF THE CHARITY

Ashtead Common is a 200-hectare nature reserve, home to over 1,000 living ancient oak pollards. Its natural and cultural heritage are of national importance, the legacy of centuries of interaction between people and the environment.

Acquisition

Ashtead Common was acquired in 1991 under the Corporation of London (Open Spaces) Act 1878 which requires it to be preserved for the recreation and enjoyment of the public.

The Ashtead Common Charity was registered in 1995.

Protected rights and designations

Ashtead Common was registered as a common in 1968 (register unit number CL 280). An entry was made in the Register of Common Land in 1970 to record rights in common held by the private owners of Newton Wood. These include rights of access, right of pasture for four cattle, estovers (collection of fallen branches or bracken) and turbary (turf or peat). In conjunction with Epsom Common, much of Ashtead Common (180 hectares) was designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1955 for its diversity of habitat, rare invertebrates (particularly decaying wood specialists, flies and butterflies) and rich community of breeding birds. Woodfield (8 hectares) was not included but was later designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Importance for species diversity with rare species present. The area designated as a National Nature Reserve (NNR) on September 26th 1995 follows the SSSI boundary, so it too is 180 hectares in size. As well as Woodfield, the other notable exclusions include the City owned land south of the railway line (sometimes called Howards or Craddocks Wood), and a thin strip adjacent to the railway line between the Woodlands Road entrance and Bridleway 38. Ashtead Common was registered as a charity on December 19th, 1995.

Community involvement and visitors

The City of London adopted aspects of the Community Woodland model when it acquired Ashtead Common in 1991, and the local community has been an integral part of the Commons' management ever since. Primarily it is through practical conservation volunteering that the local community is involved. Much of the work to manage the Common is directly undertaken by the local community itself.

TRUSTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT

STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE

GOVERNING DOCUMENTS

The Governing Document is the Corporation of London (Open Spaces) Act 1878. The charity is constituted as a charitable trust.

GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The Mayor and Commonalty and Citizens of the City of London (also referred to as 'the City Corporation' or 'the City of London Corporation'), a body corporate and politic, is the trustee of the Ashtead Common charity. The City Corporation is trustee acting by the Court of Common Council of the City of London in its general corporate capacity and that executive body has delegated responsibility in respect of the administration and management of this charity to various committees and sub-committees of the Common Council, membership of which is drawn from 125 elected Members of the Common Council and external appointees to those committees. In making appointments to committees, the Court of Common Council will take into consideration any particular expertise and knowledge of the elected Members, and where relevant, external appointees. External appointments are made after due advertisement and rigorous selection to fill gaps in skills. Elected Aldermen and Members of the City of London Corporation are appointed to the Epping Forest and Commons Committee governing Ashtead Common by the Court of Common Council of the City of London Corporation.

Members of the Court of Common Council are unpaid for support provided to the Charity and are elected by the electorate of the City of London. The key Committees which had responsibility for directly managing matters related to the charity during 2023/24 were as follows:

- **Policy and Resources Committee** – responsible for allocating resources and administering the charity.
- **Finance Committee** – responsible for controlling budgets, support costs and other central charges that affect the charity as a whole.
- **Audit and Risk Management Committee** – responsible for overseeing systems of internal control and making recommendations to Finance Committee relating to the approval of the Annual Report and Financial Statements of the charity.
- **Epping Forest and Commons Committee** - responsible for the activities undertaken at Ashtead Common and approving budget allocations for the forthcoming year.

All of the above committees are ultimately responsible to the Court of Common Council. Committee meetings are held at the Trustee's discretion in public (except where it is not considered in the charity's best interests to do so), supporting a decision-making process which is clear, transparent and publicly accountable.

The charity is consolidated within City's Estate as the City of London Corporation exercises operational control over its activities. City's Estate, which was renamed from City's Cash during 2023/24, is a fund of the City Corporation that can be traced back to the 15th century and has been built up from a combination of properties, land, bequests and transfers under

statute since that time. Investments in properties, stocks and shares are managed to provide a total return that:

- Allows City's Estate to use the income for the provision of services that are of importance nationally and internationally as well as to the City and Greater London;
- Maintains the asset base so that income will be available to fund services for the benefit of future generations.

The Trustee believes that good governance is fundamental to the success of the charity. An initial review of governance has been undertaken to ensure that the charity is effective in fulfilling its objectives and more detailed work is underway as part of a corporate review of the open space charities of which the City Corporation is the trustee; the review will report to the relevant City Corporation committees on initial conclusions in December 2024. Reference is made to the good practices recommended within the Charity Governance Code, with a focus on ensuring regulatory compliance and the ongoing maintenance of an efficient and effective portfolio of charities that maximise impact for beneficiaries.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

The charity is administered in accordance with its governing instruments and the City Corporation's own corporate governance and administration framework, including Committee Terms of Reference, Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Officer Scheme of Delegations. These governance documents can be obtained via a request to the email address stated on page 25.

