

HAMPSTEAD HEATH, HIGHGATE WOOD AND QUEEN'S PARK COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 20 May 2025

Minutes of the meeting of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee held at Committee Rooms, 2nd Floor, West Wing, Guildhall on Tuesday, 20 May 2025 at 4.00 pm

Present

Members:

Alderman & Sheriff Gregory Jones KC (Chairman)
William Upton KC (Deputy Chair)
John Beyer
Councillor Marcus Boyland
Deputy Timothy Butcher
Simon Burrows
Alderman Alison Gowman CBE
Jason Groves
Pauline Lobo
Charles Edward Lord, OBE JP (Ex-Officio Member)
Wendy Mead OBE
Councillor Arjun Mittra
Alethea Silk (attended virtually)

In attendance:

Karina Dostalova
James St John Davis (Ex-Officio Member) (attended virtually)
David Williams

Officers:

Edward Wood	Comptroller and City Solicitor's
Katie Stewart	Executive Director, Environment
Emily Brennan	Environment Department
Jo Hill	Environment Department
William LoSasso	Environment Department
Charlotte Williams	Environment Department
Polly Dunn	Assistant Town Clerk & Executive
	Director of Governance and Member
	Services
Callum Southern	Town Clerk's Department
Zoe Williams	Town Clerk's Department

1. APOLOGIES

At the outset of the meeting, Alderman Alison Gowman, as senior member present, was moved into the Chair.

Apologies were received from Alderman & Sheriff Gregory Jones KC, who was attending to his Shrieval duties. The Member attended the meeting briefly online, and was otherwise absent.

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

There were no declarations.

3. **ORDER OF THE COURT OF COMMON COUNCIL**

The Committee received the Order of the Court of Common Council dated 25 April 2025.

4. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

The Committee proceeded to elect a Chairman in accordance with Standing Order No. 28. Alderman & Sheriff Gregory Jones KC, as the only Member expressing their willingness to serve, was duly elected as Chairman for the ensuing year and took the Chair.

RESOLVED – That, Alderman & Sheriff Gregory Jones KC be elected Chairman of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee for the ensuing year.

RESOLVED – That, Alderman Alison Gowman remain in the Chair until the Election of the Deputy Chair, due to the Chairman's absence.

5. **ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN**

The Committee proceeded to elect a Deputy Chair in accordance with Standing Order No. 29.

William Upton KC, as the only Member expressing their willingness to serve, was duly elected as Deputy Chair for the ensuing year.

RESOLVED – That, William Upton KC be elected Deputy Chairman of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee.

On the proposal of the Chairman, Deputy Chair William Upton KC took the Chair in his absence.

The Deputy Chairman welcomed the new Members to the Committee. This meeting marked the end of his three-year term as Chair.

Wendy Mead OBE moved a vote of thanks to William Upton KC, the outgoing Chair.

RESOLVED – That, Members of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee wish to express their heartfelt gratitude to

WILLIAM UPTON KC

for his unwavering dedication and exceptional leadership in various initiatives since May 2022.

Since May 2022, William has been instrumental in numerous projects, starting with the Platinum Jubilee fun day in Golders Hill Park, where he delivered a

memorable speech alongside the Mayor of Barnet. His commitment continued with the opening of the newly refurbished play area at the Heath Extension in November 2022, a project that brought joy to many local families.

William's contributions to environmental sustainability are noteworthy. In January 2023, he oversaw the planting of 33 trees on Hampstead Heath as part of the Queen's Green Canopy campaign. His efforts in promoting ecological projects were further highlighted by the return of the sheep grazing project in September 2023 and 2024.

His leadership extended to the renovation and reopening of the Parliament Hill Athletics Track in December 2023, which received exclusive trackmark certification. William also played a pivotal role in the successful organisation of the first London International Cross Country in January 2024 and the Night of 10k event in May 2024.

