

Committee(s): Natural Environment Board	Dated: 06/02/2025
Subject: Environment Department high-level Business Plan 2025-30	Public report: For Decision
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes • provides business enabling functions 	Corporate Plan Outcomes: Diverse engaged communities; Vibrant thriving destination; Providing excellent services; Flourishing public spaces; Leading sustainable environment Business enabling functions: Business Planning; Resource allocation and management; Risk Management; Health and Safety; EEDI.
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
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Summary

This report presents for approval the high-level Business Plan for the Environment Department for 2025-30. Due to the size and scope of the department, the priority workstreams, performance measures and financial information has been divided into three sections, one for each of our three key Committee 'clusters'. The front and back pages of the Plan contain information which relates to the whole of the Environment Department and these pages are being presented to all Committees along with the relevant Committee-specific workstream section.

The plan presented in this report (Appendix A) contains Section C which provides a top-level strategic overview of activity of the service areas which fall within the remit of the Natural Environment Board. Once approved, the Plan will be adopted from April 2025.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- i. Note the factors taken into consideration in compiling the Environment Department's high-level Business Plan 2025-30; and
- ii. Approve, subject to the incorporation of any changes sought by the Board, Section C of the Environment Department's high-level Business Plan 2025-30 (presented at Appendix A), which covers the service areas for which the Natural Environment Board is responsible.

Main Report

Background

1. In recent years, every department has produced a standardised single-year high-level Business Plan, in alignment with the corporate business planning process. However, the organisation is now intending to transition to five-year high-level Business Plans, aligned with the Corporate Plan 2024-29 and associated strategies. The Environment Department is one of two pathfinder departments which have developed five-year high-level Business Plans commencing in 2025/26, with others due to follow from 2026/27.
2. The Environment Department's high-level Business Plan 2025-30 sets out the priority workstreams for the department for the next five years and the detailed actions for 2025/26. The Plan will be reviewed and refreshed annually to include details of the following year's deliverables and actions.
2. The high-level Business Plan 2025-30 aligns to our Corporate Plan 2024-2029 and demonstrates how the department's work supports delivery of the Corporate Plan outcomes. It also indicates the estimated funding and people resources associated with each priority workstream. As a high-level plan, this document does not capture the granularity of departmental work but gives an overall picture of departmental activity, trends where applicable and direction of travel.
3. Detailed five-year business plans for each of the Natural Environment charities have developed alongside the high-level Business Plan; these will be received by the relevant charity management committees for approval and subsequent performance reporting.

Environment Department high-level Business Plan for 2025-30

3. This report presents, at Appendix A, the draft high-level Business Plan for 2025-30 for the services of the Environment Department which fall within the remit of the Natural Environment Board, ie:
 - The Natural Environment Division
 - City Gardens.

4. As a pathfinder for a wider organisational transition from 2026/27, the Environment Department has moved to a five-year high-level Business Plan. The Plan sets out the priority workstreams for 2025-30 and the actions that will be undertaken in 2025/26 to deliver them. The Plan will be reviewed and refreshed annually to detail the actions for the following year.

Prioritisation and alignment to Corporate Plan 2024-29

5. The priority workstreams for 2025-30 were identified by the Environment Department's Senior Leaders and their management teams, in consultation with other members of staff. The establishment of these core workstreams enables management teams to set appropriate objectives and action plans to achieve the overarching goals during the years ahead.
6. The workstreams were selected to reflect key strategic links. They demonstrate how the department supports delivery of the Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes and other cross-cutting strategies, programmes and priority projects, such as Destination City and the Climate Action Strategy. The Natural Environment Division's priority workstreams reflect the Division's core strategies.
7. Please note, that due to the high-level nature of the Plan, the workstreams do not include all elements of the teams' work; there is a significant amount of 'business as usual' activity that continues alongside the priority workstreams.

Resources utilised

8. As part of a pilot prioritisation exercise which began in 2024/25, every City Corporation department has again been required to include an estimation of the budget and people resource associated with each workstream. These figures are expressed as percentages of the overall revenue budget and Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff.
9. It has not been possible to determine accurate allocation of financial or people resources for each workstream; very few are discrete projects with specific budgets, and very few members of staff spend specific proportions of their time on one workstream. Therefore, the figures shown in the Business Plan are very much estimates. Should this exercise be repeated in future years, accurate methodology will need to be designed and applied to ensure consistency across and within departments.