Each Member by virtue of their membership of the Court of Common Council, its relevant committees and sub-committees, has a duty to support the City Corporation in the proper exercise of its functions and in meeting its duties as trustee of the charity by faithfully acting in accordance with charity law, the Terms of Reference of the relevant committee or sub-committee, and the City Corporation's agreed corporate governance framework as noted above, backed up by its standards regime.

As part of the City of London Corporation's restructure, the Open Spaces Department merged with Planning & Transportation and Port Health & Environmental Services to form a new Environment Department. Ashtead Common became part of the Environment Department from 1 April 2022.

INDUCTION AND TRAINING OF MEMBERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The City Corporation makes seminars and briefings on various aspects of its activities, including those concerning the charity, available to its Members and others serving on committees which are involved with the charity, to enable them to carry out their duties efficiently and effectively. If suitable seminars or other training options are identified that are relevant to the charity, Members and other committee members are advised of these opportunities.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The objective of the charity is the preservation in perpetuity of the common at Ashtead as an open space for the recreation and enjoyment of the public.

Purposes of the charity as set out in the governing document, the Corporation of London (Open Spaces) Act 1878:

- Ashtead Common to be kept as open space for public recreation.
- Natural aspect to be preserved.
- Protect the timber and other trees, pollards, shrubs, underwood and herbage.
- Land to be unenclosed and unbuilt upon, except those features required for better attainment of the Act and deemed necessary by the City.
- Encroachments to be resisted and abated.

Main activities undertaken in relation to these purposes:

- Practical conservation management activities to maintain the biodiversity of Ashtead Common, such as tree surgery work on the veteran oak pollards, bracken suppression and management of firebreaks, scrub, grassland and wetland habitats.
- Providing volunteering opportunities to encourage community involvement.
- Providing and maintaining facilities for informal recreation.
- Grazing with cattle.
- Protecting Ashtead Common and its users from harm by patrolling, enforcing byelaws as appropriate, resisting encroachments, addressing threats and managing assets.
- Providing educational activities and events.
- Surveying and monitoring, for wildlife, visitor use, archaeological investigations and pollution monitoring.
- Managing and protecting Scheduled Monuments, including a Roman villa and tileworks.
- Managing and creating watercourses and water management systems.

Ashtead Common's natural and cultural heritage are of national importance, the legacy of centuries of interaction between people and the environment. As we progress through the 2020's and beyond the challenge of protecting this valuable resource will increase as pressures from environmental and human factors mount.

Aims of the charity

- Maintain the biodiversity of Ashtead Common by managing habitats to favourable condition and achieving conservation gains that benefit the site and beyond.
Governing document link: preserve natural aspect, protect the timber and other trees, pollards, shrubs, underwood and herbage.
- Encourage the sustainable use of Ashtead Common for recreation and promote community involvement in all aspects of the site.
Governing document link: commons acquired by the City to be kept as open spaces for the recreation and enjoyment of the public
- Protect Ashtead Common and its users from harm. Address threats and maintain assets, including heritage assets, in good condition.

Governing document link: open spaces kept unenclosed and unbuilt upon. Shall by all lawful means prevent, resist and abate enclosures, encroachments and buildings upon. The City may from time to time make and alter byelaws.

The Ashtead Common Management Plan describes the strategy for achieving these aims.

Volunteers

Volunteering remains strong at Ashtead Common. In total 6,320 hours of volunteering was achieved during the year (2022/23: 6,070 hours). The majority of this input was directly supervised by staff, but the figure also includes activities such as tool maintenance undertaken with little staff supervision.

Remuneration Policy

The charity's staff are employees of the City Corporation and pay is reviewed annually. The City Corporation is committed to attracting, recruiting and retaining skilled people and rewarding employees fairly for their contribution. As part of this commitment, staff are regularly appraised and, subject to performance, eligible for the payment of recognition awards.

The above policy applies to staff within the charity's key management personnel, as defined within note 7 to the financial statements.

The City Corporation is committed to equal opportunities for all employees. An Equality and Inclusion Sub-Committee has been established to actively promote equality, diversity and inclusion in service delivery and employment practices. The Sub-Committee is responsible for monitoring the delivery of the Equality and Inclusion Action Plan and progress against the Equality Objectives. This also includes addressing the City Corporation's gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps.

The City Corporation's Equality Objectives were recently reviewed in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 which requires public bodies to publish equality objectives every four years. The City's Corporation's Equality Objectives were approved by Policy and Resources Committee in March 2024 covering the five-year period from 2024 to 2029 to coincide with the City's Corporate Plan for 2024-29.

Staff posts of the City Corporation are individually evaluated and assessed independently against the external market allowing each post to be allocated an individual salary range within the relevant grade, which incorporates market factors as well as corporate importance.

Fundraising

Section 162A of the Charities Act 2011 requires charities to make a statement regarding fundraising activities. The legislation defines fundraising as "soliciting or otherwise procuring money or other property for charitable purposes". Although the charity does not undertake widespread fundraising from the general public, any such amounts receivable are presented in the financial statements as "voluntary income" including grants.