In addition, William's dedication to community engagement was evident in the opening of the new sandpit in Queen's Park and the Roman Kiln project in Highgate Wood. His efforts culminated in the completion of the Hampstead Heath Management Strategy review in January 2025.

As we bid farewell to William as our Chair, we extend our deepest appreciation for his gracious, energetic, and visionary guidance. We wish him continued success in all his future endeavours.

Thank you, William, for your remarkable service.

6. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED – That, the public minutes and non-public summary of the previous meeting held on 4 February 2025 be approved as an accurate record.

Matters arising

Members noted the non-public draft summary from the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee meeting on 29 April that had been included as a late item in the committee papers. The formal minutes will be noted in the next Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee meeting.

7. **APPOINTMENT OF SUB-COMMITTEES, CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES AND GROUPS AND REPRESENTATIVES ON OTHER BODIES**

Members considered a report of the Town Clerk concerning the terms of reference and composition of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood, Queen's Park, and Keats House consultative committees and groups, and the appointments it was invited to make to other bodies.

RESOLVED – That, Members –

- Noted the terms of reference and composition of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee.
- Appointed Alethea Silk to serve on the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee, alongside the Chairman.

- Noted that Councillor Marcus Boyland would attend and receive papers for the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee.
- Agreed the terms of reference and composition of the Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Consultative Groups.
- Appointed Jason Groves to serve on the Highgate Wood Consultative Group.
- Noted that Pauline Lobo had been attending and receiving the papers for the Highgate Wood Consultative Group.
- Appointed John Beyer as a local representative from this Committee to observe meetings of the Natural Environment Board.

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

Members received a report of the Executive Director Environment which provided an update on matters relating to Hampstead Heath since the last Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee meeting on 4 February 2025.

The following point was noted:

The Chairman clarified with Officers that a report with proposals on wind speed closure thresholds would come to the committee in the next cycle of meetings.

RESOLVED – That, Members –

- Noted the report and its contents.

9. **FIVE YEAR BUSINESS PLAN (HAMPSTEAD HEATH)**

Members considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment which provided a draft of the first five-year business plan for Hampstead Heath.

The following points were noted:

The Chairman queried whether water fountains would be included in the business plan for Hampstead Heath. Officers confirmed that water fountains were part of the plan, and that while they were not previously funded, the City Surveyors' department had indicated they may be able to identify funding for this. Officers hoped to have this confirmed in the next week.

Regarding the delivery aspect of the business plan, a Member inquired whether a service level agreement existed with the City Surveyor's Department, given its key role in executing structural works outlined in the plan. Officers responded that several workstreams were being delivered externally, with the Environment Department contributing to their coordination and planning. They acknowledged that clearly articulating the collaboration between the Environment Department and the City Surveyor's Department remained a work in progress. The Executive Director of Environment added that, in the short term, an estates board would be established to ensure the work was effectively monitored and jointly supervised with the City Surveyor's Department. The Executive Director noted that from a long-term perspective, the Natural Environment Charity Review would help to identify what sort of agreement would be suitable for this relationship.

Members requested a progress update on what had been actioned in the business plan every 6 months, and that the itemised list in the business plan be numbered..

A Member suggested that the business plan be ordered by funding source to make it clear how the projects would be funded. Officers noted they would be happy to add the suggested fields, and that a column would be added to update progress on the plan.

With regards to query about work on West Heath, Officers responded that there was a significant body of work happening on the various health and safety issues in West Heath, and they were taking a partnership-based approach to the situation.

A Member expressed concern that work on the Hill Garden Pergola was dependent on National Heritage Lottery funding. Officers responded to this in the non-public session.

RESOLVED – That, Members –

- Approved the Hampstead Heath five-year business plan provided at Appendix 1 of the report, and requested a progress update on its implementation every six months.

10. HEATH HANDS UPDATE

Members received a report of Heath Hands which summarised the charity's main activities on North London Open Spaces during the financial year.

