

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee	Dated: 08/12/2025
Subject: Revenue and Capital Budgets – 2026/27 – Highgate Wood and Queen's Park	Public report: For Decision
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:	Niranjan Shanmuganathan, Chamberlain's Department

Summary

This report presents for approval the revenue and capital budgets for Highgate Wood and Queen's Park charity (charity registration no: 232986) for 2026/27, for subsequent submission to Finance Committee.

The proposed draft revenue budgets for 2026/27 for Highgate Wood and Queen's Park amounts to £2.492m net expenditure. This represents an increase of £400k compared with the original budget for 2025/26 of £2.092m

The proposed budget for 2026/27 has been prepared within the resource envelope allocated to each Chief Officer by Resource Allocation Sub-Committee, including an inflationary increase of 3% as well as contingency funding provided relating to the pay award effective from July 2024 and increases in employer's national insurance. The charity's core grant for 2026/27 also includes funding for the transfer of support services staff at Highgate Wood and Queen's Park whose costs were previously met by the Directorate.

The resource envelope must be adhered to, as failure to do so will impact Finance Committee's ability to set a balanced budget for the year ahead.

The report also reframes the proposed budget to show net expenditure as grant funding from City's Estate for 2026/27 which is broken down according to the individual elements of the grant (Core Grant – based on net Local Risk Expenditure,

City Surveyor Works, Corporate Recharges and Support Services and Central Risk Expenditure). In addition, the appendices include a summarised version of the budget for the charity set out in the format of the Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) in line with best practice for the financial reporting of charities. Further details on proposed Grant Funding Model principles and arrangements are presented to Members for discussion and endorsement in the Natural Environment Charities Review – Grant Funding Model Principles paper.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- i) note the latest revenue budget for Highgate Wood and Queen's Park charity for 2025/26;
- ii) review and approve the proposed draft revenue budget for 2026/27 for Highgate Wood and Queen's Park charity for submission for approval by the Finance Committee;
- iii) review and approve capital and supplementary revenue project budgets for Highgate Wood and Queen's Park for 2026/27 for submission for approval by the Finance Committee; and
- iv) authorise the Chamberlain, in consultation with the Executive Director, Environment to approve amendments for 2025/26 and 2026/27 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 depreciation during budget setting.

Main Report

Introduction

1. The City of London Corporation owns and manages almost 11,000 acres of historic and natural Open Spaces for public recreation and enjoyment. This includes Highgate Wood and Queen's Park which is a registered charity funded from City's Estate. The charity is run at no cost to the communities that it serves and are currently funded principally by the City, together with donations, sponsorship, grants and trading income.
2. This report sets out the latest budget for 2025/26 and the proposed revenue budget for 2026/27 for Highgate Wood and Queen's Park charity and under the control of the Executive Director Environment, analysed between:
 - **Local Risk Budgets** - these are budgets deemed to be largely within the Chief Officer's control and include budgets managed by the Executive Director Environment as well as by the City Surveyor specifically for repairs and maintenance and the Cyclical Works Programme (CWP);
 - **Central Risk Budgets** – these are budgets comprising specific items where a Chief Officer manages the underlying service, but where the eventual financial outturn can be strongly influenced by external factors outside of his/her control or are budgets of a corporate nature; and