In relation to the above we confirm that all solicitations are managed internally, without involvement of commercial participators or professional fundraisers, or third parties. The day-to-day management of all income generation is delegated to the charity's executive staff

who are accountable to the Trustee. The charity is not bound by any regulatory scheme and does not consider it necessary to comply with any voluntary code of practice.

A donations page features on the Ashtead Common webpage, inviting and enabling the public to make an online donation.

The charity received nil complaints in relation to fundraising activities in the current year (2022/23: nil). Individuals are not approached for funds, hence the charity does not consider it necessary to design specific procedures to monitor such activities.

Public benefit statement

The Trustee confirms that it has referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the Ashtead Common charity's aims and objectives and in planning future activities. The purpose of the charity is the preservation in perpetuity of the common at Ashtead as an open space for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. Almost the entire open space is designated as a NNR and SSSI.

Past land use has influenced the Common, creating its rich ecological and cultural diversity. Today it is an important amenity resource for local people, who use the site for a variety of informal recreational and educational activities. Local people are actively encouraged to become involved as volunteers in all aspects of managing the Common.

Consequently, the Trustee considers that Ashtead Common operates to benefit the general public and satisfies the public benefit test.

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

The administrative details of the charity are stated on page 25.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

A full programme of conservation management was delivered by staff, volunteers and contractors.

The key targets for 2023/24 together with their outcomes were:

Landscape scale conservation

Actively support the proposals to enlarge the NNR to create a landscape scale designation that includes several sites in various ownerships near to Ashtead Common NNR. Additionally seek to engage with initiatives such as Local Nature Recovery Networks as the opportunity presents and continue to work with neighbours to safeguard and restore ecosystems beyond our boundaries (a NNR Standard).

The Ashtead team actively engaged with partners to progress the concept of a Super NNR that would encompass several sites near to Ashtead Common NNR. This included liaising with a local community group on the installation of a signalised crossing of the A243 Leatherhead Road near the Star Pub to improve access between the proposed NNR areas. Unfortunately, towards the end of the year Natural England decided to prioritise designations in other areas, so the Super NNR concept will not progress. However, the crossing proposal is still live, and communication links developed with the partners will be maintained.

Implementing the Management Plan

Work to manage the ancient oak pollards will recommence providing the trees are not subject to undue climatic stress. Wood pasture management will focus on areas around the ancient pollards, options for introducing virtual fencing will be reviewed to establish a likely timescale for their introduction. Pond maintenance regimes will also be reviewed. Survey and monitoring will focus mainly on saproxylic invertebrates.

The summer of 2022 was exceptionally dry, potentially causing stress to the ancient oak pollards, so a decision was taken not to work on them during the Autumn/Winter of 2022-23. This meant that there was a need to catch-up with the programme, and a total of 73 ancient trees had work done to them this Autumn-Winter as a result. Scrub and ride management were achieved according to the plan, and for the second year an emphasis was placed on managing firebreaks and residential boundaries to improve fire resilience.

Implement Countryside Stewardship

Delivery of the BE6 option to manage veteran trees will be adjusted to take account of the missed cutting cycle.

73 ancient trees were worked on during the autumn – winter of 2023. This partly caught-up with the backlog from 2022. All other options were delivered according to the schedule.

Provide volunteering opportunities

Provide high quality opportunities to engage with all aspects of the charity's work. Seek ways to demonstrate the value of volunteering and the benefits it provides.

6,320 hours of volunteering were achieved during the year. Many of these hours were the result of the well-attended Thursday volunteer practical conservation group, but volunteers

work alongside rangers regularly on other days too. Volunteers also undertake survey and monitoring work.

PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS

Key projects for 2024/25 include:

Implementing the Management Plan

The work to manage the ancient oak pollards will include work scheduled for this year, plus some catch-up work from the drought affected year in 2022. Wood pasture management will focus on areas around the ancient pollards, scrub management will be delivered according to the schedule. Survey and monitoring will focus on birds.

Implement Countryside Stewardship

Deliver year three of the 10-year agreement. Chemical control of bracken has been removed from the scheme because the herbicide used is no longer available. However, mechanical control of bracken will continue.

Introduce virtual fencing

Working with grazing partners Surrey Wildlife Trust, 10 Belted Galloway cattle will graze the common using the No Fence system. This allows enclosures to be established virtually and reports the position and movements of the cows, making the daily checks easier. Initially the virtual fence technology will be introduced alongside temporary electric fencing to ensure the system works as effectively on Ashtead Common as it does elsewhere.

Install 12 leaky dams

As part of the City's Carbon Reduction Project initiative to sequester carbon, locations for 12 leaky dams have been provisionally identified. The aim is that these dams will keep areas wetter for longer, thereby slowing the rate of decay and consequently carbon release from vegetative material stored in the soil. Although their impact on this front is likely to be marginal, the beneficial byproduct of slowing water runoff into and along the course of the Rye Brook will be impactful.

