

HAMPSTEAD HEATH, HIGHGATE WOOD AND QUEEN'S PARK COMMITTEE
Tuesday, 3 December 2024

Minutes of the meeting of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee held at Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Tuesday, 3 December 2024 at 4.15 pm

Present

Members:

William Upton KC (Chairman)
John Beyer
Deputy Timothy Butcher
John Foley
Alderman Alison Gowman CBE
Jason Groves
Michael Hudson
Pauline Lobo
Wendy Mead OBE
Councillor Arjun Mittra
Eamonn Mullally

In attendance:

Alethea Silk

Externals:

Wendy Fidler (Land Management Services)
David Withycombe (Land Management Services)
Cofa Pfarre (Maydencroft)

Officers:

Niranjan Shanmuganathan	Chamberlain's Department
Paul Friend	City Surveyors
Sadaf Anwar	Comptroller and City Solicitor's
Anna Cowperthwaite	Comptroller and City Solicitor's
Luke Major	Corporate Strategy and Performance
John Park	Corporate Strategy and Performance
Helen Evans	Environment Department
Bill LoSasso	Environment Department
Jonathan Meares	Environment Department
Charlotte Williams	Environment Department
Callum Southern	Town Clerk's Department

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received by Caroline Haines and Sheriff & Alderman Gregory Jones KC.

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

No declarations were received.

3. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED – That, the public and non-public summary of the meeting held on 22 October 2024 be agreed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

A Member suggested there was a need for the City to oppose high rises that were being built up around the Heath, most notably Archway Tower. Officers indicated they were in contact with a consultant that would provide a consultancy service on planning matters, including monitoring planning applications that occurred adjacent to the four open spaces at North London Open Space. Officers confirmed they were discussing the Archway Tower proposal with the consultant.

Another Member queried whether the Committee was formally requesting an objection to the Archway Tower if discussions with the London Borough of Islington's planning department were unsuccessful. The Chairman indicated he was uncertain the Committee could formally approve an objection without further information. The Member indicated they could provide more information to Officers. Officers confirmed they would report back at the next Committee meeting to confirm next steps.

The Chairman noted that a decision on the paddling pool was going to take longer to come about than expected following a recent meeting of the Queen's Park Consultative Group. Officers explained the project needed to be assessed as part of project prioritisation process and come back to Committee with a list of proposed projects for its consideration with a request for a decision on what to prioritise.

It was queried by a Member whether projects at the three parks were being compared against one another, or whether project prioritisation applied to the specific open space itself and would only compete against projects from the same open space. Officers explained the project prioritisation process applied to all the charities which sat under a specific Committee and a list would be brought to Committee with proposed projects, with the next stage of the process determining what budget was available to each charity to confirm which projects could be afforded. Officers confirmed available funding would be assessed under the prioritisation criteria.

The Member also queried where the money would come from for the padding pool project. Officers explained staff resourcing was worked out as part of the

business planning process and five-year business plans were being established. For each activity, Superintendents would assess staffing resource required in order to deliver and maintain business.

The Chairman asked for a timeline for the delivery of the paddling pool if it needed to be considered under the project prioritisation process. Officers explained the schedule had not changed, Officers were currently working on the business plan and the proposal timeline would be brought to the next meeting. The Chairman explained it was not a simple project as £35,000 was required in capital cost and another £50,000 as a new member of staff would be required.

A Member suggested it needed to be considered how it was perceived that the paddling pool project had been delayed and what reputational impact that could have on the charity. Officers explained progress was being made on business planning and the project prioritisation process and felt it was appropriate for the Committee to decide on priorities. Officers further noted that once a decision had been made on that, they would be in a position to expedite the plan for delivery of prioritised projects and devise appropriate communications in relation to those projects.

Another Member asked when delivery of the paddling pool project could occur if it was formally prioritised at the next Committee meeting. Officers explained they would need to establish an implementation timeline.

A question was raised by a Member regarding the option for a splash pool at Queen's Park instead of the paddling pool due to the cost of the pump for the paddling pool. The Chairman indicated this question was also raised at Queen's Park Consultative Group. Officers indicated they had received an indicative cost which would be more capital intensive in upfront cost but would be less operating cost and less Officer time to be operated day-to-day.

4. ANNUAL REVIEW OF TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee received a report which included the Terms of Reference for the Committee's consideration before submission to the Policy and Resources Committee.

The Chairman suggested the removal of the word 'joint' in 'Highgate Wood Joint Consultative Committee', as well as the removal of the word 'joint' and a change of 'Committee' to 'Group' in 'Queen's Park Joint Consultative Group'. These proposed amendments are in paragraph 4(e) of the terms of reference.

RESOLVED – That, Members:

- Approved the terms of reference of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee, subject to the above amendments, for submission to the Court of Common Council in April 2025, and that any further changes required in the lead up to the Court's appointment of Committees be delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman.

5. UPDATE TO HAMPSTEAD HEATH MANAGEMENT STRATEGY (2018-2028)

The Committee received a report which summarised the work done to complete the planned midterm review of the Hampstead Heath Management Strategy and sought Committee approval to finalise the document and prepare for layout and publication.

