

HAMPSTEAD HEATH CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 13 January 2026

Minutes of the meeting of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee held at Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Tuesday, 13 January 2026 at 5.30 pm

Present

Members:

William Upton (Acting Chairman)
John Arnoldi, Heath Hands
Nick Bradfield, Dartmouth Park Conservation Area Advisory Committee (attended virtually)
John Etheridge, South End Green Association (attended virtually)
Victoria Eze, Mansfield Conservation Area Advisory Committee
Colin Gregory, Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents' Association
Michael Hammerson, Highgate Society (attended virtually)
Dr Gaye Henson, Marylebone Birdwatching Society (attended virtually)
Ella Mitchell, Hampstead Rugby Club (attended virtually)
Helen Payne, Friends of Kenwood (attended virtually)
Susan Rose, Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee (attended virtually)
Richard Sumray, London Council for Sport and Recreation
Jeff Waage, Heath & Hampstead Society
John Weston, Hampstead Conservation Area Advisory Committee
Michele Martin Williams, Vale of Heath Society

Officers:

Jack Joslin
Joseph Smith
Lisa Ward
Katie Stewart
Susannah Behr
Emily Brennan
Jo Hurst
Andrew Impey
William LoSasso
Jonathan Meares
Charlotte Williams
Zoe Williams

- City Bridge Foundation
- Corporate Strategy & Performance
- Corporate Strategy & Performance
- Executive Director, Environment
- Environment Department
- Town Clerk's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Chairman Gregory Jones, Alethea Silk and Liz Andrew.

The Acting Chairman welcomed Victoria Eze, recently appointed Member, to the Committee.

The Acting Chairman noted the Committee's thanks to Officers Andrew Impey and Jonathan Meares, who were leaving the City Corporation.

2. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

There were no declarations.

3. MINUTES

a. **Draft minutes of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee**

A Member noted a text omission on Page 10 of the minutes which would mean the corrected sentence as: "*there was a governance structure whereby decisions for the charity were made by the City Corporation, there may be a perception that charity was not entirely separate from the corporation.*"

The Highgate Society representative requested that their comment on page 12 of the minutes be amended as follows: "*The Highgate Society noted the negative coverage this had received in local media and asked about the response the City Corporation had provided to this.*"

RESOLVED – That, the public minutes and non-public summary of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee held on 17 November 2025, subject to the text corrections for Page 10 and 12, were agreed as a correct record of the meeting.

b. **Draft minutes of the Hampstead Heath Sports Advisory Forum**

The London Council for Sport and Recreation (LCSR) Representative provided a brief update on the Hampstead Heath Sports Advisory Forum.

RESOLVED – That, the public minutes and non-public summary of the Hampstead Heath Sports Advisory Forum held on 18 November 2025 be noted.

c. **Matters Arising**

The Acting Chairman asked for an update on the absence of the December Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee minutes from the meeting papers. The Town Clerk responded that they were unable to produce the minutes in time for publication, but they would be circulated to Members following the meeting as well as included with the papers for the next Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee meeting scheduled for 21 April 2026.

Officers provided an update on a report considered by the Finance Committee requesting approval of the principles of the Grant Funding Model and re-baselined budgets. They commented that this was approved in principle, subject to detailed business cases. Officers confirmed that the Committee would receive a paper on the budget for comment via email, when this was sent to the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee.

4. ASSISTANT DIRECTORS REPORT

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment which provided Members with an update on matters relating to Hampstead Heath since the last update to committee of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee (16 September 2025) and the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood, and Queen's Park Committee (21 October 2025).

Regarding the Camden Nature Corridor project, Officers provided an update and the representative of the Heath and Hampstead Society noted that while this was occurring outside of Hampstead Heath, it aimed to strengthen the biodiversity and natural habitats around Parliament Hill, in advance of the estimated increase in population in the area over the next 15 years.

Members and Officers discussed Heath Extension issues concerning facilities changing rooms and on-going detection of Legionella, budgetary funding constraints and options related to additional Hampstead Heath usage. Officers explained that once the City Surveyor's Department had provided information on the cost of the options, these could be presented to the Committee for further discussion. Members expressed that option 5 in the report, to decommission the entire building, was the least desirable.

The Hampstead Rugby Club representative noted that once costs were known, they could consider funding opportunities that may be available through the Rugby Football Union.