Provide volunteering opportunities

Provide high quality opportunities to engage with all aspects of the charity's work. Seek ways to demonstrate the value of volunteering and the benefits it provides.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Overview of Financial Performance

Income

In 2023/24, the charity's total income for the year was £693,102, an overall increase of £133,930 against the previous year (£559,172). The increase was largely due to an increase in the deficit funding grant from the City of London Corporation due to an increase in expenditure.

Income from Charitable Activities (£28,348) comprised of charges for use of facilities and licences (2022/23: £2,633 from charges for use of facilities, licences and sales of timber). The increase in income was due to a one-off works compound licence being granted.

Grants income of £52,697 was received in the year (2022/23: £30,942). Payment rates for several options forming the Countryside Stewardship Scheme agreement were significantly increased resulting in the increase of grant income. The grants relate to Agri-environment schemes that provide funding to farmers and land managers to farm in a way that supports biodiversity, enhances the landscape, and improves the quality of water, air and soil.

The Ashtead Common website collected £726 in donations (2022/23: £1,660). This income is designated to the maintenance of the ancient trees of Ashtead Common. Other donations collected comprised £2,203 related to amounts contributed towards the hosting of events (2022/23: £410 contributions from hosting of events and supply of by-products to the local allotment).

An amount of £609,128 (2022/23: £523,527) was received from the City of London Corporation's City's Estate as a contribution towards the funds of the charity. The contribution increased in the year because it represents deficit funding required for any expenditure not covered by other income, and expenditure in the year increased as explained below.

Expenditure

Total expenditure for the year was £692,376 (2022/23: £557,512) all of which related to charitable activities. The increase was largely due to additional grounds maintenance being incurred on veteran tree management, due in part to catch-up work caused by the drought of summer 2022. A ride-on flail mower was also purchased during 2023/24 which will enable effective in-house delivery of work previously contracted out and resulted in additional expenditure being incurred on equipment purchases compared with the previous year.

Funds held

The charity's designated fund consists of an unrestricted fund which the Trustee has chosen to set aside for a specific purpose. Such designations are not legally binding, and the trustee can decide to "undesignate" the fund at any time. Designations as at 31 March 2024 were £2,386 (2022/23: £1,660). This relates to donations collected via the Ashtead Common website, designated to maintain ancient trees.

Details of funds held, including their purposes, are set out within note 12 to the financial statements.

Reserves

The charity receives significant support from the City of London Corporation which has committed to contributing the funds of the charity as necessary; it does so out of City's Estate. These funds are used to meet the deficit on running expenses. Consequently, this charity has no free reserves and a reserves policy is currently considered by the Trustee to be inappropriate.

Principal Risks and Uncertainties

The charity is committed to a programme of risk management as an element of its strategy to preserve the charity's assets. In order to embed sound practice, the senior leadership team ensures that risk management policies are applied, that there is an on-going review of activity and that appropriate advice and support is provided. A key risk register has been prepared for the charity, which has been reviewed by the Trustee. This identifies the potential impact of key risks and the measures which are in place to mitigate such risks.

The principal risks faced by the charity, and actions taken to manage them are as follows:

Risk	Actions to manage risks
Negative impacts of pests and diseases	Actions plans are in place to address Lyme Disease. The Tree Safety Policy is reviewed every three years and the local site risk map annually.
Decline in condition of assets	Buildings and structures, particularly byelaw boards, are monitored continuously. Officers report defects to the City Surveyor's Department and remove any which become unsound.
Negative impacts of development and encroachment	Local plans continue to be developed and are scrutinised and commented on when required. The situation is kept under regular review.
Climate change – fire, storms, drought, (ancient trees particularly vulnerable)	The Fire Management Plan is reviewed and updated bi-annually. Habitat fire management and monitoring policies and plans are in place and link to staff training and local emergency services. Storm monitoring and management and closure policies are in place and are linked to high staff awareness and training. Ongoing research and dialogue is undertaken to understand the potential impacts of climate change on Ashtead Common.
Water pollution of the Rye Brook	A remote monitoring device has been installed. This long-term monitoring will determine if the apparent improvements in water quality seen in summer 2022 are genuine and sustained.

TRUSTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

The Trustee is responsible for preparing the Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Charity law requires the Trustee to prepare financial statements for each financial year in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards and applicable law). Under charity law the Trustee must not approve the financial statements unless the Trustee is satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charity for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the Trustee is required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgements and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The Trustee is responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable the Trustee to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011. The Trustee is also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

In so far as the Trustee is aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the charity's auditors are unaware; and
- the Trustee has taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditors are aware of that information.

Financial statements are published on the Trustee's website in accordance with legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements, which may vary from legislation in other jurisdictions. The maintenance and integrity of the Trustee's website is the responsibility of the Trustee. The Trustee's responsibility also extends to the ongoing integrity of the financial statements contained therein.