- **Recharges & Support Services** - these cover budgets for services provided by one activity to another. The control of these costs is exercised at the point where the expenditure or income first arises as local or central risk.
3. Please note that City Corporation reporting convention (see Table 1) uses brackets to denote income, decreases in expenditure, or increases in income. However, where charity style reporting has been introduced in this paper (Table 2 and appendices), the convention is to show both income and expenditure without brackets, which are instead used to denote deficits or adverse variances. Only significant variances (generally those greater than £50k) have been commented on and are referenced in Appendix 1.
 4. For 2026/27, budgets include:
 - a 3% uplift for inflation as a cash limit to charity budgets;
 - contingency funding to cover increased costs associated with the pay award to staff effective from July 2024 and increases in national insurance;
 - transfer of staffing budgets;
 - a clear distinction between local risk, central risk, and recharge budgets; and
 - responsibility for budgetary control placed on departmental Chief Officers.
 5. The resulting resource envelope must be adhered to, as failure to do so will impact Finance Committee's ability to set Council Tax rates for the year ahead and the requirement in law for the City to set a balanced budget.
 6. The budget has been prepared within the resource envelope allocated to the Executive Director Environment, with the following assumption:
 - Support Services budgets reflect the attribution and cost of central departments. All support services are based on time spent or use of services and were reviewed during 2024/25 with the method of apportionment updated to reflect the latest up to date corporate information. However, the full budgets for these departments have not yet been finalised, so further changes to these budgets may be required. Members are asked to agree that the decision as to the changes required to these budgets are delegated to the Chamberlain in consultation with the Executive Director Environment.
 7. Members should note that for 2026/27, the format of the budgets for the charity has been reviewed. The proposed draft budget for 2026/27 has been set out in the format of a summarised Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) to enable Highgate Wood and Queen's Park to comply with the best practice for the financial reporting of charities, reframing the City's funding as grant funding (subject to formal approval of the grant funding principles and arrangements). A copy of the SOFA can be found in Appendix 1.
 8. The overall proposed 2026/27 draft budget for Highgate Wood and Queen's Park, which includes the charity's relevant operating budgets (local risk and central risk) and recharges & support services budgets, plus the City Surveyor's CWP and building repairs & maintenance budget is £2.492m net expenditure. This is an

increase of £400k when compared with the 2025/26 original budget of £2.092m net expenditure.

9. The latest budget for 2025/26 and provisional draft budget for 2026/27 for the charity is summarised in Table 1 below and further analysed in the charity's SOFA in Appendix 1.

Table 1 - Highgate Wood and Queen's Park (City / deficit funding report style)	Original (OR) Total Budget 2025/26 £000	Latest Total Budget 2025/26 £000	Original (OR) Total Budget 2026/27 £000	Movement 2025/26 OR to 2026/27 OR £000
Local Risk	1,382	1,439	1,483	101
City Surveyors - Repairs & Maintenance	108	108	114	6
Cyclical Works Programme (CWP)	101	54	394	293
Central Risk (inc. Depreciation / Investment income)	10	10	13	3
Recharges & Support Services	491	491	488	(3)
Capital and Projects	0	0	0	0
Total Net Expenditure	2,092	2,102	2,492	400
Depreciation (shown as Funds movement)	(15)	(15)	(18)	(3)
Investment income (shown as Self-Generated Income)	5	5	5	0
Total Grant Funding	2,082	2,092	2,479	403

Table 2 - Highgate Wood and Queen's Park (Charity / grant funding report style)	Original (OR) Total Budget 2025/26 £000	Original (OR) Total Budget 2026/27 £000	Original (OR) Unrestricted Budget 2026/27 £000	Restricted Budget 2026/27 £000	Variance F/(A) 2025/26 OR to 2026/27 £000
Core Grant (Local Risk)	1,382	1,483	1,483	0	101
Additional Grant	700	996	996	0	296
Capital / Projects	0	0	0	0	0
Total Grant Funding	2,082	2,479	2,479	0	397
Self-Generated Income	226	296	296	0	70
Total Income	2,308	2,775	2,775	0	467
Local Risk Expenditure	1,671	1,779	1,779	0	(108)
Central Risk Expenditure (excl. Depreciation)	0	0	0	0	0
City Surveyors - Repairs & Maintenance	108	114	114	0	(6)
Cyclical Works Programme (CWP)	101	394	394	0	(293)
Recharges & Support Services	491	488	488	0	3
Total Expenditure	2,371	2,775	2,775	0	404
Surplus / (Deficit)	(63)	0	0	0	63

Latest Revenue Budget for 2025/26

10. Overall, the 2025/26 latest budget for Highgate Wood and Queen's Park is net expenditure of £2.102m, a net increase of £10k compared to the 2025/26 original budget of £2.092m. The reasons for this increase are:

- (£47k) re-phasing of projects falling under the CWP;
- £57k transfer of budgets for support services staff from the Directorate;

