

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Epping Forest and Commons	Dated: 27/11/2025
Subject: Revenue Outturn 2024/25 – The Commons	Public report: For Information
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes• provides statutory duties	Providing Excellent Services Flourishing Public Spaces
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	£0
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of:	Executive Director Environment Chamberlain
Report author:	Clem Harcourt, Chamberlain's Department

Summary

This report compares the revenue outturn for the various Commons charities in 2024/25 with the final budget for the year. Please note that this report has been deferred from your Committee's meeting in July 2025.

Unlike previous years, separate reports are being prepared for Epping Forest and the Commons charities.

The report is divided into three separate sections setting out the revenue outturn for the individual Commons charities for 2024/25 which is also summarised below:

- Section A – Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common (charity registration number: 232987) – net expenditure of £1.167m compared with budget of £1.163m – overspend of £4k.
- Section B – West Wickham Common and Spring Park Wood and Coulsdon and Other Commons (charity registration numbers: 232988 and 232988-1) – net expenditure of £1.702m compared with budget of £1.620m – overspend of £82k.
- Section C – Ashted Common (charity registration number: 1051510) – net expenditure of £705k compared with budget of £732k – underspend of (£27k).

Explanations for significant budget variances compared with the final budget for 2024/25 are detailed in paragraphs 12 to 14.

The Executive Director Environment had an overall underspend of (£53k) on her local risk budget (excluding City Surveyor) for activities relating to The Commons. The Executive Director also had a net local risk underspend totalling (£186k) on

other activities within her remit, after adjusting for unspent carry forwards from 2023/24. The Executive Director Environment proposed that £200k of her maximum eligible local risk underspend be carried forward into 2025/26, none of which relates to The Commons charities.

Recommendation(s)

- Note the report.

Main Report

Introduction

1. This report sets out the revenue outturn for the individual Commons charities for 2024/25 and compares the outturn with the final budget for the year for each charity. Please note that this report has been deferred from your Committee's July 2025 meeting.
2. Unlike in previous years, separate reports have been prepared for Epping Forest and The Commons for 2024/25. The report is also divided into the following sections setting out the final revenue outturn position for 2024/25 for the individual Commons charities:
 - Section A – Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common (charity registration number: 232987)
 - Section B – West Wickham Common and Spring Park Wood and Coulsdon and Other Commons (charity registration numbers: 232988 and 232988-1)
 - Section C – Ashted Common (charity registration number: 1051510).

Section A - Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common (charity registration number: 232987)

Budget Position for 2024/25

3. The 2024/25 original budget for Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common (received in November 2023) was £1.068m net expenditure. This budget was endorsed by the Court of Common Council in March 2024 and was subsequently updated for approved net increases of £95k, resulting in a final net expenditure budget of £1.163m. This is primarily explained by the following:
 - £52k increase in recharges from corporate departments following a review of central support recharges taking place during 2024/25;
 - £40k contingency funding to cover centrally funded apprentices, contribution pay and cost of living pay rises to staff effective from July 2024;
 - £15k re-phasing of projects falling under the Cyclical Works Programme (CWP) managed by the City Surveyor;
 - £14k uplift to cover film liaison staff costs;
 - £2k central risk carry forward funding from the Priorities Investment Pot (PIP) for the Biodiversity Net Gain project; and
 - (£28k) reduced recharges from the Natural Environment Directorate.
4. A reconciliation between the original budget and the final budget is shown in Appendix 1.

Revenue Outturn 2024/25

5. Actual net expenditure for Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common during 2024/25 totalled £1.167m, an overspend of £4k compared with the final net expenditure budget of £1.163m.
6. A summary comparison with the final budget for the year is tabulated below. In the tables, brackets are used to denote income, decreases in expenditure, or increases in income. Please note that this is a departure from the convention used in previous reports and has been adopted across the Financial Services Division. Only significant variances (generally those greater than £30k) are commented on in this report.
7. A more detailed comparison with the final budget can be found in appendix 2.

Table 1: Comparison between 2024/25 Revenue Outturn and Final Budget – Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common

	Original Budget	Final Budget	Outturn	Variation (Better)/ Worse
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Local Risk				
Executive Director Environment	622	676	659	(17)
City Surveyor	157	172	186	14
Total Local Risk	779	848	845	(3)
Central Risk	52	54	71	17
Recharges	237	261	251	(10)
Total	1,068	1,163	1,167	4

Section B – West Wickham Common and Spring Park Wood and Coulsdon and Other Commons (charity registration numbers: 232988 and 232988-1)

Budget Position for 2024/25

8. The 2024/25 original budget for West Wickham Common and Spring Park Wood and Coulsdon and Other Commons (received in November 2023) was £1.209m net expenditure. This budget was endorsed by the Court of Common Council in March 2024 and was subsequently updated for approved net increases of £411k, resulting in a final net expenditure budget of £1.620m. This is primarily explained by the following:
 - £365k re-phasing of projects falling under the CWP managed by City Surveyors;
 - £51k contingency funding for centrally funded apprentices, contribution pay and cost of living pay rises to staff effective from July 2024;
 - £19k increase in recharges from corporate recharges following a review of central support recharges taking place during 2024/25; and
 - (£24k) reduced recharges from the Natural Environment Directorate.
9. A reconciliation between the original budget and the final budget for the charities is shown in Appendix 3.