Adopted and signed for on behalf of the Trustee.

Henry Nicholas Almroth Colthurst, Deputy
Chairman of Finance Committee of
The City of London Corporation

Randall Keith Anderson, Deputy
Deputy Chairman of Finance
Committee of The City of London
Corporation

Guildhall, London

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INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEE OF ASHTEAD COMMON

I report to the Trustee on my examination of the accounts of Ashtead Common for the year ended 31 March 2024 which are set out on pages 14 to 24.

This report is made solely to the charity's Trustee, as a body, in accordance with section 154 of the Charities Act 2011. My independent examiner's work has been undertaken so that I might state to the charity's Trustee those matters I am required to state to them in an independent examiner's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity, the charity's members as a body and the charity's Trustee as a body for my independent examiner's work, for this report, or for the opinions I have formed.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity Trustee of the Trust you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view' which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Vincent Marke, FCA

Crowe U.K LLP,
55 Ludgate Hill,
London,
EC4M 7JW

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

		Unrestricted Funds	Unrestricted Funds
	Notes	2023/24	2022/23
		£	£
Income from:			
Voluntary activities	2	55,626	33,012
Charitable activities	3	28,348	2,633
Grant from City of London Corporation	4	609,128	523,527
Total income		693,102	559,172
Expenditure on:			
Charitable activities:			
Preservation of Ashtead Common	5	692,376	557,512
Total expenditure		692,376	557,512
Net income/(expenditure)		726	1,660
Net movement in funds		726	1,660
Reconciliation of funds:			
Total funds brought forward	12	1,660	-
Total funds carried forward	12	2,386	1,660

All of the above results are derived from continuing activities.

There were no other recognised gains and losses other than those shown above.

The notes on pages 16 to 24 form part of these financial statements.

BALANCE SHEET**AS AT 31 MARCH 2024**

	Notes	2024	2023
		Total £	Total £
Current assets			
Debtors	9	38,733	35,520
Total current assets		38,733	35,520
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	10	(36,347)	(33,860)
Net current assets		2,386	1,660
Total assets less current liabilities		2,386	1,660
Total net assets		2,386	1,660
The funds of the charity:			
Unrestricted income funds	12	2,386	1,660
Total funds		2,386	1,660

The notes on pages 16 to 24 form part of these financial statements.

Approved and signed on behalf of the Trustee.

Caroline Al-Beyerty

Chamberlain of London and Chief Financial Officer

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NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The following accounting policies have been applied consistently in dealing with items that are considered material in relation to the financial statements of the charity.

(a) Basis of preparation

The financial statements of the charity, which is a public benefit entity under FRS102, have been prepared under the historical cost convention and in accordance with the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (second edition effective 1 January 2019) and the Charities Act 2011.

(b) Going concern

The financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis as the Trustee considers that there are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue as a going concern. The charity's governing documents place an obligation on the City of London Corporation to preserve the open spaces for the benefit of the public. Funding is provided from the City of London Corporation's City's Estate. On an annual basis, a medium-term financial forecast is prepared for City's Estate, covering the next 5 years from the period covered by these financial statements. The latest forecast anticipates that adequate funds will be available in the 12 months from the date of these financial statements being signed to enable the charity to continue to fulfil its obligations.

In making this assessment, the Trustee has considered the financial position, including future income levels and the liquidity of the charity over the next 12-month period. The assessment helps to provide assurances that the charity can continue to keep operating over the next 12-month period. For this reason, the Trustee continues to adopt a going concern basis for the preparation of the financial statements.

(c) Key management judgements and assumptions

The preparation of the financial statements requires management to make judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the application of policies and reported amounts of assets and liabilities, income and expenditure. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and various other factors that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances, the result of which form the basis of decisions about carrying values of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The resulting accounting estimates will, by definition, seldom equal the related actual results.

Estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised and in any future periods affected. Management do not consider there to be any material revisions requiring disclosure. In preparing the financial statements, management have not made any key judgements or assumptions.

(d) Statement of Cash Flows

The charity has taken advantage of the exemption in FRS102 (paragraph 1.12b) from the requirement to produce a statement of cash flows on the grounds that it is a qualifying entity.

A Statement of Cash Flows is included within the City's Estate Annual Report and Financial Statements 2024 which is publicly available at www.cityoflondon.gov.uk.

(e) Income

All income is included in the Statements of Financial Activities (SOFA) when the charity is legally entitled to the income; it is more likely than not that economic benefit associated with the transaction will come to the charity and the amount can be quantified with reasonable certainty. Income consists of charges for use of facilities, contributions, grants (including government grants from the RPA), sales and license income.

The City of London Corporation's City's Estate meets the deficit on running expenses of the charity and also provides funding for certain capital works. This income is considered due each year end once the deficit on running expenses and capital works funding has been confirmed, and it recognised in the SOFA at this point.

