

**WEST HAM PARK COMMITTEE**  
**Thursday, 1 May 2025**

Minutes of the meeting of the West Ham Park Committee held at Committee Rooms  
- 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Thursday, 1 May 2025 at 11.00 am

**Present**

**Members:**

James St John Davis (Chair)  
Charles Edward Lord OBE JP (Deputy Chair)  
Deputy Caroline Haines  
Wendy Mead OBE  
William Upton KC  
Catherine Bickmore  
Tim Hodgson  
Councillor Joy Laguda MBE  
Justin Meath-Baker

**In attendance:**

Anne Corbett (attended online)  
Deputy Benjamin Murphy (attended online)

**Officers:**

Niranjan Shanmuganathan	- Chamberlain's Department
Jack Joslin	- City Bridge Foundation
Joseph Smith	- Corporate Strategy and Performance
Katie Stewart	- Executive Director, Environment
Emily Brennan	- Environment Department
Andrew Impey	- Environment Department
William LoSasso	- Environment Department
Charlotte Williams	- Environment Department
Ben Dunleavy	- Town Clerk's Department
Callum Southern	- Town Clerk's Department
Zoe Williams	- Town Clerk's Department

**1. APOLOGIES**

At the outset of the meeting, Wendy Mead OBE, as senior Member present, was moved into the Chair.

Apologies were received from Rafe Courage and Councillor John Whitworth.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

There were no declarations.

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

**RESOLVED** – That, Members received the Order of the Court appointing the Committee.

4. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

The Committee proceeded to elect a Chair in accordance with Standing Order No. 28. James St John Davis, as the only Member expressing their willingness to serve, was duly elected as Chairman for the ensuing year and took the Chair.

**RESOLVED** – That, James St John Davis be elected Chair of the West Ham Park Committee for the ensuing year.

The Chair thanked the Committee and made opening remarks about their upcoming tenure as Chair.

5. **ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN**

The Committee proceeded to elect a Deputy Chair in accordance with Standing Order No. 29. The Town Clerk informed the Committee that Catherine Bickmore and Charles Edward Lord OBE JP had both expressed a willingness to serve, and that a ballot was therefore necessary.

A ballot having been taken, votes were cast as follows:-

Catherine Bickmore - 5

Charles Edward Lord OBE JP - 6

Charles Edward Lord OBE JP, having received the majority of votes, was duly elected as Deputy Chair for the ensuing year. The Deputy Chair thanked the Committee for its support and made introductory remarks.

**RESOLVED** – That, Charles Edward Lord OBE JP be elected as Deputy Chairman of the West Ham Park Committee.

Wendy Mead OBE moved a vote of thanks to Deputy Caroline Haines, the outgoing Chair.

**RESOLVED** – That, Members of the West Ham Park Committee wish to place on record their sincere appreciation to

CAROLINE HAINES

for her unwavering dedication and dynamic leadership as Chair of the Committee since May 2022.

Caroline has been instrumental in driving numerous initiatives that had significantly benefitted the park and its community.

Throughout her tenure, Caroline has championed various projects, including the grand opening of the playground in March 2023, the installation of a new cricket square, and the planting of a Giant Redwood as part of Queen Elizabeth II's Green Canopy initiative. Her efforts extended to organising the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary event, securing sponsorships and fostering participation from key stakeholders such as the England and Wales Cricket Board and West Ham United Football Club.

Caroline's commitment to social mobility, equality, and inclusion has been evident through her support for apprentices, volunteers, and various community programs. Her leadership has ensured that West Ham Park remains a vibrant and welcoming space for all.

As we bid farewell to Caroline as our Chair, we acknowledge her gracious, energetic, and good-humoured approach to her role. We wish her continued success in her future endeavours within the City Corporation and beyond. Caroline, your passion and dedication have truly made a lasting impact on West Ham Park and its community.

Thank you, Caroline, for your dedication and service!

## 6. **MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** – That, the public minutes and non-public summary of the previous meeting held on 6 February 2025 be agreed as a correct record of the meeting.

## 7. **ASSISTANT DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director of Environment which provided an update on matters relating to West Ham Park since the last Committee meeting on 6 February 2025.

The Assistant Director introduced the report and made a clarification regarding a typographical error in an appendix, noting that the annual membership fee for the cricket nets had increased with inflation by 2.7 percent, in line with other fees.

A Member shared that they had received numerous messages of appreciation from the community following the Eid Prayers. They expressed gratitude to the local community for leaving the park in an excellent condition after the event and extended thanks to the teams involved in organising and supporting the event.

