



Open Spaces

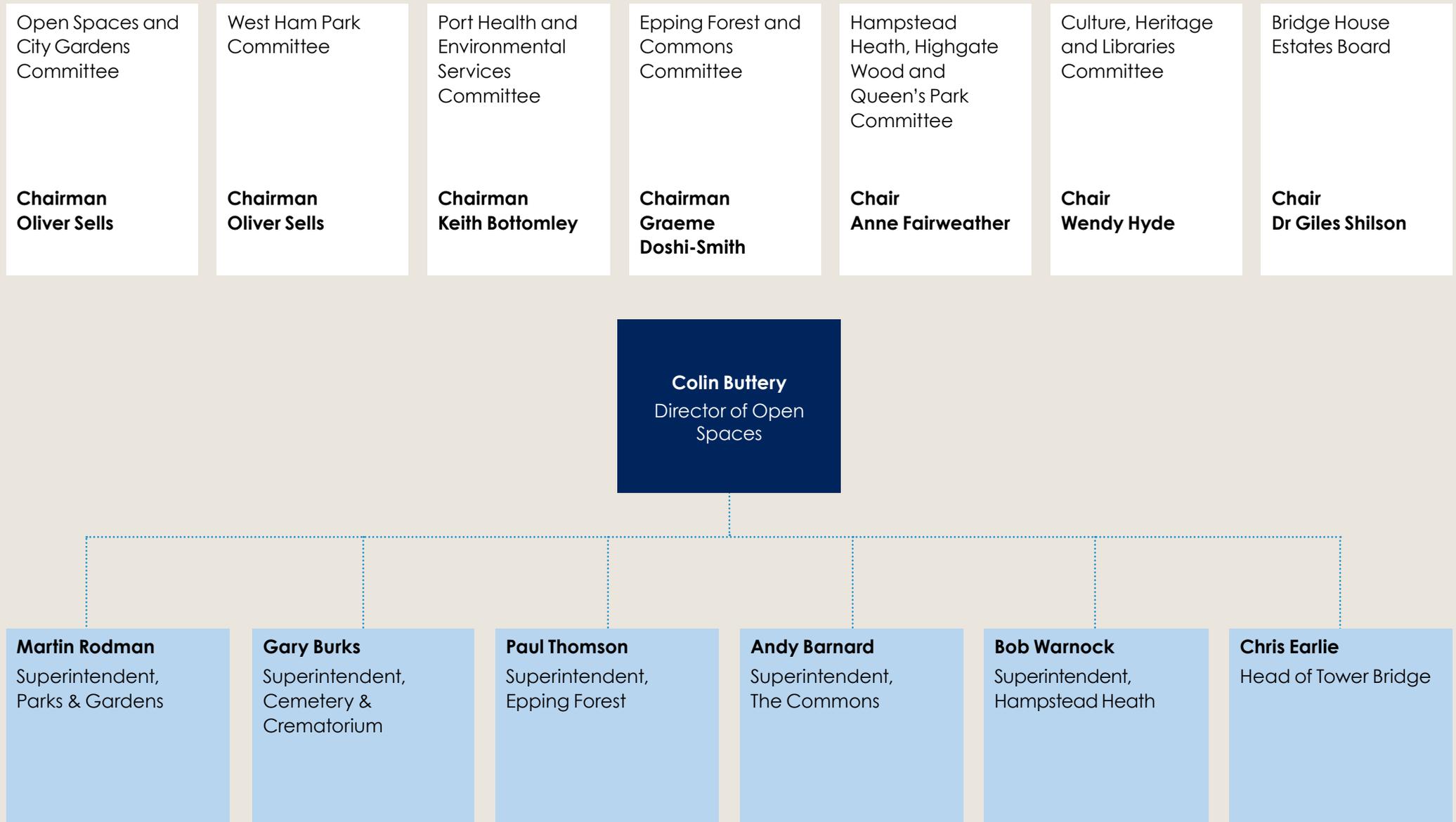
Registered Charity

Open Spaces Department 2021-2022

www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/greenspaces

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Organisational structure



Correct as of June 2021

The Open Spaces Department enriches people's lives by enhancing and providing access to 4,500 hectares of diverse open space across London and beyond, including outstanding heritage assets.