The following points were noted:

Members noted their congratulations to Heath Hands on their work, and for the increase in volunteers.

The Chairman noted that these volunteers had been active in both Hampstead Heath and Highgate Wood.

RESOLVED – That, Members –

- Noted the report and its contents.

11. RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE REPORT

Members considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment which sought to provide assurance that risk management procedures in place within the Environment Department and its Natural Environment Division are satisfactory and meet the requirements of the Corporate Risk Management Framework and the Charities Act 2011.

The following points were noted:

The Chairman asked how this register aligned with the work of the City Surveyor's Department. Officers explained that the register included a risk related to the repair and maintenance of built assets. They noted that there had been recent discussions about the potential for joint ownership of certain actions within the risk register, with the City Surveyor's Department.

A Member sought clarification with regards to the local risk identified in the Five-Year Business Plan. Officers explained that the local budget was called the 'local risk' which meant it was funded through the local expense budget.

RESOLVED – That, Members –

- Confirmed, on behalf of the City Corporation as trustee, that the registers appended to the report satisfactorily identified the key risks to each of the charities and that appropriate risk management systems are in place to effectively identify and mitigate risks.

12. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT COMPLEMENTARY LAND POLICY AND COMPLEMENTARY LAND USE APPRAISAL

Members received a report of the Executive Director, Environment which proposed the scope and terms of reference for two specific pieces of work to review and improve management of the development of an updated Complementary Land Policy, and a Complementary Land Use Appraisal.

The following points were noted:

A Member expressed concern about the name buffer land being changed to complementary land. Officers explained that the current policy was specifically covering the buffer land in Epping Forest that was purchased for the purpose of protecting the rural nature of Epping Forest. However, other land purchased by the City Corporation did not fulfil the same purpose as the buffer land at Epping Forest. The Officer noted there would be detailed appendices for each piece of land, and the appendix for Epping Forest would contain the relevant information on the buffer land.

Officers explained that the appraisal was being undertaken following discussions at the Policy and Resources Committee and the Resource Allocation Sub-Committee where Officers were asked what assessments they had done for the suitability of the Natural Environment division's complementary land assets for housing development. Officers told Members that from conversations with local authorities, they had found there was limited opportunity to use the complementary land assets for housing development, and there were a number of restrictions on many of the sites such as conservation designations and other designations in local plans.

A Member asked whether the work would consider the possibility of selling Heathfield House and moving staff onto Hampstead Heath itself. Officers responded that they would consider all options, and the key criteria was to consider if the facility was essential for operational purposes. Officers assured Members that Heathfield House was essential for operational purposes.

RESOLVED – That, Members –

- Noted the report and its contents.

13. TRANSFORMATION FOR THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT CHARITIES – PROJECT UPDATE AND GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

Members received a report of the Executive Director, Environment which provided an update on project governance arrangements as the work transitioned to implementation phase.

The following points were noted:

A Member noted that it would be helpful to have a press release on the changes being made. Officers responded that a FAQ document was recently circulated to Members, and the next step would be to publish most of that information on the website.

RESOLVED – That, Members –

- Noted the work to date on implementation of improvements identified by the NECR across assets, grant funding, governance and income generation.
- Noted the upcoming reporting schedule bringing detailed updates on these four areas.

14. ASSISTANT DIRECTOR'S REPORT (HIGHGATE WOOD)

Members received a report of the Executive Director, Environment which provided an update on matters relating to Highgate Wood since the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee meeting on 4 February 2025

RESOLVED – That, Members –

- Noted the report and its contents.

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

Members received a report of the Executive Director, Environment which provided an update on matters relating to Queen's Park since the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee meeting on 4 February 2025.

The following points were noted:

The Chairman expressed appreciation for the recent progress and thanked Officers for their efforts.