The Member also congratulated the learning team on their strong engagement figures, highlighting the improvements that had been made since the COVID-19 pandemic. They noted that the learning team served as the interface with local communities and other groups such as sports clubs.

A Member expressed their appreciation for seeing people enjoying and respecting the park. They also raised a concern about the height of the hedges in the community garden, noting that they were obstructing views into the area. Another Member suggested that the hedges may not have been trimmed due to bird nesting in the hedge during that time of year. Officers later confirmed that hedge cutting would take place in autumn, following the end of the bird nesting season.

In relation to the soil compaction testing of trees used to assess the benefits of soil work on tree health at West Ham Park, a Member inquired about the duration of the effects from soil decompaction. Officers noted that they would discuss this with the Arboriculture team and provide a response in due course.

A Member congratulated the Assistant Director on their leadership in the work of West Ham Park. The Member noted that there had been discussions about how there could be engagement with local authorities to promote the work the City Corporation was doing in its open spaces to the local Newham residents. The Member queried whether there would be the opportunity to include West Ham Park in these communications. The Executive Director responded that they were engaged with the London Borough of Newham and had a good relationship with the Executive Director and Officers there. They noted they were in the process of scheduling a further conversation with Newham Officers on this matter. Officers acknowledged that they would be pleased to host people at the park. With regard to communications, Officers noted that they were working on individual communication plans for each of the North London Open Spaces.

A Member noted the toilet refurbishment programme and asked Officers when they expect the toilets to be upgraded. Officers responded that they were liaising with the City Surveyor's department who were obtaining quotes from suppliers and contractors. Officers noted that once they knew the cost they would be able to provide an update.

**RESOLVED** – That, Members received the report and noted its contents.

## **8. RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE REPORT**

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director of Environment which sought to provide assurance that risk management procedures in place within the Environment Department and its Natural Environment Division, which included West Ham Park, were satisfactory and met the requirements of the Corporate Risk Management Framework and the Charities Act 2011.

A Member sought clarification on whether condition surveys had been completed for all assets. Officers explained that condition surveys were conducted at regular intervals, rather than on a rolling basis. They added that they would liaise with the City Surveyor's department to confirm which condition surveys had been undertaken recently.

In response to the Member's query about the grant funding model, Officers clarified that the transition referenced in the risk register pertained only to the local risk budget. They explained that the more complex transfer of other elements, such as the cyclical works budget and other major project funding, was being developed with the Chamberlain's and City Surveyor's department.

The Chair suggested that it would be beneficial for Members to receive a briefing on the grant funding model prior to its consideration by the Committee. The Member agreed, noting that it would be helpful for the Committee to have an explanation to clarify why the Committee was transitioning to this funding model. Another Member, also the Deputy Chair of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee, noted that West Ham Park's inclusion in the initial review of the model had been carefully considered. They explained that its inclusion was due to its unique status as the City Corporation's largest urban park. The Member acknowledged the need for greater clarity around the process for all Members.

**RESOLVED** – That, Members confirmed, on behalf of the City Corporation as Trustee, that the Risk Register appended to the report satisfactorily set out the key risks to the charity and that appropriate systems were in place to identify and mitigate risk.

#### 9. **FIVE-YEAR BUSINESS PLAN (WEST HAM PARK)**

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director of Environment which provided an updated draft of the first five-year business plan for West Ham Park.

A Member asked for further details on the matter of identifying a location for food and beverage offering. Officers responded that they wanted to institute a food and beverage offer in the park as there was no dedicated café building. They noted that this would likely be a mobile provision. Officers explained that they would be prioritise identifying a suitable location for the provision of food and beverage this year.

The Member also asked for an update on the Padel courts in the tarmac area of West Ham Park. Officers responded that they had been considering the tarmac area and other possible locations for the development of Padel courts in the park. They noted they were not currently considering the tennis courts as a potential location. Officers explained they would consult with local park users and community groups before this was taken further.

A Member asked Officers to consider whether Pickleball could be accommodated in these courts. Officers acknowledged the popularity of Pickleball and responded they would consider this and respond to the Member in due course.

In response to a query about the reinstatement of a planning consultant, Officers responded that they would be engaging with a planning consultant, and they were in the process of finalising the specifications of this.

A Member queried whether they should expect a management plan to follow the five-year business plan. They noted that the format of the plan made it challenging to distinguish between ongoing conservation and maintenance activities, and the value-added initiatives. Officers responded that the new management plan was agreed in February 2025. The Officer noted that the business plan was a separate document that presented how the management plan and the unique work streams would be delivered. They further explained that the five-year business plan reflected the discrete projects and unique work streams that were not yet business-as-usual.

