

HAMPSTEAD HEATH, HIGHGATE WOOD AND QUEEN'S PARK COMMITTEE
Tuesday, 4 February 2025

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, 4 February 2025 at 4.05 pm

Present

Members:

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

In attendance:

Alethea Silk (attended virtually)

Officers:

Simon Owen	Chamberlain's Department
Niranjan Shanmuganathan	Chamberlain's Department
Edward Wood	Comptroller and City Solicitor's
Emily Brennan	Environment Department
Andrey Impey	Environment Department
Bill LoSasso	Environment Department
Polly Dunn	Town Clerk's Department
Isaac Thomas	Town Clerk's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from 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

3.1 Draft Minutes of Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee

RESOLVED – That, the public and non-public summary of the meeting held on 3 December 2024 be agreed as a correct record.

3.2 Draft Minutes of Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee

Members noted the draft public minutes of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee held on 14 January 2025.

3.3 Draft Minutes of the Highgate Wood Consultative Group

Members noted the draft public minutes of the Highgate Wood Consultative Group held on 14 November 2024.

3.4 Draft Minutes of the Queen's Park Consultative Group

Members noted the draft public minutes of the Queen's Park Consultative Group held on 20 November 2024.

Matters Arising

The Chairman requested that officers provide an update concerning the review of the Queen's Park Paddling Pool, which had drawn concern from Queen's Park residents due to being out of operation for the last 6 years. Officers explained that issues with the design and challenges securing funding had made the matter more complex than originally thought, and assured Members that a detailed paper containing costed options to take forward would be brought to the next Committee meeting. Additional resource would be sought should the costs not be adequately covered by the resources available in the budget. Members were also informed that generous offers of fundraising had been made by the local community. Members highlighted the importance of this issue for Queens Park residents and emphasised the need to show local residents that their concerns were being taken seriously.

4. HAMPSTEAD HEATH SPORTS AND WELLBEING TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee received the 2025 Sports and Wellbeing Forum Terms of Reference.

The Chairman noted that the terms of reference were broadly welcomed by the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee at their last meeting held on 14 January 2025, with the suggestion that a Member of the Consultative Committee should be appointed to the Sports and Wellbeing Forum.

RESOLVED – That, Members:

- Noted the Hampstead Heath Sports and Wellbeing Terms of Reference. .

5. **ASSISTANT DIRECTOR'S REPORT (HAMPSTEAD HEATH)**

The Committee received the Assistant Director's report which presented an update on matters relating to Hampstead Heath since the last Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee meeting on 22 October 2024.

During the discussion, the following points were made:

- a) A Member queried whether previous data pertaining to closures of the Pergola could be provided in order to ascertain whether closures have become more frequent than in previous years. Officers responded that this data was captured by the arboriculture team and used to inform the wider operational and policy approach. Officers indicated that data from the last 2-3 years could be brought back to the Committee at a future meeting.
- b) A Member commended the installation of additional PVs to increase the number of solar panels on the Lido roof at Parliament Hill and suggested that the Environment Department should consider whether other assets across Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queens Park would be suitable for this sort of investment. The Member drew attention to the considerable amounts of money being spent on energy and raised the potential benefits of reducing long term costs and carbon emissions. Officers responded that the Energy Team, Climate Team and City Surveyors were in regular conversation regarding where best to install energy efficient infrastructure. Officers highlighted that the Lido was a clear objective given that it was the largest building on the Heath. Officers also drew attention to budget constraints but noted that progress was made to gather funds for environmental improvements to lodges, with the effect of improving living standards, rentability, and reducing the climate footprint.
- c) The Chairman queried whether the repairs to the sauna, which saw it out of use for almost 3 months, had impacted usage of the Lido. The Chairman also questioned whether this had affected income and whether it could be afforded for this to happen again. Officers explained that the repair had impacted use of the Lido necessitating that repairs were carried out as quickly as possible to prevent closure over the winter period during which its popularity had tended to peak.
- d) The Chairman took the opportunity to welcome Andrew Impey, the new Deputy Director of Natural Environment at the Corporation, to the Committee.

RESOLVED – That, Members –

- Noted the report and its contents.

6. **RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE REPORT**

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director, Environment concerning the risk management procedures in place within the Environment Department and its Natural Environment Division.

RESOLVED – That, Members –

- Confirmed, on behalf of the City Corporation as Trustee, that the Summary Risk Registers appended to the report satisfactorily identified the key risks to each of the charities and that appropriate risk management processes are in place.