(f) Expenditure

Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under the principal categories of 'expenditure on raising funds' and 'expenditure on charitable activities'. Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that settlement will be required, and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably.

Governance costs include the costs of governance arrangements which relate to the general running of the charity as opposed to the direct management of functions inherent in the activities undertaken. These include the costs associated with constitutional and statutory requirements such as the cost of Trustee meetings.

Support costs (including governance costs) include activities undertaken by the City Corporation on behalf of the charity, such as human resources, digital services, legal support, accounting services, committee administration, public relations and premises costs. These costs are recharged and the basis of the cost allocation is set out in Note 6.

The Trustee, the City Corporation, accounts centrally for all payroll related deductions. As a result, the charity accounts for all such sums due as having been paid.

(g) Pension costs

Staff are employed by the City of London Corporation and are eligible to contribute to the City of London Local Government Pension Fund, which is a funded defined benefit scheme. The estimated net deficit on the Fund is the responsibility of the City of London Corporation as a whole, as one employer, rather than the specific responsibility of any of its three main funds (City Fund, City's Estate and Bridge House Estates) or the trusts it supports.

The Fund's estimated net liability has been determined by independent actuaries in accordance with FRS102 as £49.9m as at 31 March 2024 (£142.6m as at 31 March 2023). Since any net deficit is apportioned between the financial statements of the City of London's three main funds, the charity's Trustee does not anticipate that any of the liability will fall on

the charity. The charity is unable to identify its share of the pension scheme assets and liabilities and therefore the Pension Fund is accounted for as a defined contribution scheme in these financial statements.

Barnett Waddingham, an independent actuary, carried out the latest triennial actuarial assessment of the scheme as at 31 March 2022, using the projected unit method. The 31 March 2022 valuation was carried out in 2022/23 and has set contribution rates for the period 01 April 2023 to 31 March 2026 at 21%. Contribution rates adopted for the financial years 2020/21 2021/22 and 2022/23 were set at 21%.

(h) Taxation

The charity meets the definition of a charitable trust for UK income tax purposes, as set out in Paragraph 1 Schedule 6 of the Finance Act 2010. Accordingly, the charity is exempt from UK taxation in respect of income or capital gains under part 10 of the Income Tax Act 2007 or section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992, to the extent that such income or gains are applied exclusively to charitable purposes.

(i) Fixed Assets

Heritage Land and Associated Buildings

Ashtead Common comprises 200 hectares (500 acres) of land located in North East Surrey, together with associated buildings. The object of the charity is the preservation in perpetuity of the common at Ashtead as an open space for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. Ashtead Common is considered to be inalienable (i.e. may not be disposed of without specific statutory powers).

Land and the original associated buildings are considered to be heritage assets. In respect of the original land and buildings, cost or valuation amounts are not included in these financial statements as reliable cost information is not available and a significant cost would be involved in the reconstruction of past accounting records, or in the valuation, which would be onerous compared to the benefit to the users of these accounts.

Additions to the original land and capital expenditure on buildings and other assets would be included as fixed assets at historic cost, less provision for depreciation and any impairment, where this cost can be reliably measured. Heritage assets are reviewed annually for indicators of impairment and adjustments recognised accordingly if required.

(j) Funds structure

Income, expenditure and gains/losses are allocated to particular funds according to their purpose:

Unrestricted funds – these funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objects at the discretion of the Trustee and include income generated by assets held representing unrestricted funds. Specifically, this represents any surplus of income over expenditure for the charity which is carried forward to meet the requirements of future years, known as free reserves.

Designated funds – these are funds set aside by the Trustee out of unrestricted funds for a specific purpose.

(k) Cash

Cash and cash equivalents include cash in hand, overdrafts (if any) and short-term deposits and other instruments held as part of the Corporation's treasury management activities with original maturities of three months or less.

(l) Insurance

The City Corporation's elected Members and City Corporation staff supporting the charity's administration are covered by the City Corporation's insurance liability policies, and otherwise under the indemnity the City Corporation provides to Members and staff, funded from City's Estate.

2. INCOME FROM VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES

	Unrestricted funds 2023/24 £	Unrestricted funds 2022/23 £
Grants	52,697	30,942
Donations	2,929	2,070
Total	55,626	33,012

3. INCOME FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	Unrestricted funds 2023/24 £	Unrestricted funds 2022/23 £
Charges for use of facilities	26,452	482
Sales	-	500
Licenses	1,896	1,651
Total	28,348	2,633

4. INCOME FROM THE CITY OF LONDON CORPORATION

	Unrestricted funds 2023/24 £	Unrestricted funds 2022/23 £
Revenue and capital grant from City of London Corporation	609,128	523,527

Income for the year included:

Grants – being amounts received from organisations for delivering some or all of the charity's objects. Grants have been received from Natural England's Countryside Stewardship Scheme relating to works carried out at Ashtead Common during 2023/24. All

grant income received has been fully recognised as revenue in the financial statements and there were no unfilled conditions relating to the grant income received as at 31 March 2024. No other forms of government assistance were received by the charity during 2023/24.