Proposed Draft Revenue budget for 2026/27

11. The proposed 2026/27 draft budget is net expenditure of £2.492m an increase of £400k compared to the 2025/26 original budget for the charity of £2.092m.
12. Each of the Natural Environment Charities has been targeted to achieve unrestricted operational breakeven within the budget envelope. However, an update will be provided to your Committee's February 2026 meeting subject to further officer review of the baseline budgets to support a request to Finance Committee to increase the budget envelope for local risk elements (i.e. the core unrestricted revenue grant), to address concerns regarding historic underfunding of core operations. Also, as part of the Natural Environment Charities Review, work will continue to be undertaken to identify opportunities for income generation and cost savings.
13. Appendix 1 provides details on budget movements between the 2025/26 original budget and the 2026/27 proposed draft budget. Overall, there is an increase in net expenditure of £400k. The main reasons for this net expenditure increase are:
 - £296k increase in budgets for CWP projects managed by the City Surveyor relating to the agreed programme for the CWP backlog of works;
 - £55k additional staffing costs. This is explained by additional costs budgeted for 2026/27 relating to the transfer of support services staff who were previously charged to the Directorate;
 - £41k in additional Transport repairs and maintenance costs to service existing fleet
 - £28k increase in order to update staff Health & safety equipment

Staffing Statement

14. Analysis of the movement in staff related costs are shown in Table 3 below:

Table 3 – Staffing Statement

Original Budget 2025/26		Latest Budget 2025/26		Original Budget 2026/27	
Staffing Full-time Equivalent	Estimated Cost £000	Staffing Full-time Equivalent	Estimated Cost £000	Staffing Full-time Equivalent	Estimated Cost £000
24.98	1,305	25.78	1,344	27.12	1,420

Cyclical Works Programme

15. Table 4 below details the budgets held and proposed for the City Surveyor's CWP and building repairs & maintenance:

Table 4 – CWP & City Surveyor Local Risk Highgate Wood and Queen's Park	Original Budget 2025/26 £'000s	Latest Budget 2025/26 £000's	Original Budget 2026/27 £'000
Cyclical Works Programme (CWP)	101	54	394
Planned & Reactive Work – Breakdown & Servicing (City Surveyor Local Risk)	108	108	114
Cleaning (City Surveyor Local Risk)			
Total CWP and City Surveyor	209	162	508

Grant Funding from City's Estate

16. Please note that as part of the move to the Grant Funding model, the charity's total proposed grant funding from City's Estate amounts to £2.479m for 2026/27, an increase of £397k (19.07%) compared with the 2025/26 original budget. A reconciliation setting out how the grant has been calculated for 2026/27 can be found in Appendix 2. The grant from City's Estate is comprised of the following elements:

- Core Grant (Local Risk) - £1.483m – an increase of £101k (7.31%); £639k (43%) Highgate Wood; £849k (67%) Queen's Park Kilburn
- Additional Grant (City Surveyor Works) - £508k – an increase of £299k (143.06%)
- Additional Grant – Recharges and Support Services - £488k, a reduction of £3k (0.61%)

17. Please note that the grant does not include funding for depreciation as funding for any capital expenditure has previously been provided to the charity relating to the total purchase price of assets in the year that the expenditure took place. Depreciation is however funded from the charity's designated reserve held for tangible fixed assets with the £18k depreciation budgeted for 2026/27 as shown in Appendix 1 being funded from this reserve.

Draft Capital and Supplementary Revenue Project budgets for 2026/27

18. The latest estimated costs of the current approved Capital and Supplementary Revenue Projects are summarised below in Table 6:

Table 6 – Highgate Wood and Queen’s Park Draft Capital and Supplementary Revenue Project budgets - 2026/27

Service	Project	Exp. Pre 01/04/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/ 28 £'000	Later Years £'000	Total £'000
Highgate Wood and Queen’s Park	QP Play Area and Sandpit replacement of equipment	144	8	0	0	0	152
TOTAL HIGHGATE WOOD AND QUEEN’S PARK		144	8	0	0	0	152

19. The latest Capital and Supplementary Revenue Project forecast expenditure on approved schemes will be presented to the Court of Common Council for formal approval in March 2026.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications – none

Financial implications – none

Resource implications – none

Legal implications – none

Risk implications – the net local risk budget (core unrestricted grant) has been set at a level which will make it challenging to breakeven in 2026/27 (and in future years) without calling on reserves. This may therefore negatively impact delivery of core operations where additional cost savings and/or additional income are not achieved.

Equalities implications – none

Climate implications – none

Security implications – none

Conclusion

20. This report presents the proposed draft revenue and capital budgets for 2026/27 for Highgate Wood and Queen’s Park charity for Members to consider and approve.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) – Highgate Wood and Queen’s Park
- Appendix 2 – Movement between 2025/26 and 2026/27 City’s Estate Grant – Highgate Wood and Queen’s Park

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