7. BUDGET ESTIMATES 2025/26 – HAMPSTEAD HEATH CHARITY

This item was discussed following the discussion of Item 14, which concerned the Operational Finance Progress Report 2024/25.

Members considered a joint report of the Chamberlain and Executive Director, Environment concerning the revenue and capital budgets for Hampstead Heath charity for 2025/26, for subsequent submission to Finance Committee.

During the discussion, the following points were made:

- a) Officers highlighted an error on the expenditure table (Table 1) provided on page 87 of the report and informed Members that the fourth column on the 'Central Risk' row should read 1,226 rather than 1,126 as it was written in the report. Officers apologised for the error and assured Members that the rest of the figures, including the totals, provided in the table were correct.
- b) A Member drew attention to the disparity between the total net expenditure shown on pages 87 (4,031) and 214 (4,336) of the report. Officers responded that due to the timing of the individual reports, it was agreed that the learning recharges would not be included in the 2024/25 budget for Hampstead Heath, which explained the disconnect between the two reports. Officers added that learning budget would not be recharged to Hampstead Heath as it was more of an accounting mechanism and there were no direct recharges to the charities, but the way it had been presented seemed to imply it was. It was confirmed that the confusing reporting mechanism had been removed going forward.
- c) A Member queried what works fell under the Cyclical Works Programme (CWP). Officers responded that a schedule of works would be provided to Members following the meeting and informed Members that a coordination process was being developed with City Surveyors to enable delivery.
- d) The Chairman suggested that the budgets could not be approved at the meeting without information being provided on the Cyclical Works Programme. The Town Clerk informed the Committee of the option to delegate approval of the budgets to the Town Clerk, in consultation with

the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, subject to the changes to the Cyclical Works Programme. Members of the Committee were content with this approach.

- e) A Member indicated that, for future reference, it would be useful for the Committee to have a better understanding of the Cyclical Works Programme and suggested that the City Surveyor should be invited to future meetings.

RESOLVED – That, Members:

- i) noted the latest revenue budget for Hampstead Heath charity for 2024/25;
- ii) agreed that authority be delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman to review and approve the proposed revenue budget for 2025/26 for Hampstead Heath for submission for approval by the Finance Committee;
- iii) agreed that authority be delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman to review and approve Hampstead Heath's capital and supplementary revenue project budgets for 2025/26 for submission for approval by the Finance Committee; and
- iv) agreed that authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, to agree that amendments for 2024/25 and 2025/26 budgets arising from changes to recharges & support services or for any further implications arising from corporate contracts, energy price increases, changes to the Cyclical Works Programme (CWP) and capital charges during budget setting be delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman.

8. HAMPSTEAD HEATH FEES AND CHARGES FY'2025-26 (1 APRIL 2025 – 31 MARCH 2026)

The Committee considered the report of the Superintendent concerning the annual review of fees and charges on Hampstead Heath and proposed fees and charges for financial year 2025-26.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:

- a) A Member queried why reduced rates were offered to schools. Officers responded that as the schools were struggling with their budgets, the reduced rate was added to ensure that they would remain accessible to young people, which has been practice for many years.

RESOLVED – That, Members:

- Approved the update to the existing fees and charges for financial year 2025-26 (1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026).

9. RE-OPENING OF FORMER TENNIS HUT AT PARLIAMENT HILL

The Committee considered the report of the Volunteer Coordinator which provided an overview of the pilot re-opening of the former Tennis Booking Hut at Parliament Hill.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:

- a) The Chairman queried whether the Tennis Hut was to be staffed by City Corporation officers, or by the Heath Hands and volunteers. Officers suggested that staffing would likely reflect a balance of both, but this would depend upon the resources available.
- b) Officers from the Comptroller and City Solicitor's Department advised the Committee that the recommendation should be amended to authorise one or more named officers (rather than officers generically).

RESOLVED – That, Members:

- Authorised the Superintendent to agree terms with Heath Hands to occupy and reactivate the Tennis Hut and authorised the Comptroller and City Solicitor to complete any necessary documentation.

10. PROJECT PRIORITISATION PROCESS

This item was discussed in conjunction with Item 12, which concerned the Five-Year Business Plan for Hampstead Heath.

The Committee received the Natural Environment Director's report which proposed a project prioritisation process that would inform the development and implementation of the five-year business plan.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:

- a) The Chairman informed the Committee that an updated project prioritisation criteria and weighting table (Addendum Pack 2) with a new maximum score of 43 had been circulated to Committee Members by email ahead of the meeting. The Chairman explained that the updated criteria and weighting scoring was to supersede the prioritisation scores that were contained in the report.
- b) Officers reminded the Committee that this paper was for decision, rather than for discussion as suggested by the report. Subject to the Committee's agreement, Officers proposed to begin the prioritisation process by applying the prioritisation criteria to the long list of projects in the five-year business plan (not including business as usual and essential projects).