Revenue Outturn 2024/25

10. Actual net expenditure for the charities during 2024/25 totalled £1.702m, an overspend of £82k compared with the final net expenditure budget of £1.620m.
11. A summary comparison with the final budget for the year is tabulated below. A more detailed comparison with the final budget can be found in appendix 4.

Table 2: Comparison between 2024/25 Revenue Outturn and Final Budget – West Wickham Common and Spring Park Wood and Coulsdon and Other Commons

	Original Budget	Final Budget	Outturn	Variation (Better)/ Worse	Para Ref
	£000	£000	£000	£000	
Local Risk					
Executive Director Environment	672	723	688	(35)	12
City Surveyor	282	647	740	93	13
Total Local Risk	954	1,370	1,428	58	
Central Risk	1	1	33	32	14
Recharges	254	249	241	(8)	
Total	1,209	1,620	1,702	82	

Reasons for Significant Variations

12. The charities' local risk budget was underspent by (£35k) in 2024/25. This underspend can primarily be attributed to savings on employment costs as a result of vacant posts. This was in addition to extra grant income having been received from the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) to fund increased grounds maintenance costs at the charities' sites. The underspend was also partly offset by additional expenditure required on other items including equipment maintenance, professional fees and extra costs needed to maintain existing vehicles.
13. The £93k overspend on budgets managed by the City Surveyor is largely attributable to a £175k overspend relating to the corporate Integrated Facilities Management contract. This can be explained by additional costs required on both repairs and maintenance and cleaning as part of the contract. The net overspend relating to the City Surveyor was partly mitigated by expenditure on projects falling under the CWP being (£82k) less than budgeted largely as a result of the re-phasing of projects at Coulsdon Commons. Please note that the CWP does not form part of the City Surveyor's local risk budget, and any variances will be carried over to 2025/26. Under the governance of the programme, variances on budgets are adjusted for the life of the programme to allow for the completion of works which can span multiple financial years.
14. The £32k overspend on central risk budgets can largely be explained by £24k incurred on external audit fees following two separate sets of accounts needing to be prepared for the charities in the previous financial year. In addition, depreciation was £8k greater than budgeted following extra capital expenditure

having been incurred in 2023/24 with the additional cost met from the charities designated reserve for tangible fixed assets.

Section C – Ashtead Common (charity registration number: 1051510)

Budget Position for 2024/25

15. The 2024/25 original budget for Ashtead Common (received in November 2023) was £558k net expenditure. This budget was endorsed by the Court of Common Council in March 2024 and was subsequently updated for approved net increases of £174k, resulting in a final net expenditure budget of £732k. This is explained by £169k re-phasing of projects falling under the CWP managed by City Surveyors as well as £5k contingency funding to cover contribution pay and cost of living pay rises to staff effective from July 2024.
16. A reconciliation between the original budget and the final budget is shown in Appendix 5.

Revenue Outturn 2024/25

17. Actual net expenditure for Ashtead Common during 2024/25 totalled £705k, an underspend of (£27k) compared with the final net expenditure budget of £732k.
18. A summary comparison with the final budget for the year is tabulated below. A more detailed comparison with the final budget can be found in appendix 6.

Table 3: Comparison between 2024/25 Revenue Outturn and Final Budget – Ashtead Common

	Original Budget	Final Budget	Outturn	Variation (Better)/ Worse
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Local Risk				
Executive Director Environment	434	439	438	(1)
City Surveyor	7	176	151	(25)
Total Local Risk	441	615	589	(26)
Central Risk	0	0	4	4
Recharges	117	117	112	(5)
Total	558	732	705	(27)

Local Risk and Central Risk Carry Forward to 2025/26

19. Chief Officers can generally request underspends of up to 10% or £500,000 (whichever is the lesser) of the final local risk budget to be carried forward, so long as the underspending is not fortuitous and the resources were for a planned purpose that was prevented from happening during the year. Such requests are subject to the approval of the Chamberlain in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of Resources Allocation Sub Committee. In accordance with Financial Regulations, any overspends are currently carried forward in full and are met from the agreed 2025/26 budgets.
20. The Executive Director Environment had a total underspend of (£53k) on activities relating to the Commons charities. The Executive Director Environment also had a net local risk underspend totalling (£186k) on activities relating to other services within her remit, after adjusting for unspent carry forwards from 2023/24. The Executive Director Environment is proposing that £200k of her eligible underspend of (£239k) be carried forward, none of which relates to activities at The Commons.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications – none

Financial implications – none

Resource implications – none

Legal implications – none

Risk implications – none

Equalities implications – none

Climate implications – none

Security implications – none

Conclusion

21. This report presents the revenue outturn position for 2024/25 for the individual Commons charities for Members to note.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Movement between 2024/25 Original Budget and 2024/25 Final Budget – Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common
- Appendix 2 – Comparison between 2024/25 Revenue Outturn and Budget – Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common
- Appendix 3 – Movement between 2024/25 Original Budget and 2024/25 Final Budget – West Wickham Common and Spring Park Wood and Coulsdon and Other Commons
- Appendix 4 – Comparison between 2024/25 Revenue Outturn and Budget – West Wickham Common and Spring Park Wood and Coulsdon and Other Commons

- Appendix 5 – Movement between 2024/25 Original Budget and 2024/25 Final Budget – Ashtead Common
- Appendix 6 – Comparison between 2024/25 Revenue Outturn and Budget – Ashtead Common

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