During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- a) A Member requested the slide deck from the presentation be circulated to the Committee.
- b) Questions were raised to what extent swimming had increased at the ponds and was it being measured now charges had been introduced. Officers agreed to share the figures outside of the meeting.
- c) The Committee questioned how the management plan could be publicised once it had been finalised. Officers confirmed a communications plan would be put together.
- d) The Chairman considered how business plans were being progressed and how that would tie-in with the management strategy. Officers confirmed the business plans would come to Committee in February and also confirmed everything would be ready for a Green Flag submission by the end of January 2025.

RESOLVED – That, Members –

- Noted the provided report and attached Hampstead Heath Management Strategy.
- Authorised the Superintendent, in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair, to finalise the review to the Hampstead Heath Management Strategy (2018-2028).

6. UPDATE TO MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR HIGHGATE WOOD AND QUEEN'S PARK

The Committee received a report which summarised the work done to update the management plans for both Highgate Wood and Queen's Park and sought Committee approval to finalise the document and prepare for layout and publication.

During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- a) The Chairman queried the motivation behind using a ten-year plan. Officers explained it was to give time for an overarching vision to be worked towards and were planning to do a five-year review to consult stakeholders. Officers also noted

- b) The Chairman also asked when the date could be included for the tendering of the cafes at Highgate Wood and Queen's Park. Officers were seeking to complete the work on it in the fiscal year of 2025/26.
- c) The Chairman questioned what the target date would be for introducing a licensing scheme for professional dog walking. Officers noted the Consultative Committee had asked Officers to look into a licensing scheme and they were conscious of fully embedding the scheme on the Heath to learn any lessons that may need to come out of that. Officers would continue to think about what the target date would be and indicated it would be further refined in the business plan.
- d) A Member welcomed the ten-year plan and queried whether there was any maintenance works that could be carried out on buildings, such as the lavatories or the hut, especially for visiting sports teams. Officers indicated they were happy to consider that as the plan was finalised and the programme for implementation and identification of improvements was being put together.
- e) Members queried why there was a disparity between the net natural capital asset value and benefit to cost ratio of Highgate Wood and Hampstead Heath. Officers told the Committee it depended on the assets held in those areas and a proportion of the estimated value was related to access provision.
- f) The Chairman suggested the natural capital asset assessment missed things as it looked like Hampstead Heath was costing a lot more money, but did not include the value of other elements, such as sporting events, which costed more to maintain but acknowledged it was a good first study.
- g) Officers explained the natural capital asset assisted with demonstrating the high value of the services provided, alongside the biodiversity and ecosystems presented, to those who may be encouraged to donate funding.
- h) A Member queried what mitigations were in place for visitor pressures, especially in relation to dogs on woodland habitats. Officers explained that the continued approach was creating conservation areas, and those areas would be closed off for 10 years to regenerate naturally. They also explained that there was only two conservation areas closed off at any one time.
- i) Another Member sought more information on the sweet chestnut blight. Cora, an external speaker, indicated it was becoming more of an issue in London and the management plan would highlight potentials. Officers indicated they were currently a small number of sweet chestnuts at Highgate Wood and explained the main concern was the oak decline.
- j) The Committee identified an error on the second paragraph of Page 118 on the Queen's Park Management Plan which referred to Highgate Wood.

The Chairman suggested this needed to be amended. Officers confirmed it was a drafting error and would amend following the meeting.

- k) The Chairman suggested action relating to the paddling pool at Queen's Park should have a timescale of 2025 rather than 2025/26. Officers explained they sought a steer, from the prioritisation process, of what was happening with the space and any implementation would begin in the next fiscal year.
- l) Officers explained there was a proposal that sought to expand the woodland walk which would be a significant redesign of the park and would significantly impact the layout and size of the pitch and pull. Officers confirmed they would turn their attention to the proposal this fiscal year and make a recommendation following due diligence.

RESOLVED – That, Members –

- Noted the provided reports and attached Highgate Wood Management Plan and Queen's Park Management Plan.
- Authorised the Superintendent, in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair, to finalise the update to the management plans for Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee.

7. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

The Chairman confirmed, in response to questions, that the date of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee dinner was on Tuesday 4 February 2025.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

A Member requested the slides decks from the management strategy presentations be shared with Members following the meeting.

9. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED – That, the following matters relate to business under the remit of the Court of Common Council acting for the City Corporation as charity Trustee, to which Part VA and Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 public access to meetings provisions do not apply. The following items contain sensitive information which it is not in the best interests of the charity to consider in a public meeting (engaging similar considerations as under paragraphs 3 and 5 of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Act) and will be considered in non-public session.

10. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

RESOLVED – That, the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2024 be agreed as a correct record.

11. RE-MARKETING OF CAFES AT HAMPSTEAD HEATH, HIGHGATE WOOD, AND QUEEN'S PARK

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment.

12. DONATION TO SUPPORT WILDLIFE SANCTUARY AT MODEL BOATING POND

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment.

13. HILL GARDEN PERGOLA UPDATE

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment.

14. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

No questions were raised in non-public session on matters relating to the work of the Committee.

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

No other business that the Chairman considered urgent was raised in non-public session.

The meeting ended at 6.54 pm

Chairman

Contact Officer: Callum Southern
Callum.Southern@cityoflondon.gov.uk