Performance measurement

10. Progress made against priority workstreams is measured by monitoring key performance indicators and achievement of milestones. Performance is reviewed regularly by Directors and their Management Teams and is reported to your Board every six months to enable Member scrutiny. The Town Clerk's Executive Leadership Board also regularly reviews the progress of every department's Business Plan workstreams and performance measures.

11. The priority workstreams identified in this high-level Business Plan are part of the 'golden thread' that flows through the charity business plans, local team management plans, and the individual performance plans of members of staff, all of which provide further methods of assessing progress. This also enables individual officers to fully understand how their work feeds into charity, divisional, departmental and corporate objectives and outcomes.

Synergies and combatting silos

12. Workstreams have been linked to corporate priorities wherever possible. Other Corporate strategies, programmes and projects are referenced throughout.

13. The front and back pages of the Plan contain information which relates to the whole of the Environment Department and these pages are being presented to all Committees along with the relevant Committee-specific workstream section.

14. Colleagues across the department are working collaboratively to identify synergies and break down siloed working practices. As a key enabling function, the Department's Business Services Division works to align common processes and procedures to achieve consistency. This Division leads cross-departmentally on areas including business planning; risk management; health and safety; workforce planning; Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion; communications and engagement; information and data management; and GIS mapping.

Departmental Operational Property Assets Utilisation Assessment

15. The Environment Department's staff are based across 25 sites throughout London and the south-east. The Department holds approximately 340 physical assets, almost 270 of which are at its Natural Environment sites.

16. As part of the Corporation's Operational Property Review Programme, the Department has undertaken a detailed utilisation assessment of all allocated operational property assets beyond Guildhall. A separate detailed utilisation of accommodation allocated to the Environment Department within the Guildhall complex was undertaken over a four-week period in November/December 2024. The results of both exercises have been returned to the City Surveyor's Department.

17. Over the coming year, a departmental Asset Plan will be produced to enable effective management and development of these assets to ensure they add value to the organisation and the natural environment charities while being fit for purpose, well maintained, and safe for our staff and service users.

Corporate and strategic implications

Strategic implications - The Environment Department's high-level Business Plan is aligned to Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes. There are common themes woven throughout the Department's high-level Business Plan which highlight our contribution and commitment to the delivery of the Corporate Plan, Destination City, the Climate Action

Strategy, the People Strategy and other key cross-cutting programmes and projects. Any new strategies will be reviewed as they are approved, and consideration given as to how the services can and will support their delivery.

Security implications - None

Financial implications - The high-level Business Plan has been produced in liaison with Chamberlain's Department and takes into consideration opportunities to reduce expenditure and increase income in order to make necessary savings.

Equalities implications - The Department has an established Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EEDI) Working Group. The Group has developed a Departmental EEDI Plan which aligns with the Corporate EDI Plan. Members of the group lead on a range of EEDI actions, including those set out in the Business Plan, to ensure compliance with the PSED across the department.

Resourcing implications - Any changes to resources will be brought to the relevant Committee(s).

Risk Implications – The risk management processes in place in the Environment Department support the delivery of the Corporate Plan, our Departmental and Divisional Business Plans and relevant Corporate Strategies. Risks to achieving the objectives set out in the Business Plan are identified and managed in accordance with the City of London Risk Management Framework and the requirements of the Charity Commission where relevant.

Climate Implications - The work of the Natural Environment Division and City Gardens team supports the delivery of the Corporate Climate Action Strategy through delivery of relevant workstreams; updates on progress are reported to this Committee.

Conclusion

This report presents, for approval, the high-level Business Plan for 2025-30 for the services of the Environment Department which fall within the remit of the Natural Environment Board. Once approved, the Plan will be updated in line with any changes requested by the Board and will be adopted in April 2025.

Appendices

- Appendix A – Environment Department high-level Business Plan 2025-30

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