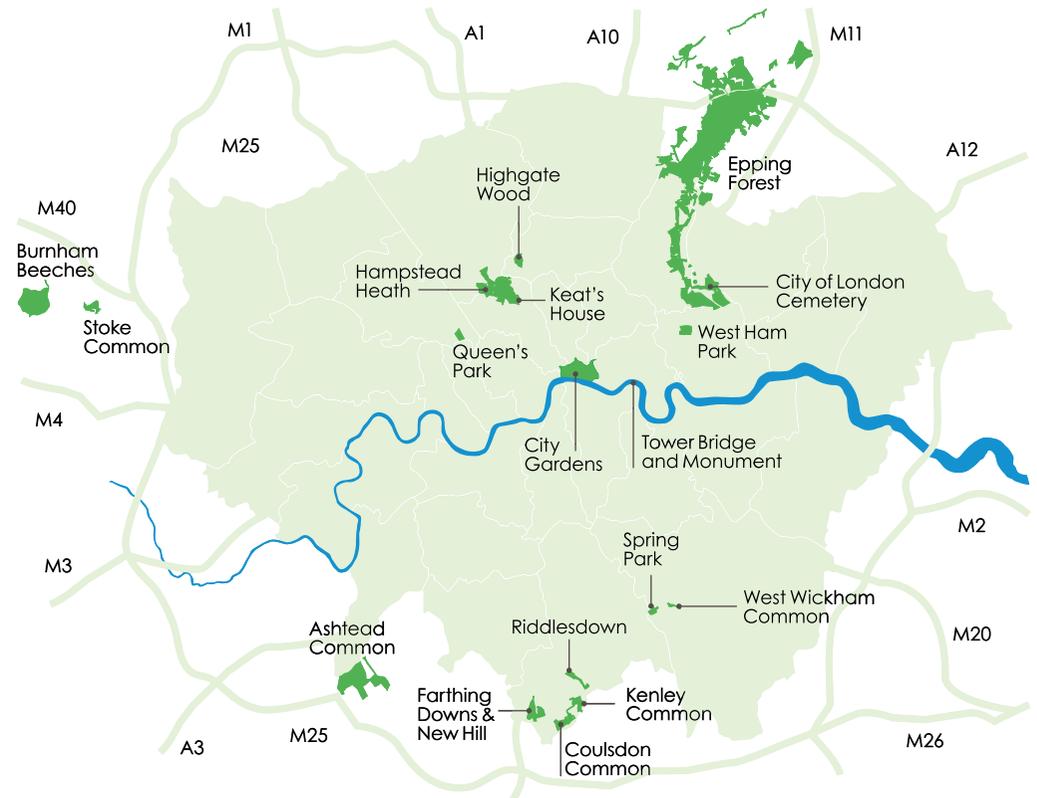
Every year millions of people visit our sites. Our award-winning open spaces range from the National Nature Reserve of Burnham Beeches in Buckinghamshire, Epping Forest – London's largest open space and Hampstead Heath with its amazing views, rolling woodlands and meadows. Also, Keats House Museum, home of Romantic poet John Keats, Tower Bridge one of London's most iconic landmarks and The Monument with its 311 steps and 360-degree panoramic views of London.

Our Cemetery and Crematorium in East London with its Grade I listed landscape is one of the largest and busiest in London. Our parks in Newham (West Ham Park), Brent (Queen's Park) and

Camden (Golders Hill Park) provide facilities for all ages, including playgrounds, sports facilities and tranquil areas with beautiful planting. Whilst in the City, our network of gardens, churchyards, parks, plazas and highway planting provide areas of rest for residents, workers and visitors as well as an important habitat for wildlife within the urban landscape.

Most of these sites are run as charitable trusts and have won a range of prestigious awards including 15 green flags and 13 green heritage awards.

We enhance, protect, conserve and promote the use and enjoyment of the open spaces and heritage attractions for public recreation, health and well-being.



Providing engaging visitor opportunities where people can learn and discover, where nature and heritage are understood and valued. Most of our sites include a wide variety of important wildlife habitats, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Areas of Conservation and National Nature Reserves.



Cattle grazing at Wanstead Flats
© City of London Corporation

Coronavirus Pandemic

2020/21 was an exceptional year. The Coronavirus pandemic saw the country enter national lockdowns with travel restricted; businesses, public facilities and visitor attractions closed, and people required to social distance. Our green spaces played a crucial role in keeping the population well, both mentally and physically. In London, many people's homes have limited outdoor space, so our parks, heaths and forests became saviours, havens and lifelines for millions during the national health crisis with many of our sites reporting a three-fold increase in visitor numbers.



This difficult year presented many challenges. To ensure the health and safety of our staff and visitors; many operational changes were necessary, whether that was staff working from home or in COVID secure workplaces with work bubbles or amended work rotas with varying work hours. A consequence of the dramatic increase in visitor numbers is the negative long-term impact across our sites on our infrastructure and the environment's habitats and biodiversity.

