

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Natural Environment Board	Dated: 29/1/2026
Subject: Environment Department high-level Business Plan 2026-30	Public report: For Decision
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes • provides statutory duties • provides business enabling functions 	Corporate Plan Outcomes: Diverse engaged communities; Vibrant thriving destination; Providing excellent services; Flourishing public spaces; Leading sustainable environment Business enabling functions: Business Planning; Resource allocation and management; Risk Management; Health and Safety; EEDI.
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
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Summary

This report presents for approval the Environment Department's high-level Business Plan 2026-30. The Business Plan sets out the Department's priority workstreams for 2026-30 along with the specific actions and targets which will be undertaken in 2026/27 to deliver each one. For ease of governance and reporting, the department's workstreams have been separated into sections, each containing information relevant to a specific Committee or Committees. The remaining content of the plan relates to the Environment Department as whole.

The Business Plan presented at Appendix A contains Section C which provides an overview of the top-level strategic workstreams of the service areas which fall within the remit of the Natural Environment Board, i.e. the Natural Environment Division and City Gardens. Once approved, the Business Plan will be adopted from April 2026.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- i. Note the factors taken into consideration in compiling the Environment Department's high-level Business Plan 2026-30; and
- ii. Approve, subject to the incorporation of any changes sought by this Committee, the elements of the Environment Department's high-level Business Plan 2026-30 (Appendix A), which fall within the remit of the Natural Environment Board.

Main Report

Background

1. Each year, every City of London department produces a standardised high-level Business Plan, in alignment with the corporate business planning process. In 2025, the Environment Department was one of two pathfinder departments to transition from a single-year to a multi-year Business Plan which covered 2025-30. The Plan set out the Department's priority workstreams for 2025-30 and the specific actions which would be undertaken to deliver those workstreams in 2025/26.
2. The Environment Department's Business Plan has now been reviewed and refreshed for 2026-30. The majority of the workstreams are still relevant and remain unchanged, but the actions under each workstream have been updated for 2026/27. Performance measures and targets have also been reviewed and refined where possible. The end date of the Business Plan remains 2030 to align with the duration of the Corporate Plan 2024-29.
3. The high-level Business Plan 2026-30 aligns to our Corporate Plan 2024-2029 and demonstrates how the department's work supports delivery of the Corporate Plan outcomes. It also indicates the estimated funding and people resources associated with each priority workstream. As a high-level plan, this document does not capture the granularity of departmental work but gives an overall picture of departmental activity, trends where applicable and direction of travel.
4. Detailed five-year business plans for each of the Natural Environment charities are in place alongside the high-level Business Plan; these charity business plans are approved by, and performance is reported to, the relevant Charity Management Committee.

Environment Department high-level Business Plan for 2026-30

5. This report presents, at Appendix A, the high-level Business Plan for 2026-30 for the services of the Environment Department which fall within the remit of the Natural Environment Board, ie:
 - The Natural Environment Division
 - City Gardens
6. The Business Plan sets out the priority workstreams for 2026-30 and the actions that will be undertaken in 2026/27 to deliver them. The Plan will be reviewed and refreshed annually to detail the actions for the following year.
7. The priority workstreams are as listed below with a brief description of each one. The first three workstreams reflect the Natural Environment Strategies.

a) Nature conservation and resilience (incl. climate mitigation and adaptation).

This workstream includes a wide range of actions across all sites to protect and enhance the biodiversity and resilience of our green spaces. Delivery of the workstream directly supports the Corporate Plan outcome 'leading sustainable environment' as well as the Climate Action Strategy's Carbon Removals Project. Actions also contribute to the mitigation of the Natural Environment Cross-Divisional risks associated with extreme weather and climate change; pests and diseases; and wildlife management.

b) Access and recreation

This workstream focuses on providing welcoming and accessible open spaces which benefit public health and wellbeing, while balancing the impacts of visitor pressure with the protection and maintenance of the sites and assets for the future. It supports the Corporate Plan outcomes 'flourishing public spaces' and 'diverse engaged communities'. Actions contribute to the mitigation of risks associated with negative impacts of visitor pressure and the effects of anti-social behaviour.

c) Culture, heritage and learning

Actions within this workstream aim to provide more opportunities for children to engage in outdoor play and learning. Also to protect, enhance and promote our built heritage, landscape heritage and archaeological assets and promote them as part of our visitor and learning offers. The workstream supports several of the Corporate Plan outcomes, including 'diverse engaged communities', 'flourishing public spaces', and 'leading sustainable environment'.

d) Develop a sustainable business model

This workstream is linked to the Natural Environment Charities Review, improving financial security for the charities and ensuring compliance with charity law. Other actions include the identification and maximisation of

fundraising opportunities; and improved utilisation, maintenance and sustainability of built assets. Delivery of the workstream supports the mitigation of risks associated with uncertainty of the future funding model; budget pressures; and decline in condition of assets.

e) City Gardens: Effectively manage the green spaces within the Square Mile

Actions within this workstream will ensure the provision of well-maintained and accessible green spaces within the Square Mile which can be enjoyed by everyone. It supports the Corporate Plan outcomes 'flourishing public spaces', 'vibrant thriving destination', and 'providing excellent services'.