This process would enable officers to create a prioritised list and to assign the appropriate levels of resourcing needed. Officers explained that this paper was aimed as a starting point and informed Members that a report would be brought back to the Committee on the process so far, detailing a list of above the line projects covered by existing resources and projects further down the list of priorities that would require further resources for delivery. Members' feedback and suggestions were welcomed.

- c) The Chairman reiterated to the Committee that the prioritisation process was not a decision-making process of which projects would be delivered and reassured Members that projects on the lower end of the list of priorities could still be delivered.
- d) A Member queried the applicability and weighting given to the criteria regarding whether a project would support Corporate Plan outcomes or the delivery of the Natural Environment Strategies. It was suggested that the desired outcomes of the Corporate Plan and Natural Environment Strategies may not always be relevant to the best interests of the charity. Officers reassured Members that the Corporate Plan outcomes listed in the criteria were high level strategic priority areas that were relevant to North London open spaces and that these were developed with charity objectives in mind. It was intended that open spaces were represented on the Corporate Plan and that there was alignment between strategies and plans. This was the same case with the Natural Environment Strategies. Officers gave assurance that the criteria could be reviewed and adjusted according to Members' view.
- e) A Member inquired about the 'Has funding been secured?' criteria and pointed out that funding usually cannot be secured until a project is finalised and costed. The Member advised that this could create difficulty as officers would not look to fund projects that are not on the radar or assigned any priority. The Committee requested that the wording for this priority be amended to 'Would funding be secured?' and officers responded that this would be updated accordingly.
- f) A Member suggested that money being spent at the lower level should be delegated to the Superintendent for greater efficiency. Officers agreed with this approach from a management perspective.

RESOLVED – That, Members:

- Approved the proposed project prioritisation criteria and process for Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee.

11. HAMPSTEAD HEATH DOG SWIMMING AND PESTICIDE INTRODUCTION

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

During the discussion, the following points were raised:

- a) Members acknowledged the potential challenges that could arise by prohibiting dogs from swimming in those Hampstead Heath ponds where they were currently allowed.
- b) Members advised that more information signposting was needed at Hampstead Heath to better educate and inform the public of the environmental risks posed by dog swimming and the consequent introduction of pesticides into ponds. Members were hopeful that this research would help raise awareness among dog owners.
- c) A Member asked whether officers could provide more information about the effects of pesticides downstream from the ponds that are used for dog swimming. Officers explained current research indicated that chemicals broke down quickly as they passed further downstream, but it was unknown at this stage whether the by-products were less harmful.

RESOLVED – That, Members:

- Noted the report and the findings of the references study and discussed potential future options.

12. FIVE-YEAR BUSINESS PLAN (HAMPSTEAD HEATH)

This item was discussed in conjunction with Item 10, which concerned the Project Prioritisation Process.

The Committee received a report of the Superintendent providing a working draft of the first five-year business plan for Hampstead Heath.

During the discussion, the following points were made:

- a) A Member commended officers for the work that was put into creating a Five-Year Business Plan and noted that it was helpful to have all projects and priorities in one place. In light of the Natural Environment Charity Review (NECR), the Member advised that there was an opportunity to look at bigger questions around commercial activity on the Heath, such as opportunities to raise funds, upgrade the current café provision and making the Heath as self-sustaining as possible.
- b) A Member queried why many of the prioritisation scores and total budgets were still to be confirmed. Officers responded that this was because, at this stage, the Draft Business Plan was intended to provide a general direction of travel. Officers clarified that scores and budgets would be assigned in the coming months, and also stated that efforts were being made by the Natural Environment Division to recruit a candidate with inhouse fundraising expertise.

RESOLVED – That, Members:

- Reviewed the draft Hampstead Heath five-year business plan.

13. HAMPSTEAD HEATH TRUSTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

The Committee received a report of the Chamberlain presenting the Trustee's Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2024 for Hampstead Heath.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:

- a) A query was raised regarding the lateness of the report. Officers explained that the report was delayed due to a wait for some voluntary information.

RESOLVED – That, Members:

- Noted the Trustee's Annual Report and Financial Statements for the 2023/24 Financial Year.

14. OPERATIONAL FINANCE PROGRESS REPORT 2024/25 (QUARTER 3 APRIL - DECEMBER) - HAMPSTEAD HEATH

The Committee received a report of the Chamberlain concerning the Hampstead Heath charity's revenue operating budget position, projected year-end outturn, live capital projects and outstanding debt position.