Like thousands of other heritage and cultural institutions across the country Tower Bridge, Monument and Keats House were hugely affected from being closed for many months.

During these times of adversity, we seized the opportunity to remain positive and well connected with our visitors by engaging with them in creative, educational and fun ways through all our digital platforms.



The City of London Cemetery and Crematorium remained open to the public throughout the pandemic for burials, cremations and as an open space. During the particularly busy periods, staff undertook alternative duties to ensure the core services were provided. At different points during the year, up to three times the normal number of cremations and burials were taking place as the first and second waves of the pandemic peaked. Over the year there was a 23% increase in burials and a 18% increase in cremations in comparison to averages of previous years.

During the easing of the pandemic restrictions, reopening of various sporting facilities saw a record number of bookings. The reopening of tennis courts in May 2020 at West Ham Park

after the first lockdown saw a huge demand with an increase of 111% usage during the first month, compared to the same time last year.

During the pandemic there were huge pressures on staff that were able to work. The assistance of volunteers, when regulations allowed, was very much appreciated, in particular those who helped pick the enormous amount of litter that was left scattered across our sites. The professionalism and resilience of our teams have been a true testament to our work culture and ethics.

Above:
Mixed bathing pond Hampstead Heath
© City of London Corporation

Left:
People enjoying the glass floor at Tower Bridge
© City of London Corporation

Key achievements in 2020/21

Carbon reduction project to be delivered by Open Spaces, initially focussing at Epping Forest is one of the themes of the COL's Climate Action Strategy. Capital and revenue funding have been awarded for two areas:



Sequestration study and land management



Land management and the resulting agricultural products

The target is to increase carbon sequestration capacity, ecosystem services and biodiversity by 2027, from the 2020 baselines.

During 2020-21 we launched some great open spaces and heritage attraction donation campaigns to improve, enhance and protect our iconic sites.

Campaigns include:

The ancient trees project at Burnham Beeches

Model Boating Pond Island - wildlife sanctuary at Hampstead Heath

West Ham Park's playground improvements

Queen's Park sand pit and playground improvements.

All campaigns are available on the website www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/greenspaces and people can make easily accessible online donations for the first time.

Continuation of the No Fence project at West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons to expand grazing into areas where fencing has proved difficult and expensive.



Finsbury Circus Gardens reopened at the beginning of August after 10 years.

There is currently an interim landscape in place for visitors, workers and residents to enjoy the largest open space in the Square Mile. The Finsbury Circus Garden Reinstatement Project is anticipated to be completed in 2022/23.



New Kenley Revival Project signage was installed, marking the final phase of the project. Informative, educational and interactive signage has brought the site back to life.





Deer Management Strategy for Epping Forest and management plans for The Commons were agreed by Committee.



Significant work was undertaken at Tower Bridge to reconfigure the visitor journey via a new one-way route to make visitors feel comfortable and safe as they explored the Bridge's walkways.

The Learning programme had to adapt in 2020-21 with targeted initiatives in-line with each stage of the COVID restrictions.

This included printed activity sheets delivered via food banks, activity videos for use in school playgrounds, in-school nature wellbeing workshops, outdoor wellbeing programme for groups of six, an adapted COVID-safe school programme and COVID-safe play programme.

Committee gave approval for the introduction of car parking charges within Epping Forest and new charges were introduced at Farthing Downs, Riddlesdown and Burnham Beeches.



The cremator project commenced in August, replacing four ageing cremators with one fully abating cremator. The project was completed on time and on budget with minimum disruption to services.

Acknowledging the restricted number of people that could attend funerals during the COVID-19 pandemic, live streaming was introduced at two chapels in the modern crematorium.



To comply with COVID regulations and to control participation levels, we successfully introduced online bookings and payments for activities such as outdoor swimming and athletics.



