

WEST HAM PARK COMMITTEE
Thursday, 23 October 2025

Minutes of the meeting of the West Ham Park Committee held at Committee Rooms
- 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Thursday, 23 October 2025 at 9.30 am

Present

Members:

James St John Davis (Chair)
Charles Edward Lord, OBE JP (Deputy Chair)
Deputy Caroline Haines
Wendy Mead OBE
Catherine Bickmore

In attendance:

Deputy Benjamin Murphy
Reverend Farida Matthews

Officers:

Marguerite Jenkin	- Chamberlain's Department
Niranjan Shanmuganathan	- Chamberlain's Department
Anna Cowperthwaite	- Comptroller and City Solicitor's Department
Joseph Smith	- Corporate Strategy & Performance
Katie Stewart	- Executive Director, Environment
Emily Brennan	- Environment Department
Jo Hill	- Environment Department
Jo Hurst	- Environment Department
Andrew Impey	- Environment Department
William LoSasso	- Environment Department
Charlotte Williams	- Environment Department
Zoe Williams	- Town Clerk's Department

Matters arising

The Chair noted his thanks, on behalf of the Committee, to those who were involved in organising and running Park Fest, in particular, the Friends of West Ham Park.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Deputy Anne Corbett, Rafe Courage, Karina Dostalova, Tim Hodgson, Justin Meath-Baker, William Upton KC, Councillor John Whitworth and Councillor Jane Lofthouse.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT

No declarations of interest were received.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED – That, the public minutes and non-public summary of the previous meeting held on Thursday 23 October 2025 be agreed as a correct record of the meeting.

4. **ASSISTANT DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment which provided Members with an update on matters relating to West Ham Park since the last Committee meeting on 3 July 2025.

Officers noted that West Ham Park had recently won a gold medal at the London in Bloom awards for the large park over 25 acres category.

A Member noted their congratulations to the work of Officers for achieving these awards, as well as the Green Flag and Green Heritage Site awards. The Member also passed on their congratulations to the Amenity Horticulture Apprentice who recently completed their apprenticeship. A Member commented that West Ham Park's achievements with successful events and work happening in the park should be widely advertised. The Chair asked whether information about these awards had been published on the City Corporation's social media channels. Officers confirmed that social media posts would go out in the coming week about the awards received by West Ham Park.

Regarding the rise in antisocial behaviour in West Ham Park, the Member asked whether formal meetings with the London Borough of Newham had taken place and what type of feedback had been communicated through these. Officers confirmed that they had engaged with the London Borough of Newham's lead on community enforcement when the issue first arose who had set up periodic patrols. They noted that they had been responsive, and they would continue with meeting them to address this.

The Member also queried whether the two Members on the West Ham Park Committee representing the London Borough of Newham had been engaged on this subject. Officers confirmed that they would contact the councillors about this. The Chair noted that they had engaged with the councillors on this matter. The Chair requested that the councillors be invited to provide a structured update on the response from the London Borough of Newham.

In response to a further question about the Metropolitan Police's engagement with youth in the area, Officers noted that there had been police action within some parts of the London Borough of Newham although they were not aware of their efforts with youth engagement. They commented that a day of action was planned in Newham on 13 November, targeting known and used areas for drug use, sales and distribution.

With regard to plants identified in paragraph 5 of the report, a Member commented that acer palmatum and azaleas were not climbing shrubs. They also noted that the pollinator-friendly shrubs identified in paragraph 25 included buddleia, which had been identified as a species of concern under the London Invasive Species Initiative. Officers noted that they would speak to the Head

Gardener and respond to the Member on these matters at the next Committee meeting.

A Member noted that they were disappointed to hear that the playground already required resurfacing and commented that the mounds by the playground were heavily used by children and were beginning to look worn. Officers responded that they would pass this feedback on to the team. The Member also suggested that donations for West Ham Park could be sought from the events that were being held at the park.

Another Member noted that the byelaws of West Ham Park had not been updated since 1966 and queried whether there was an opportunity to review these. The Member asked how individual Officers in West Ham Park were authorised to enforce the byelaws. Officers responded that they were aware of the need to update the byelaws, and an initial conversation had been held about how this would be approached across the open spaces. They explained that enforcement of the byelaws at West Ham Park was primarily carried out through engagement and education by the Rangers. However, as the Rangers were neither constables nor trained security professionals, external security personnel were employed to provide additional support. They also noted that the enforcement of criminal legislation was controlled through the Metropolitan Police.

Officers noted that the appointment of four Park Guard security officers had strengthened support with enforcement of the byelaws. These officers actively engaged with groups and individuals on byelaw issues, such as those relating to dogs and cycling within the park.

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

5. **RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE**

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment which sought to provide assurance to Members that the 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 asked about progress on initiatives to reduce work-related stress and whether the structure of the North London Open Spaces enhanced or detracted from this. Officers responded that, given the limited resources available, they had been working to manage workloads across teams. They noted that business planning had been a useful development to communicate expectations about what could be accomplished in a year.