RESOLVED – That, Members:

- Noted the content of the report and its appendices.

At this point, the Chairman sought approval from the Committee to continue the meeting beyond two hours from the appointed time for the start of the meeting, in accordance with Standing Order 40, and this was agreed.

15. ASSISTANT DIRECTOR'S REPORT (HIGHGATE WOOD)

The Committee received a report of the Superintendent providing an update on matters relating to Highgate Wood since the last Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee meeting on 22 October 2024.

RESOLVED – That, Members:

- Noted the report.

16. ASSISTANT DIRECTOR'S REPORT (QUEEN'S PARK)

The Committee received a report of the Superintendent providing an update on matters relating to Queen's Park since the last Committee on 22 October 2024.

RESOLVED – That, Members:

- Noted the report.

17. BUDGET ESTIMATES 2025/26 - HIGHGATE WOOD & QUEEN'S PARK CHARITY

The Committee considered a joint report of the Chamberlain and Executive Director, Environment concerning the revenue and capital budgets for Highgate Wood and Queen's Park charity for 2025/26, for subsequent submission to Finance Committee.

During the discussion, the following point was raised:

- a) The Committee agreed that further information on the Cyclical Works Programme was needed before the budgets could be approved. Members agreed to delegate authority to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman.

RESOLVED – That, Members:

- i) noted the latest revenue budget for Highgate Wood & Queen's Park charity for 2024/25;
- ii) agreed that authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, to review and approve the proposed revenue budget for 2025/26 for Highgate Wood & Queen's Park for submission for approval by the Finance Committee; and
- iii) agreed that authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, to agree that amendments for 2024/25 and 2025/26 budgets arising from changes to recharges & support services or for any further implications arising from corporate contracts, energy price increases, changes to the Cyclical Works Programme (CWP) and capita charges during budget setting be delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman.

18. HIGHGATE WOOD FEES AND CHARGES FY'2025-26 (1 APRIL 2025 – 31 MARCH 2026)

The Committee considered the report of the Superintendent concerning the annual review of fees and charges on Highgate Wood and proposed fees and charges for financial year 2025-26.

RESOLVED – That, Members:

- Approved the update to the existing fees and charges for financial year 2025- 26 (1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026).

19. QUEEN'S PARK FEES AND CHARGES FY'2025-26 (1 APRIL 2025 - 31 MARCH 2026)

The Committee considered the report of the Superintendent concerning the annual review of fees and charges on Queen's Park and proposed fees and charges for financial year 2025-26.

RESOLVED – That, Members:

- Approved the update to the existing fees and charges for financial year 2025- 26 (1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026).

20. FIVE-YEAR BUSINESS PLAN (HIGHGATE WOOD)

The Committee received a report of the Superintendent providing a working draft of the first five-year business plan for Highgate Wood.

RESOLVED – That, Members:

- Reviewed the draft Highgate Wood five-year business plan.

21. FIVE-YEAR BUSINESS PLAN (QUEEN'S PARK)

The Committee received a report of the Superintendent providing a working draft of the first five-year business plan for Queen's Park.

RESOLVED – That, Members:

- Reviewed the draft Queen's Park five-year business plan.

22. OPERATIONAL FINANCE PROGRESS REPORT 2024/25 (QUARTER 3 APRIL - DECEMBER) - HIGHGATE WOOD & QUEEN'S PARK

The Committee received a report of the Chamberlain concerning the Highgate Wood & Queen's Park charity's revenue operating budget position, projected year-end outturn, live capital projects and outstanding debt position.

RESOLVED – That, Members:

- Noted the content of the report and its appendices.

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

No questions were raised relating to the work of the Committee.

24. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

As it was the final meeting of the municipal year, a Member took the opportunity to extend their gratitude to the Chair, Vice-Chair, Members and officers for their hard work over the last year.

Appointment of a Member to the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee

RESOLVED – That, Members:

- Appointed Ella Mitchell, nominated by Hampstead Rugby Club, as a Member of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee, in accordance with the London Government Reorganisation (Hampstead Heath) Order 1989.

25. 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.

26. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

a) Draft Non-Public Minutes of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee

RESOLVED – That, the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2024 be agreed as a correct record.

b) Draft Non-Public Minutes of Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee

RESOLVED – That, the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2025 be agreed as a correct record.

27. 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.

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

One item of other business considered urgent were discussed whilst the public were excluded.

The meeting ended at 6.49 pm

Chairman

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