Prioritisation and alignment to Corporate Plan 2024-29

8. The Environment Department's priority workstreams were identified by the Department's Senior Leaders and their management teams, in consultation with other members of staff. The establishment of these core workstreams enables management teams to set appropriate objectives and action plans to achieve the overarching goals during the years ahead.
9. The workstreams were selected to reflect key strategic priorities. They demonstrate how the department supports delivery of the Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes and other cross-cutting strategies, programmes and priority projects, such as Destination City and the Climate Action Strategy, as well as the statutory duties of the services. However, due to the high-level nature of the Plan, the workstreams do not include all elements of the teams' work; there is a significant amount of 'business as usual' activity that will continue alongside the priority workstreams.

Synergies and collaboration

10. Each workstream is linked to corporate priorities. Other corporate strategies, programmes and projects are referenced throughout.
11. Colleagues are working collaboratively to identify synergies and opportunities to work together across the department and the wider organisation and continue to develop opportunities for improvement. All projects and programmes will adhere to the new corporate P3 Project Framework.
12. The front and back pages of the Plan contain information which relates to the whole of the Environment Department and these pages are being presented to all Committees along with the relevant Committee-specific workstream section.
13. As a key enabling function, the Department's Business Services Division works to align common processes and procedures to achieve consistency and effectiveness. This Division leads cross-departmentally on areas including business planning; risk management; health and safety; workforce planning; Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion; communications and engagement; information and data management; and GIS mapping.

Resources utilised

14. As part of a pilot prioritisation exercise which began in 2024/25, every City Corporation department has again been required to include an estimation of the budget and people resource associated with each workstream. These figures are expressed as percentages of the overall revenue budget and Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff.
15. It has not been possible to determine accurate allocation of financial or people resources for each workstream; very few are discrete projects with specific budgets, and very few members of staff spend specific proportions of their time on one workstream. Therefore, the figures shown in the Business Plan are very much estimates. Should this exercise be repeated in future years, accurate methodology will need to be designed and applied to ensure consistency across and within departments.

Performance measurement

16. Progress made against priority workstreams is assessed by monitoring key performance measures and achievement of milestones. Performance is reviewed regularly by Directors and their Management Teams and is reported to the Natural Environment Board every six months to enable Member scrutiny. The Town Clerk's Executive Leadership Board also reviews the progress of every department's Business Plan workstreams and performance measures on a quarterly basis.
17. The priority workstreams identified in this high-level Business Plan are part of the 'golden thread' that flows through the charity business plans and the individual performance plans of members of staff, all of which provide further methods of assessing progress. This also enables individual officers to fully understand how their work feeds into charity, divisional, departmental and corporate activities, aims and objectives.

Departmental Operational Property Assets Utilisation Assessment

18. The Environment Department's staff are based across 25 sites throughout London and the south-east. The Department holds approximately 340 physical assets, almost 270 of which are at its Natural Environment sites.
19. As part of the Corporation's Operational Property Review Programme, the Department has undertaken a detailed utilisation assessment of all allocated operational property assets beyond Guildhall. A separate detailed utilisation assessment of accommodation allocated to the Environment Department within the Guildhall complex was undertaken over a four-week period in November 2025. The results of both exercises have been returned to the City Surveyor's Department.
20. Over the coming year, we will continue to work in partnership with the City Surveyor's Department to review, assess and progress essential repairs and maintenance to our physical assets. In addition, work will continue to produce a comprehensive departmental Asset Plan which will enable effective management and development of these assets to ensure they add value to the organisation

and the natural environment charities while being fit for purpose, well maintained, and safe for our staff and service users.

Corporate and Strategic Implications

Strategic implications - The Environment Department's high-level Business Plan is aligned to Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes. There are common themes woven throughout the Business Plan which highlight its contribution and commitment to the delivery of the Corporate Plan, Destination City, the Climate Action Strategy, the People Strategy and other key cross-cutting programmes and projects. Any new strategies will be reviewed as they are approved, and consideration given as to how the services can and will support their delivery.

Security implications - None

Financial implications - The high-level Business Plan has been produced in liaison with Chamberlain's Department and the Natural Environment Charities Review team. It takes into consideration opportunities to reduce expenditure and increase income to make necessary savings, and the need to develop a sustainable business model for the charities under the new grant-funding model.

Equalities implications and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) - The Department has an established Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EEDI) Working Group. The Group has developed a Departmental EEDI Plan which aligns with the Corporate EDI Plan. Members of the Group lead on a range of EEDI actions, including those set out in the Business Plan, to ensure compliance with the PSED across the department.

Resourcing implications - Any changes to resources will be brought to the relevant Committee(s).

Risk Implications - The risk management processes in place in the Environment Department support the delivery of the Corporate Plan, our Departmental and Divisional Business Plans and relevant Corporate strategies. Risk management is an integral factor in the business planning process, with several of the priority workstreams delivering actions which will contribute to the mitigation of risks. Risks to achieving the objectives set out in the Business Plan are identified and managed in accordance with the City of London Risk Management Framework and the requirements of the Charity Commission where relevant.

Climate Implications - The work of the Natural Environment Division and City Gardens team supports the delivery of the Corporate Climate Action Strategy through delivery of relevant workstreams; updates on progress are reported to this Board throughout the year.

Conclusion

This report presents, for consideration and approval, the high-level Business Plan for 2026-30 for the services of the Environment Department which fall within the remit of the Natural Environment Board. Once approved, the Plan will be updated in line with any changes requested by the Board and will be adopted in April 2026.

Appendices

- Appendix A – Environment Department high-level Business Plan 2026-30

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