Open Spaces Department

2020/21 outturn

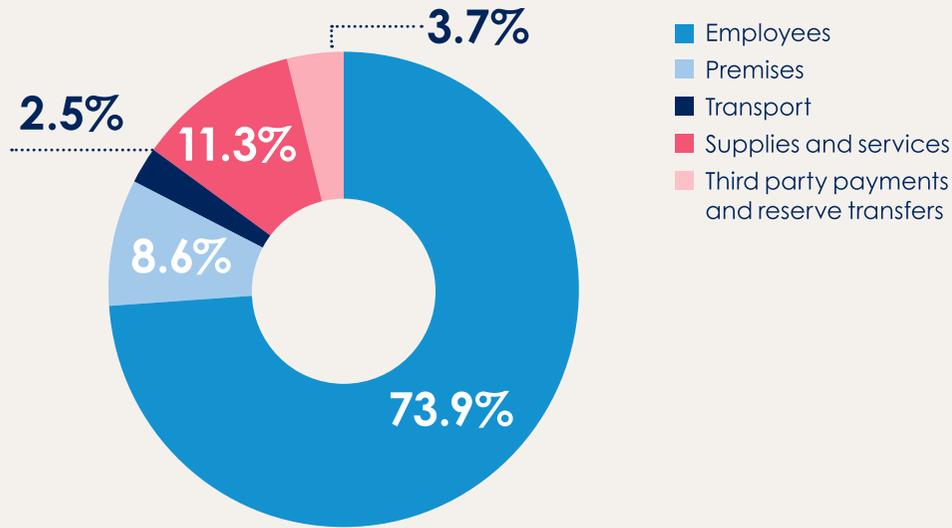
financial information

Director's local risk budget by division	(Gross expenditure) £	Gross income £	Net outturn £
Epping Forest	(4,451,438)	1,493,413	(2,958,024)
Hampstead Heath	(6,390,204)	1,713,367	(4,676,837)
West Ham Park	(1,067,216)	364,955	(702,261)
Highgate Wood & Queen's Park	(1,041,807)	137,817	(903,990)
City Gardens	(1,785,734)	574,305	(1,211,429)
Bunhill	(119,629)	0	(119,629)
Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common	(859,228)	317,599	(541,669)
City Commons	(1,312,739)	139,304	(1,173,394)
Directorate & Learning	(957,910)	6,785	(951,126)
Cemetery & Crematorium	(3,898,835)	6,976,516	3,077,681
Keats House	(351,817)	79,817	(272,000)
Tower Bridge (tourism)	(2,999,127)	1,293,513	(1,705,613)
Tower Bridge (operations)	(1,812,388)	0	(1,812,388)
Monument	(249,364)	161,205	(88,158)
Total local risk	(27,297,436)	13,258,597	(14,038,839)
Across the Department			
Central recharges	(7,582,760)	1,684,644	(5,898,116)
City Surveyors	(1,633,350)	0	(1,633,350)
Central risk	(1,656,570)	1,586,283	(70,287)
Grand total	(38,170,116)	16,529,524	(21,640,592)

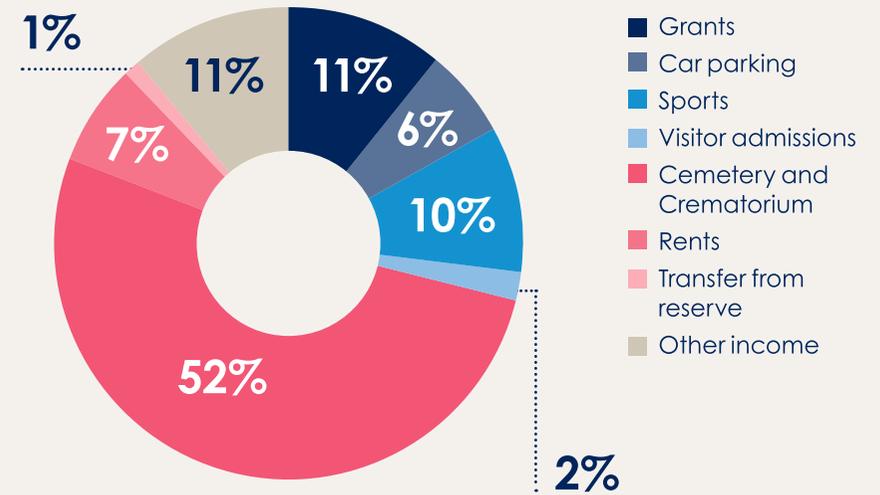
2020/21 was an unprecedented year due to the impact of Covid-19. Income in some areas decreased as our visitor attractions were closed for many months and our events programme cancelled. Sports facilities were closed but saw significant increases in participation when they were permitted to be open. Some staff were furloughed, for which grants were received from Government and there was a 19% increase in the number of burials and cremations at the Cemetery and Crematorium which resulted in income levels significantly above budget.

Across the Department expenditure was capped to help offset the reduced income. A reduced workforce capacity due to staff illness, self-isolation and shielding, meant that the Department focussed on the provision of essential services and put on hold most project work.

2020/21 Director's local risk outturn, expenditure by 'type'



2020/21 Director's local risk outturn, income by 'type'



Historical Open Spaces Department's local risk expenditure, income and net outturn