The Friends of Kenwood representative requested an update on work at the Sandpit in Hampstead Heath. Officers responded that the CIL grant had been approved, they were working with the London Borough of Barnet to finalise the necessary documents and they aimed to have it completed within the calendar year. They noted they could not confirm a start date on the works while the documents were being finalised.

In response to a query about Wates' donation to improve the Learning Team Adventure Playground, Officers explained that each year the company chose a charity to work with and the City Corporation had been chosen on this occasion.

Concerning the anticipated update to signage, the Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents' Association (HGSRA) noted that it would be important for the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee to have input into such matters. Officers confirmed that they would take this into consideration and would return to the Consultative Committee with an update in due course.

The Member also noted their concern about the City Surveyor's projected overspend for the financial year on reactive maintenance works and queried how this interacted with the Cyclical Works Programme backlog that was being addressed. The London Council for Sports and Recreation (LCSR) representative queried how this would be addressed in future years when other urgent requirements arise.

The LCSR representative also raised concern about how the current level of Constabulary on Hampstead Heath could effectively manage the recurring issues, while also being prepared to address any reactive issues. The Executive Director, Environment confirmed that the Superintendent had raised such considerations as part of the baseline budget for the next financial year. Officers agreed that visibility of Constabulary on the Heath was important and noted they would welcome additional Constables if the resources could be found. However, in the meantime the Constabulary was doing their best to have visible patrols while doing targeted work on issues such as cycling and unlicensed commercial dog walking.

The Highgate Society representative raised a question concerning the statement that London's residents had the least amount of green space per person in any region. With London also described as an exceptionally green city, with pressure on green spaces and Greenbelt areas, the Member queried where the information was sourced from. Officers responded to the Member that London was mainly a very urban region, and most other regions were semi-urban and rural but would contact colleagues to confirm information sources. Regarding a statement about the number of bats recorded at Hampstead Heath, the Member queried whether there had been a decline. Officers confirmed they would consider this and respond to the Member in due course.

Regarding the review of potential sauna provision referenced in the five-year business plan report in item 8, the representative from the South End Green Association reported that both the Men's Pond and Ladies' Pond expressed concerns about the possible installation of a sauna and were opposed to the proposal. Officers clarified that no decisions have been made and that the reference in the business plan simply related to exploring options at this stage.

The Acting Chairman requested an update on the planning application process concerning huts and the new leisure management system. Officers advised that discussions had taken place with all Swimming user groups, with a final design submitted to Camden Planning department in December 2025, with a statutory response deadline set for 10 February 2026 for two new kiosks (men's pond and mixed pond). The new leisure management booking system was due to go live in March/April 2026. Timber cladding would be applied to the kiosks as per requests from swimmers and user groups.

The Acting Chairman acknowledged the high-interest matter concerning the Hampstead Heath cafes submitted and requested a summary update.

Officers explained that following a competitive process, there was considerable time spent reviewing the proposals and subsequent discussions with the Committee. Discussions were ongoing with the incoming operator on the provision of a temporary service. Works were required on building interiors and exterior, with exterior improvements to be completed by the City Surveyor's Department through the Cyclical Works Programme. Officers noted that the incoming operator had been engaging with a number of stakeholders and groups to prepare for the transition.

The Hampstead Conservation Area Advisory Committee representative expressed concern about whether the appointed operator would be the right fit for the Cafes on Hampstead Heath. Officers noted that the operator had a range of different cafes, and some of the offerings at these establishments, such as bottomless brunches, would not be provided on Hampstead Heath. They noted that the operator had been clear that they would be creating cafes that were each unique to Hampstead Heath and they had opened an online forum to engage with the local community and receive feedback about what they would like to see from these cafes.

The LCSR representative noted it should be clear that the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee was not responsible for the final decision that had been made on the cafes. The Member expressed their belief that communication about this process should have occurred earlier, and this communication gap had led to unhelpful misunderstandings and further complication. They also noted it would be important for the outgoing operators to be treated fairly in the transition and given as much support as possible, given the good service they had provided for many years.

The LCSR representative queried whether the current café operators would have been disadvantaged in the process from not being able to demonstrate success in other high-volume locations. Officers confirmed there was no disadvantage and clarified that the paragraph the Member referred to simply stated that the incoming operator had experience in accommodating high-volume locations.

The Acting Chair acknowledged that while most of the outgoing operators were working collaboratively with Daisy Green in the transition, communications with one of the operators had been challenging. In response to a query about the transition, Officers confirmed that Daisy Green was interested in retaining existing staff where possible and encouraged their conversations with the existing operators.