Officers explained they would also be reviewing outdated working rotas across all of the North London Open Spaces to reflect capacity. They noted that the increase in anti-social behaviour and criminal activity had an impact on the staff. Officers further explained that they were at significant risk of single point failure.

They assured Members that efforts were underway to establish a structure that would provide appropriate support where needed, but they ultimately needed more staff to meet the workload demands. Officers acknowledged the risks and emphasised that they were actively listening to staff to ensure they feel supported and had a positive work environment. The Chair stressed that the response should not imply that Officers were expected to achieve more with fewer resources and confirmed the Committee's support in mitigating this risk.

Regarding the impact of the Target Operating Model discussed in the previous meeting, a Member asked how Officers would ensure that the Grant Funding Model was implemented in a sustainable way that could be delivered in the long term. The Chair also asked whether Officers expected there to be sufficient staff levels at West Ham Park before they transitioned to the Grant Funding Model. The Executive Director, Environment said that it was important to ensure they could get provide staff with necessary resources immediately, rather than waiting for future progress. They added that the Natural Environment Charities Review would help determine the optimal team size for managing the open spaces, and this level of resourcing would be incorporated into the long-term model.

A Member asked about progress on the survey of assets. The Executive Director reported that a Head of Estates had recently been appointed, which had positively helped to reset the relationship with City Surveyors. Officers explained that a transformation programme was underway to establish a clear understanding of the assets held by the City Corporation.

A Member observed that significant work remained on the asset survey and stressed the importance of incorporating a forward-looking approach as part of the NECR and the transition to the Grant Funding Model. They also queried whether West Ham Park operating under North London Open Spaces continued to be the most appropriate model. Officers explained that West Ham Park operated under North London Open Spaces because its features aligned more closely with those of other sites in the group. While the possibility of changing this model had been considered, Officers believed staff would benefit more from a period of stability rather than further structural change. A Member, also the Chair of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee, commented that it would be important not to shift the burden caused by insufficient staffing levels on to other groups of staff.

The Member also commented that the identification of stress as a risk was a broad topic and it did not identify what the drivers behind this stress were. Officers confirmed that the cause of the work-related stress was that there was not enough staff to get work done, which in turn had the potential to create health and safety risks. They also noted that while Cyclical Works Programme was a positive development, it had resulted in additional demands for on-site staff to deliver the programme. The Member asked whether staff pressure stemmed from an operational structure that was not fit for purpose or from additional workload. Officers confirmed that both factors contributed.

In response to a Member's query, Officers confirmed that while the staff had two-way radios, they did not have body cameras, but they were considering this option. Officers also noted that most visitors to West Ham Park were respectful members of the community who appreciated the park.

The Chair noted that they did not want to be stuck in a reactionary cycle in terms of risk management and it would be beneficial to have more forecasting in place in the future.

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

6. OPERATIONAL FINANCE PROGRESS REPORT - Q1 2025/26

The Committee received a report of the Chamberlain and Executive Director, Environment which provided an update on the operational finance position as at period 9 (April – June) 2025/26 for the West Ham Park charity and set out the charity's revenue operating budget position to date and projected year-end outturn, current live capital projects and outstanding debt position.

Officers noted that since the report had been produced, they had undertaken a Quarter 2 forecast exercise, and the projected net underspend had changed from £1,000 to £18,000.

A Member requested an update on the Natural Environment Charity Review. Officers responded that there was a wide range of workshops and briefings being organised for both elected Members and other Members of committees and consultative group about the Grant Funding Model. They assured the Member that they would be provided with the opportunity to attend these briefings.

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

7. DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

The Committee received a report of the Chamberlain and Executive Director, Environment which provided a draft version of the Trustee's Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2025 for West Ham Park.

A Member commented that on page 81 "heirs" should be corrected to "heir", and on page 82, the line "External appointments are made after due advertisement and rigorous selection to fill gaps in skills" should be deleted as it was not applicable to this Committee.

A Member raised that while some of the local projects were listed, the report did not cover the resources that were aligned to larger projects such as the Natural Environment Charity Review and Digital Transformation. Officers confirmed that they would review this further.

A Member noted that such cross-cutting changes had not been included previously because they were awaiting the outcome of the Natural Environment Charity Review, and the papers would need to be revised following that review. Officers commented that the Natural Environment Charity Review would provide the opportunity to consider the 2025/26 annual reports importance as a stakeholder document and how it reflected the work of the charities.

Members emphasised the importance of clearly outlining that there was a flight path for improving the annual report. They noted that the structural improvements suggested in recent years would need to be incorporated in due course.

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

8. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**
There were no questions on matters relating the work of the Committee.

9. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT.**
There was no other business that the Chair considered urgent.

10. **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.

11. **NON PUBLIC MINUTES**

RESOLVED – That, the non-public minutes of the previous meeting held on 3 July 2025 be agreed as a correct record of the meeting.

12. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**
There were no questions on matters relating the work of the Committee.

13. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**
The Chair raised one item of urgent business in non-public session.

The meeting ended at 10.49am.

Chairman

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