A Member noted the unfortunate passing of Bella the goat and queried whether signs could be put up about feeding the animals. The Chairman noted that this had also been raised at the recent Queens Park Consultative Group, and that officers had put up detailed signs about the incident and to raise awareness to the public about this matter. Officers explained that the issue about the public feeding animals was a major topic discussed at the recent Zoo Ethics Board meeting. They also explained the role of the Ethics Board as part of the running of the farm.

RESOLVED – That, Members –

- Noted the report and its contents.

16. FIVE YEAR BUSINESS PLAN (HIGHGATE WOOD)

Members considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment which provided an updated draft of the first five-year business plan for Highgate Wood.

The following points were noted:

Members requested a progress update on what had been actioned in the business plan every 6 months.

A Member asked why the review of site accessibility was being conducted in 2026/27 rather than 2025/26. Officers responded that it was a matter of having the staff capacity and financial resource to conduct the review, and ensure it was completed to a high standard.

RESOLVED – That, Members –

- Approved the Highgate Wood five-year business plan provided at Appendix 1 of the report, and requested a progress update on its implementation every six months.

17. FIVE YEAR BUSINESS PLAN (QUEEN'S PARK)

Members considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment which provided an updated draft of the first five-year business plan for Queen's Park.

The following points were noted:

Members requested a progress update on what had been actioned in the business plan every 6 months.

RESOLVED – That, Members –

- Approved the Queen's Park five-year business plan provided at Appendix 1 of the report, and requested a progress update on its implementation every six months.

18. QUEEN'S PARK WATER PLAY FEATURE

Members considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment which provided an update on the feasibility of reopening a water play feature at Queen's Park.

The following points were noted:

The Chairman noted that this matter was discussed at the Queens Park Consultative Group, which he had chaired, and which had met on 14 May 2025. The Consultative Group Members had noted the reasons why it was not being proposed to reinstate the paddling pool, and they were widely supportive of the proposal for a splash park. Given the very recent date of the meeting, the formal minutes of that meeting would be coming to the next Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee meeting.

A Member asked if Officers had consulted the local Member of Parliament Georgia Gould MP about the proposal as she could be interested in being involved in the fundraising efforts. Officers responded that the local MP would be most welcome to be involved in the fundraising and noted that discussions would soon take place to establish a local working group focused on fundraising.

In response to a Member's query about the London Borough of Brent's possible involvement in the proposal, Officers noted that some local councillors were members of the Queens Park Consultative Group. At the recent Group meeting, they had expressed their support about getting involved in the fundraising efforts, and Officers would be reaching out to them for confirmation. In response to a query about the project timeline, Officers explained that the proposed splash pad was an off-the-shelf product, and therefore, once funding was secured, the project was expected to progress swiftly. Officers believed that the splash pad could be ready for the summer of 2026.

A Member inquired about the capacity of the proposed splash pad, and the size difference compared to the current paddling pool. Officers responded that the splash pad would be the same size as the paddling pool and they would follow up with the Member with answer about the capacity. Officers noted that the splash pad would be flat, making it more accessible for all families.

A Member asked about the operational period of the splash pad and encouraged maximising its availability. Officers responded that seasonal considerations had to be considered. They explained that the facility would be closed and 'winterised' to prevent the systems from freezing, and it would undergo water testing before opening for summer use. They noted that they would aim for it to be opened in times that line up for school holidays to ensure it was available for optimum use. Officers ensured Members that a maintenance plan, including regular cleaning and checks, would be in place to ensure long-term functionality.

A Member asked whether work could begin on this project before all the funding was secured. Officers explained that the project could not proceed without secured funding, as it would exceed the available budget. They emphasised the need to ensure all necessary funds were in place before moving forward and noted there was strong support for the project from the local community.

RESOLVED – That, Members –

- Approved Option 1 to formally decommission the paddling pool at Queen's Park and raise c. £97,000 to install a new splash pad water play feature in the same location that will be safer, more accessible, easier to operate, and incur lower operating costs.

19. HIGHGATE WOOD AND QUEENS PARK KILBURN TRUSTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

Members received a report of the Chamberlain that provided the final version of the Trustee's Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2024 for Highgate Wood and Queens Park Kilburn.