In response to a query from the Vale of Heath Society representative, Officers confirmed that they had contacted all outgoing operators. The Committee were informed of potential legal proceedings from café operators which could not be elaborated on in the public session of the meeting.

The Vale of Health Society representative expressed concern that the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee had not been appropriately consulted during the process. They stated their view that the process should be paused to allow for further consultation to take place. The Executive Director, Environment confirmed that the Consultative Committee had been engaged in the process and setting the outcomes to be achieved in the process. They noted that it would not be typical to engage the Members in the delivery of the procurement as that was the responsibility of Officers. The Executive Director confirmed that the procurement process was done in the correct way and any challenges to this would be handled through the appropriate channels. The Acting Chairman noted that it had been declared at the start there was a competitive bidding process and that was the structure that was followed.

In response to a question of clarification from the Highgate Society representative, the Acting Chairman confirmed that while Officers reviewed the bids, the final decision appointing the Hampstead Heath Cafes operator was made by the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the report and its contents.

5. HEATH HANDS UPDATE

The Committee received a brief Heath Hands Activity Update from John Arnoldi, representative of Heath Hands.

The Heath Hands representative confirmed that they intended to continue to open the Heath Information Hut on weekends, however there would be a short period over the winter where it would not be open. Officers added that the information hit had been a popular addition to Hampstead Heath and noted their thanks to Heath Hands for their work on it.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the report and its contents.

6. HAMPSTEAD HEATH PONDS - VERBAL UPDATE

The Committee received a verbal update from Officers of the Environment Department about the Hampstead Heath Ponds.

Officers noted that the public consultation process was closed on 25 November 2025 with just under 40,000 responses received. A final report was received with an additional report of various focus groups. They noted that it was likely an additional meeting would be scheduled for 10 February 2026 to discuss the access arrangements for the Ponds. An internal meeting would ascertain whether a second extraordinary meeting would be required, and the Committee would be informed of the outcome of this.

The Acting Chairman asked whether the 10 February meeting would be limited to reporting on the consultation or an opportunity for discussions. Officers responded the meeting was primarily an opportunity for clarification, to review the data and to make comments.

The Heath and Hampstead Society representative expressed surprise at the number of respondents (40,000) and requested clarity on who the responses came from. Officers stated the expectation was greater than 40,000 due to the potential for global responses, and not just from the UK. Focus groups were utilised to ensure responses from swimming communities and there was additional category analysis undertaken to identify the origin of responses.

Members asked for clarity on what was expected of the Committee if a second extraordinary meeting concerning the public consultation was needed. Officers advised that they would be meeting with City Solicitors to receive legal advice to help determine actions for the second meeting. They assured Members that the intention regardless was to continue to engage with the Committee.

The Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents' Association representative asked about how the timing of guidance issued from the Equalities and Human Rights Commission and City Corporation's broader review of its gender identity policy

would affect the review of access to the Hampstead Heath Ponds. The Executive Director, Environment responded that the consultation was one element of this review and there were other factors to be considered. They noted that the City Corporation's gender identity policy was being reviewed in tandem but this would not impact the detail considered through the review of the ponds access arrangements. Officers were not aware of when EHRC guidance would be issued but confirmed it would be taken into account if there were any implications.

In response to a query about the start time of the possible meeting on 10 February, the Town Clerk responded that meeting details were still to be finalised after the process meetings had occurred with the Environment and City Solicitor's Departments.

7. BUDGET 2026/27 - VERBAL UPDATE

The Committee received a verbal update from Officers of the Chamberlain's and Environment Departments on the Hampstead Heath Revenue and Capital Budgets 2026/27.

Officers informed the Committee of proposals submitted to the Finance Committee which asked for approval of the principles of the grant-funding model, as well as approval for a re-baselined budget. Officers noted that there was an in-principle approval to the re-baselined budget figured, subject to the provision of detailed business cases.

In response to queries from Members, Officers acknowledged that there were Budget pressures on the City Fund as well as City Estates, but working closely with Chamberlain colleagues, the intention was to deliver safe and effective operations within compliance. They noted that there was significant understaffing in some areas that additional funding would alleviate, but this would be part of wider budget considerations. A final paper would be produced and circulated to Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee Members as soon as it was available.

The Executive Director, Environment noted that the Finance Committee acknowledged the challenges at Hampstead Heath which had previously been identified by Members.

The Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents' Association representative raised concerns on issues surrounding the safety and future security of Hampstead Heath and the effects on the environment caused by increased numbers of people and whether funding would be sufficient to enable Hampstead Heath to be properly maintained going forward. Officers advised that consideration had been given to the concerns described as there were legal requirements to maintain these sites in good condition, so those were factors that had been considered in this process.

8. FIVE-YEAR BUSINESS PLAN (HAMPSTEAD HEATH)

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment which provided an updated draft of the five-year business plan for Hampstead Heath.

Officers provided a brief overview of the five-year business plan which would evolve over the coming years to allow for strategic long-term arrangements as the charity review and funding models became clear.

The LCSR representative raised the issue of the absence of the development of a new strategy for 2028/29, as the previous one was produced in 2018. The Member also noted that increased footfall should also be considered as this had increased drastically and consideration should be given to the potential overuse of Hampstead Heath. They also noted that other items in the business plan such as park run, future events, wildfires, sauna usage, padel and unauthorised access to the ponds required further detail and improvement.

On the question whether future projects identified as requiring external funding would involve any funding from the local risk budget, Officers noted that any external funding required for projects would be considered well in advance to determine if they could proceed. Officers confirmed that core operations would not be funded externally.

At this stage, the Committee agreed to extend the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 39.

The Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents' Association representative asked how the Business Plan was used to generate priorities and how this worked in practice. Officers replied that, over time, the intention was to capture all essential areas and also recognise that some new workstreams and projects could become business as usual. They explained that the Business Plan was used as a reporting and management document internally to measure what had been completed in a year and whether Officers are on target. As a strategy-rich organisation, Officers explained that the Business Plan was structured to act as a delivery-vehicle for the strategies.

RESOLVED – That Members:

- Reviewed the five-year business plan provided at Appendix 1 and provided comments.

9. SENIOR OFFICERS RECRUITMENT

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment which outlined the process for recruiting a new Deputy Director for the Natural Environment Division, following the resignation of the previous postholder.

RESOLVED – That Members:

- Noted the report.
- Endorsed the recruitment plan for the Deputy Director, including interim arrangements and committee involvement.

10. FUNDRAISING OVERVIEW FOR NORTH LONDON OPEN SPACES (HAMPSTEAD HEATH)

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment which provided Members with an overview on the development of a fundraising and partnerships strategy for North London Open Spaces (Hampstead Heath).

The HGSRA representative noted that it would be important to give the Head of Development and Partnerships space to do the necessary work and become familiar the local audience and context of Hampstead Heath.

The LCSR representative commended the report overall and noted that it would likely lead to discussions about future commercial income and the amount derived from Hampstead Heath. They noted that it was likely that capital would be the area with most success in fundraising and the pergola would be a good starting point for a major capital bid.

The Highgate Society representative queried whether Chairs of local organisations including the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee could be involved further in the consultation process. Officers responded funders were typically very interested in their audience, so it was important in ascertaining their feedback.

The Heath and Hampstead Society representative noted that the Officer's role in generating both voluntary and commercial income would require a careful balance. Regarding match funding they noted that it had advantages as it would be helpful in promoting the City Corporation's interests but also contribute to the perception of the Charity's independence from the City Corporation.

The Mansfield Conservation Area Advisory Committee representative expressed concern that the recent negative coverage the City Corporation had received regarding the cafes could impact fundraising pursuits.

In response to a query from the Vale of Health representative, Officers acknowledged that recognition would be important in some instances, but this could also be done where appropriate through routes other than signage.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the report and its contents.

11. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE
There were no questions.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT
There was no urgent business.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Town Clerk noted the date of the additional meeting concerning the Hampstead Heath Pond was likely to be 10 February 2026, and the next Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee formal meeting date was 21 April 2026.

14. 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, Page 14 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.

15. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

- a. To agree the non-public minutes of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee held on 17 November 2025**

RESOLVED – That, the non-public minutes of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee held on 17 November 2025 were agreed as a correct record of the meeting.

- b. Matters arising**

One matter was discussed.

16. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT COMPLEMENTARY LAND USE ASSESSMENT

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Environment.

17. NON-PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

There were no questions.

18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED

No other business was discussed.

The meeting ended at 8.33pm.

Chairman

Contact Officer: Zoe Williams
Zoe.Williams@cityoflondon.gov.uk