The Member also queried how the previously agreed prioritisation framework was reflected in the plan. Officers explained that the framework would be applied as new work was proposed. They clarified that the current plan was intended to outline what staff could realistically deliver across the North London Open Spaces, based on existing capacity. Officers noted that the prioritisation framework would be incorporated more as the plan evolved and additional workstreams were introduced. They acknowledged that further detail would be added once more information became available regarding project delivery timelines and requirements. They concluded that the prioritisation plan was not entirely integrated into the five-year plan at this stage as they believed the workstreams that were prioritised for the next five years could be delivered.

**RESOLVED –** That, Members reviewed and approved the West Ham Park five-year business plan provided at Appendix 1 of the report.

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

The Committee discussed a report of the Executive Director of 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.

In response to clarification sought by a Member, Officers confirmed that there was no complementary land within West Ham Park and the only time the policy could apply to West Ham Park would be if the City Corporation acquired additional land that was bordering the park.

**RESOLVED –** That, Members received the report and noted its contents.

**11. TRANSFORMATION FOR THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT CHARITIES - PROJECT UPDATE AND GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION PHASE**

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

In response to a Member's question about work on asset ownership, Officers responded that the original plan was to build asset registers for each of the charities, and this did not include the complementary land. They explained that work had been completed on the West Ham Park and Epping Forest asset lists and a report on these would be brought to the next Committee meeting.

The Member also reiterated their previous request for greater clarity regarding the transition to the grant funding model. Officers responded that a detailed paper on the grant funding model would be presented at the Committee's next meeting. They explained that the decision had been developed in consultation with relevant committees, senior officers across the City Corporation, and various consultative groups. Officers also noted that over the past two years, Member briefings had been held to support the transition, during which feedback from Members was actively considered.

Another Member emphasised the importance of reviewing external and internal communications to ensure that Members of the Committee who were not Members of the Court of Common Council received the same background information. Additionally, a Member highlighted the need for transparency around which matters fall under the remit of other committees, such as the Policy & Resources Committee and the Finance Committee.

**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 to bring detailed updates on these four areas.

**12. WEST HAM PARK TRUSTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**

The Committee received a report of the Chamberlain and the Executive Director of Environment which presented the final version of the Trustee's Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2024 for West Ham Park.

The Deputy Chair requested that the Chamberlain include the names of the Members on the West Ham Park Committee in the 2024/25 Annual Report, as it had been done for Hampstead Heath. Officers responded that they would follow up to confirm this could be included moving forward. Another Member noted that the content of these reports was under the remit of the Audit and Risk Management Committee. They suggested that it may be appropriate to raise such matters at that Committee. The Chair responded they would raise the matter in the Audit and Risk Management Committee to consider for the reporting of the next financial year.

A Member noted that there were a number of elements in the report that were not relevant to the West Ham Park Committee. They requested that the report

be made relevant to the Committee, rather than using the standard template. The Chair commented that this was being considered as part of the Natural Environment Charity Review. They noted that they would need to achieve a compromise that included the essential information for West Ham Park, while limiting the information that was not relevant from a charity perspective.

A Member expressed concern that the decrease in funds for the 2023/24 financial year was one third of the income of West Ham Park. They asked Officers how they intended to manage this. Officer noted that they would consider this and respond in due course.

**RESOLVED** – That, Members noted the Trustee’s Annual Report and Financial Statements for the 2023/24 Financial Year.

**13. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

A Member requested a copy of the management plan for West Ham Park. They also queried whether the committee would receive an annual work plan, in addition to the management plan and the five-year business plan. Officers responded that the annual work plan was not included in the Committee papers as it was highly operational and included repetitive tasks such as hedge trimming and picking up litter.

Another Member asked when the Conservation Management Plan would be updated. Officers responded that they were aware of the need to update the conservation management plan, and it would be included the five-year business plan.

With regard to the achievements and performance listed in the West Ham Park Trustee’s Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2024, a Member asked whether any targets had not been met during the reporting period. Officers responded that while they had intended to introduce a food and beverage provision in West Ham Park in the previous year, this target was deferred to the current year due to time and capacity constraints.

A Member, also the Chairman of the Epping Forest and the Commons Committee, suggested that it would be helpful to have a Sharepoint site where Members could have easy access to documents such as the management plans.

**14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT.**

There was no urgent business.

**15. 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.

16. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

**RESOLVED –** That, the non-public minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 February 2025 be agreed as a correct record of the meeting.

17. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

There was one question discussed in non-public session.

18. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

There were no non-public items of urgent business.

**The meeting ended at 12.14pm.**

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Chairman

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