

<b>Committee(s):</b> Epping Forest and Commons Committee	<b>Dated:</b> 23/01/2025
<b>Subject:</b> Burnham Beeches and City Commons Five Year Business Plan 2025-30	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diverse engaged communities</li> <li>• Dynamic economic growth</li> <li>• Vibrant thriving destination</li> <li>• Flourishing public spaces</li> <li>• Providing excellent services</li> <li>• Leading sustainable environment</li> </ul>
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>If so, how much?</b>	<b>£714,200</b>
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	<b>Local Risk / External</b>
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Katie Stewart, Executive Director, Environment	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Geoff Sinclair, Assistant Director, The Commons	

### Summary

This report provides a five-year costed business plan for the four City Commons Charities comprising; Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common (number 232987) Ashtead Common (number 1051510), Coulsdon and other Commons (number 232989), and West Wickham Common and Spring Park Woods (number 232988).

The business plan is attached in Appendix A and presents a costed programme to deliver the first and second priority projects detailed in the management plans for the nine sites managed by the charities. The costing includes the planned local risk spend, staff time expressed as full time equivalent per year and additional estimated funding of £714,200 still required to be found to deliver workstreams over the next five years.

Key Performance Indicators have been given for each 'Activity' however these are still being reviewed and are indicative at present.

Decisions taken in relation to the recommendations in this report in respect of charity land need to be made by the City of London Corporation in its capacity as trustee of each of the four charities. The trustee must be satisfied that the action proposed for each charity is in the best interests of that particular charity

## **Recommendation**

Members are asked to:

- Approve the five-year business plan contained in Appendix A for the Four City Commons charities and delegate authority to the Assistant Director of the Commons to make amendments and carry out annual reviews necessary to re-prioritise or re- scope workstreams to accommodate new pressures or changes.

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. The City Commons is comprised of nine sites spread across four charities. Each site has its own ten-year management plan agreed with your committee with links to these plans given in appendix A.
2. Subsequent to the preparation of the individual site management plans additional site management workstreams have been identified following the preparation of four Natural Environment Strategies in 2023 and also from strategic City of London Corporation initiatives such as the Carbon Removals Project.
3. The ongoing review of the Natural Environment Charities has highlighted the need to widen and develop income streams for the different charities (within the charitable objects of the charities). This has resulted in additional new workstreams for each charity.
4. Each site management plan gives a detailed year by year operational plan which forms the core of the day-to-day operations at each site. The operational plans assign each workstream a priority of 1-3 with 1 being essential, 2 highly desirable and 3 desirable. When framing the annual work plan all priority 1 workstreams are included and depending on resources and other considerations most, if not all priority 2 actions are included. Priority 3 actions are more opportunistically implemented with the overall aim that over the life of the plan, they will be completed.

5. A summary of approved workstreams and new workstreams, which were subjected to a project prioritisation exercise, was approved by your Committee on the 28 November 2024. The approved report has been taken into consideration during the preparation of the five-year business plan.
6. In addition to delivering management plan actions, staff and financial resources are required to ensure compliance with the charitable objectives of the charities as set out in their governing documents (primarily the City of London (Open Spaces) Act 1878). Staff and financial resources are also needed to deliver relevant statutory requirements such as health and safety, and to respond where appropriate to wider City Corporation policies. The annual work plan prepared by each Charity draws these different activities together into an overall activity plan for the year.
7. This report, by collating the workstreams for the five-year period 2025-30 along with the funding and staffing resources required, presents a strategic overview of the operational environment of the four City Commons Charities. Annual work plans for each Charity may amend activity to re-prioritise or re-scope workstreams to accommodate new pressures or changes. Any changes will be subject to the Natural Environment Division's project prioritisation process.

### **Current Position**

8. A five-year business plan for the period 2025-30 is presented in Appendix A. This brings together Priority 1 and 2 workstreams across the nine sites presented for each charity as a whole.

### **Proposals**

9. Workstreams for each Charity have been itemised in the five year business plan and aligned to the respective High Level (Natural Environment Strategies) Business Plan.
10. The resource requirements in terms of local risk budget requirements and staff time are given for each workstream. These are provisional figures based on each charity's experience. Each site has a significant element of reactive works which are estimated to occupy around 20% of the staff resource.
11. Additional funding requirements over the period for each workstream have also been estimated and in most cases reflect additional funding needs that still need to be identified (See para 18 below).
12. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) have been proposed for each workstream and are outlined in Appendix A. These are currently provisional and further work to integrate them into the wider reporting frameworks in place across the City Corporation will need to be actioned.
13. This is the first attempt to itemise the operational resource required across each workstream and going forward this will be an area requiring ongoing review.

## Key Data

14. There are over 95 workstreams contained within the business plan most of which are for ongoing activity. Further detail behind the workstreams can be found within the management plans for each site.
15. Appendix A keeps the West Wickham Common and Spring Park and the Coulsdon Commons data separate however the summaries below have linked the two charities in accordance with future reporting procedures.
16. Table one collates the staff resource being applied in each charity for each of the six high level business plan workstreams. Figures are expressed in full time equivalent staff per year and as a percentage of the staff resource, excluding time on reactive tasks.

*Table One: Staff time against High Level Business Plan workstreams*

High Level Business Plan workstream	Ashtead Common (FTE/yr)	West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons (FTE/yr)	Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common (FTE/yr)	Total (FTE/yr)	Total %
Access and recreation	0.51	1.15	4.11	<b>5.77</b>	25
Community engagement	1.5	0.62	0.58	<b>2.7</b>	12
Culture, heritage and learning	0.07	0.22	0.05	<b>0.34</b>	1
Income generation	0.31	0.28	0.49	<b>1.08</b>	5
Nature conservation and resilience	2.03	5.38	2.51	<b>9.92</b>	43
Sustainable Business Model	0.48	1.15	1.9	<b>3.53</b>	15

17. Table two collates the local risk budget allocation for each charity against the six high level business plan workstreams. Figures are expressed in pounds sterling per year and as a percentage.