Officer noted the report was reported on time.

RESOLVED – That, Members –

- Noted the report and its contents.

20. REPORT OF ACTION TAKEN

Members received a report of the Town Clerk which provided details of decisions taken under Delegated Authority procedures under Standing Order 41(b) between Committee meetings, including the approval of the Budget.

RESOLVED – That, Members –

- Noted the report and its contents.

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

There were no questions.

22. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

The Chairman raised a matter of urgent business concerning the recent Supreme Court judgement in *For Women Scotland* on the statutory interpretation of the Equality Act 2010 and its implications for the management of the Hampstead Heath Pond facilities. The Chairman noted that they had been taking the matter seriously since the judgment came out. They explained that the Ponds should be one of those fun invigorating features on the Heath, and that they are an extraordinary outdoor natural swimming facility, steeped in history and social significance. The Chairman explained that the men's and the women's ponds are presented as single sex facilities, subject to the Gender Identity Policy. He further noted that the temporary position had been to continue the existing policy whilst they seek legal advice.

The Assistant Solicitor gave a brief summary, advising that the case specifically regarded the legal definitions of *man*, *woman*, and *sex*, and that they had retained Leading Counsel to advise further. The Assistant City Solicitor advised that one letter threatening judicial review had already been received, but that this was felt to be premature. In light of the ruling, they noted that it would be appropriate to review the swimming facilities on Hampstead Heath to decide what arrangements to adopt moving forward and to ensure these were compliant with the Equality Act 2010. The Assistant City Solicitor explained that this review would involve clearly articulating the reasons for continuing to provide segregated facilities at the Men's Pond and the Ladies' Pond, if this was the preferred approach. In deciding whether or not they should continue to be trans-inclusive spaces, this would involve balancing the competing needs of different user groups with their own protected characteristics. Either way, the Assistant City Solicitor explained that it would need to be demonstrated that this was a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. They advised that there was a very high risk of legal proceedings, whatever approach was adopted.

The Assistant City Solicitor proposed conducting an information gathering/consultation exercise with service users to inform the decision-making process. They noted that this work would be timed to follow the anticipated release of revised statutory guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission, expected by the end of June 2025. The corporate gender identity policy would also be reviewed. They explained that once the relevant information had been compiled, a detailed report would be provided to the Committee so Members could make an informed policy decision. The precise reporting arrangements were still being discussed with the Town Clerk.

An observing Member, also a former Chair of the Committee, received permission from the Chairman to speak on this item.

The observing Member suggested that Committee seek input from other relevant bodies, such as the Corporate Services Committee, to help make these decisions. The Member also recommended that the Committee await guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission before the consultation begins.

A Member asked how the Committee intended to manage the changing facilities at Parliament Hill Lido, considering the recent discussion. In response, the observing Member noted that when the original gender policy was introduced, all swimming department staff received gender awareness training, and some changing cubicles were converted to unisex to accommodate diverse needs.

A Member noted that it would be important to also consult the wider customer base of service users who were not affiliated with relevant interest groups.

It was noted that the ponds are London-wide facilities, and there was likely to be very strong resistance that we move away from the idea of single sex swimming provision, and we need to hear the feedback.

23. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED – That, the following matters related 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 did not apply. The following items contained sensitive information which it was 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 would be considered in non-public session.

24. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

RESOLVED – That, the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2025 be agreed as a correct record.

Matters arising

The Committee discussed one matter.

25. CYCLICAL WORKS PROGRAMME AT HAMPSTEAD HEATH, HIGHGATE WOOD AND QUEEN'S PARK

Members considered a report of the City Surveyor.

26. HILL GARDEN PERGOLA

Members heard a verbal update on the Hill Garden Pergola.

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

No items of other business considered urgent were discussed whilst the public were excluded.

The meeting ended at 6.15pm.

Chairman

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