Donations – consist of campaign donations collected through the Ashtead Common website plus voluntary contributions towards the hosting of events such as bat walks.

Grants from the City of London Corporation – being the amount received from the City of London Corporation’s City’s Estate to meet the deficit on running expenses of the charity.

Charitable activities – being amounts generated from licences, room hire, and charges made to the public for the use of facilities.

5. EXPENDITURE

	Direct costs £	Support costs £	Total 2023/24 £	Direct costs £	Support costs £	Total 2022/23 £
Preservation of Ashtead Common	582,217	110,159	692,376	440,048	117,464	557,512
Total	582,217	110,159	692,376	440,048	117,464	557,512

Charitable activity

Expenditure on the charitable activities includes labour, premises costs, equipment, materials and other supplies and services incurred in the running of Ashtead Common.

Independent examiner’s remuneration and fees for other services

Crowe U.K. LLP are the auditors of the City of London City’s Estate Fund and provide assurance services to all of the different charities of which it is Trustee. In 2023/24, an independent examination fee of £1,943 was recharged (2022/23: £2,000). No other services were provided to the charity by its examiners during the year (2022/23: £nil).

6. SUPPORT COSTS

Support costs include activities undertaken by the City of London Corporation on behalf of the charity, such as human resources, digital services, legal support, accounting services, committee administration and premises costs. Such costs are determined on a departmental basis, and are allocated on a cost recovery basis to the charity based on time spent, with associated office accommodation charged proportionately to the space occupied by the respective activities, with the split of costs as follows:

	Charitable activities £	Governance £	2023/24 £	2022/23 £
Department:				
Chamberlain	11,326	-	11,326	20,081
Comptroller & City Solicitor	-	-	-	3,660
Town Clerk	-	15,279	15,279	18,054
City Surveyor	8,192	-	8,192	5,668
Natural Environment directorate	40,060	-	40,060	48,566
Other governance & support costs	2,865	1,943	4,808	4,987
Digital Services	30,494	-	30,494	16,448
Sub-total	92,937	17,222	110,159	117,464
Reallocation of governance costs	17,222	(17,222)	-	-
Total	110,159	-	110,159	117,464

All support costs are undertaken from unrestricted funds. Governance costs are allocated based on a proportion of officer time spent on the administration of Trustee and Committee related meetings.

7. DETAILS OF STAFF COSTS

All staff that work on behalf of the charity are employed by the City Corporation. The average number of people directly undertaking activities on behalf of the charity during the year was 6 (2022/23: 6).

Amounts paid in respect of employees directly undertaking activities on behalf of the charity were as follows:

	2023/24 £	2022/23 £
Salaries and wages	255,138	225,702
National Insurance costs	26,515	24,470
Employer's pension contributions	56,360	50,529
Total emoluments of employees	338,013	300,701

The number of directly charged employees whose emoluments (excluding employer's pension contribution and national insurance contribution) for the year were over £60,000 was nil (2022/23: nil).

Remuneration of Key Management Personnel

The charity considers its key management personnel to comprise the Members of the City of London Corporation, acting collectively for the City Corporation in its capacity as the Trustee, and the Director of Natural Environment who manages the seven open spaces for which the City of London Corporation is a charity trustee. A proportion of the Directors' employment benefits are allocated to this charity.

Support is also provided by other chief officers and their departments from across the City of London Corporation, including the Town Clerk and Chief Executive, Chamberlain, Comptroller and City Solicitor and City Surveyor.

The amount of employee benefits received by key management personnel totalled £2,812 (2022/23: £7,902). No Members received any remuneration, with directly incurred expenses reimbursed, if claimed. Expenses totalling £nil were claimed in 2023/24 (2022/23: £nil).

8. HERITAGE ASSETS

Since 1995 the primary purpose of the charity has been the preservation in perpetuity of the common at Ashtead as an open space for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. As set out in Note 1(i), the original heritage land and buildings are not recognised in the Financial Statements. Policies for the preservation and management of Ashtead Common are contained in the Ashtead Common Heritage Conservation Plan 2021. Records of heritage assets owned and maintained by Ashtead Common can be obtained from the Executive Director of Environment at the principal address as stated on page 25.

9. DEBTORS – AMOUNTS DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2024 £	2023 £
Prepayments and accrued income	1,385	1,311
Recoverable VAT	6,232	4,832
Other debtors	31,116	29,377
Total	38,733	35,520

10. CREDITORS – AMOUNTS DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2024 £	2023 £
Trade creditors	5,357	2,133
Accruals	13,998	1,251
Bank overdraft	13,684	24,122
Deferred income	240	566
Other creditors	3,068	5,788
Total	36,347	33,860

Other creditors consist of listed creditors and a telecommunications wayleave rent deposit that will be returned in 2024/25.