*Table Two: Local risk budget allocation against High Level Business Plan workstreams (£/yr)*

High Level Business Plan workstream	Ashtead Common (£/yr)	West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons (£/yr)	Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common (£/yr)	Total (£/year)	Total %
Access and recreation	16,597	29,234	47,892	<b>93,723</b>	20
Community engagement	4,270	0	4,500	<b>8,770</b>	2

Culture, heritage and learning	2,669	3,109	2,100	<b>7,878</b>	2
Income generation	0	6,000	12,200	<b>18,200</b>	4
Nature conservation and resilience	105,945	48,941	92,400	<b>247,286</b>	52
Sustainable Business Model	25,834	17,995	57,000	<b>100,829</b>	21

18. Table three provides an estimate of capital works and unfunded projects over the next five years that will also need to be considered. Some items are likely to be funded through central projects, such as the Climate Action Strategy programme. Other works are planned spend where income generation or in-year savings will typically help to finance. There are still some notable items where funding needs to be identified such as for tree safety and the second phase of agricultural fence replacement at the West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons, and insulation of staff lodges to ensure they are in line with good practice. These items are highly unlikely to progress if funding is not found.

*Table three: Unfunded/Capital works for the period 2025-30*

Programme / Project	Cost (£)
Climate Resilience Project	255,000
Habitat Management	241,200
Risk Management	88,000
Heritage Management	100,000
Income management	30,000

## Corporate & Strategic Implications

### Strategic implications

19. The Commons Business Plan delivers on all of the Corporate Plan objectives and Natural Environment Strategy Objectives as detailed in the report.

### Financial implications

20. The Business Plan indicates whether workstreams can be met within local risk budget or whether additional resources are required. In some cases, where a suitable source of funding has not been identified this is flagged under dependencies as the project cannot be delivered without external funding.

### Resource implications

21. Staff time required to deliver workstreams has been given and is estimated to equate to around 80% of the staff time resource. Reactive and other activity makes up the remainder of the staff resource.

## **Legal implications**

22. The City Commons were primarily acquired under the City of London (Open Spaces) Act 1878 ("the 1878 Act"). The 1878 Act places obligations on the City Corporation to keep the land acquired under the 1878 Act unenclosed and unbuilt on as an open space for the recreation and enjoyment of the public and to preserve its natural aspect. These obligations need to be balanced alongside the provisions of subsequent, modern legislation.
23. Parts of the Commons are also designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. These designations will be taken into account, as appropriate, in the implementation of projects identified in the business plan.

## **Risk implications**

24. Activities within the business plan are assessed within the Risk registers applying to the City Commons charities.

## **Equalities implications**

26. Activities within the business plan have equalities impact assessments where relevant and the range of activities address a wide scope of equality considerations as captured within the corporate and local objectives.

## **Climate implications**

27. Several of the activities with the business plan are specifically to address climate issues.

## **Security implications**

- 28 . None.

## **Charity Implications**

25. Ashtead Common (number 1051510), Burnham Beeches & Stoke Common (number 232987), West Wickham Common & Spring Park Wood (number 232988) and Coulsdon and other Commons (number 232988-1) are registered charities. Charity Law obliges Members to ensure that the decisions they take in relation to the Charity are taken in the best interests of the Charity.

## **Conclusion**

30. A five-year business plan for the four Commons charities has been prepared which itemises workstreams at the Charity level and presents estimates on the local risk costs and staff time required to deliver work streams.
31. A forecast of capital and unfunded works costs over the five-year period is also presented.

32. The five-year business plan presents a strategic overview of the activity of the four charities however annual reviews will be undertaken to assess the need to accommodate new developments with these subject to the Natural Environment Division's project prioritisation process.

## Appendices

Appendix A – Burnham Beeches and the City Commons Five-year Business Plan

### Background Papers

- Burnham Beeches Management Plan, [Burnham Beeches 2020 - 2030 Management Plan \(cityoflondon.gov.uk\)](https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk)
- Stoke Common Management Plan, [Burnham Beeches & Stoke Common \(cityoflondon.gov.uk\)](https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk)
- Ashtead Common Management Plan, [Ashtead Common Management Plan 2021-2031 \(cityoflondon.gov.uk\)](https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk)
- West Wickham Management Plan [West Wickham Commons Management Plan \(cityoflondon.gov.uk\)](https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk)
- Spring Park Management Plan [West Wickham Commons Management Plan \(cityoflondon.gov.uk\)](https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk)
- Farthing Downs Management Plan, [Farthing Downs Management Plan 2021-2031 \(cityoflondon.gov.uk\)](https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk)
- Riddlesdown Management Plan, [Riddlesdown Management Plan 2021-2031 \(cityoflondon.gov.uk\)](https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk)
- Kenley Common Management Plan [Kenley Common Management Plan 2021-2031 \(cityoflondon.gov.uk\)](https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk)
- Coulsdon Common Management Plan [Coulsdon Common Management Plan \(cityoflondon.gov.uk\)](https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk)
- Nature Conservation and Resilience Strategy: [Nature Conservation and Resilience Strategy \(cityoflondon.gov.uk\)](https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk)
- Community Engagement Strategy [Community Engagement Strategy \(cityoflondon.gov.uk\)](https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk)
- Access Recreation Strategy [Natural Environment Access and Recreation Strategy \(cityoflondon.gov.uk\)](https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk)
- Culture, Heritage and Learning Strategy [Culture, Heritage and Learning Strategy \(cityoflondon.gov.uk\)](https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk)

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