Deferred income relates to income received in advance from customers relating to future accounting periods.

	2024 £	2023 £
Deferred income analysis within creditors:		
Balance at 1 April	566	246
Amounts released to income	(566)	(246)
Amounts deferred in the year	240	566
Balance at 31 March	240	566

11. ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BY FUND

At 31 March 2024	Unrestricted Income Funds			Total at 31 March 2023
	General Funds	Designated Funds	Total at 31 March 2024	
	£	£	£	£
Current Assets	36,347	2,386	38,733	35,520
Current Liabilities	(36,347)	-	(36,347)	(33,860)
Total	-	2,386	2,386	1,660

At 31 March 2023	Unrestricted Income Funds			Total at 31 March 2022
	General Funds	Designated Funds	Total at 31 March 2023	
	£	£	£	£
Current Assets	33,860	1,660	35,520	8,599
Current Liabilities	(33,860)	-	(33,860)	(8,599)
Total	-	1,660	1,660	-

12. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

At 31 March 2024	Total as at 1 April 2023	Income	Expenditure	Total as at 31 March 2024
	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted funds:				
General funds	-	692,376	(692,376)	-
Designated funds:				
Ancient tree maintenance	1,660	726	-	2,386
Total unrestricted funds	1,660	693,102	(692,376)	2,386
Total funds	1,660	693,102	(692,376)	2,386

At 31 March 2023	Total as at 1 April 2022	Income	Expenditure	Total as at 31 March 2023
	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted funds:				
General funds	-	557,512	(557,512)	-
Designated funds:				
Ancient tree maintenance	-	1,660	-	1,660
Total unrestricted funds	-	559,172	(557,512)	1,660
Total funds	-	559,172	(557,512)	1,660

Purposes of designated funds

Ancient tree maintenance – This designated fund has been established by the Trustee to support the maintenance of over 2,300 ancient trees at Ashtead Common, with plans for how best to deliver this support currently in development. From November 2022, the public have been invited to donate to Ashtead Common via a campaign donations page on their website. Donations received through that campaign are designated to this fund.

Designated donations amounted to £726 (2022/23: £1,660).

13. RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS

The City Corporation is the sole Trustee of the charity, as described on page 2. The City Corporation provides various services to the charity, the costs of which are recharged to the charity. This includes the provision of banking services, charging all transactions to the charity at cost and crediting or charging interest at a commercial rate. The cost of these services is included within expenditure, as set out in note 5.

The charity is consolidated within the accounts of City's Estate, a fund of the City of London Corporation (the City Corporation, the Corporate Trustee of the charity), by virtue of the deemed control arising from the provision of the shortfall between the charity's income and expenditure by City's Estate, whose place of business is Guildhall, London EC2P 2EJ. The principal purpose of City's Estate is to manage its investments in properties, stocks and shares to provide returns which allows the City Corporation to use the income for the provision of services that are of importance to the City and Greater London as well as nationally and internationally, and to maintain the asset base so that income will be available to fund services for the benefit of future generations. The financial statements of City's Estate can be obtained from the address provided above.

The charity is required to disclose information on related party transactions with bodies or individuals that have the potential to control or influence the charity. Members are required to disclose their interests, and these can be viewed online at www.cityoflondon.gov.uk.

Members and senior staff are requested to disclose all related party transactions, including instances where their close family has made such transactions.

Figures in brackets represent the amounts due at the balance sheet date. Other figures represent the value of the transactions during the year.

Related party	Connected party	2023/24 £	2022/23 £	Detail of transaction
City of London Corporation	The City of London Corporation is the Trustee for the charity	110,159 (nil)	117,464 (nil)	Management, surveying and administrative services provided for the charity
		609,128 (nil)	523,527 (nil)	The City of London Corporation's City's Estate meets the deficit on running expenses of the charity

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATION DETAILS

CHARITY NAME: Ashtead Common

Registered charity number: 1051510

PRINCIPAL OFFICE OF THE CHARITY & THE CITY CORPORATION:

Guildhall, London, EC2P 2EJ

TRUSTEE:

The Mayor and Commonalty & Citizens of the City of London

SENIOR MANAGEMENT:

Chief Executive

Ian Thomas CBE - The Town Clerk and Chief Executive of the City of London Corporation

Treasurer

Caroline Al-Beyerty - The Chamberlain & Chief Financial Officer of the City of London Corporation

Solicitor

Michael Cogher - The Comptroller and City Solicitor of the City of London Corporation

Environment Department

Katie Stewart – Executive Director of Environment

Emily Brennan – Director of Natural Environment

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

Crowe U.K. LLP, 55 Ludgate Hill, London, EC4M 7JW

BANKERS:

Lloyds Bank Plc., P.O.Box 1000 BX1 1LT

Contact for The Chamberlain & Chief Financial Officer, to request copies of governance documents & of the Annual Report of City's Estate:

CHBOffice-BusinessSupport@cityoflondon.gov.uk