

OPEN SPACES AND CITY GARDENS
Tuesday, 8 April 2014

Minutes of the meeting of the Open Spaces and City Gardens held at Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Tuesday, 8 April 2014 at 11.30 am

Present

Members:

Alderman Ian Luder (Chairman)
Deputy Alex Deane (Deputy Chairman)
Wendy Mead
Barbara Newman
Jeremy Simons
Graeme Smith
Deputy Michael Welbank
Alderman Gordon Haines (Ex-Officio Member)
Virginia Rounding (Ex-Officio Member)

Observers:

Verderer Peter Adams (Epping Forest & Commons Committee)
Catherine Bickmore (West Ham Park Committee)
Tony Ghilchik (Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee)

Officers:

Alistair MacLellan	- Town Clerk's Department
Lucy Frazer	- Town Clerk's Department
Alison Elam	- Group Accountant, Chamberlain's Department
Deborah Cluett	- Assistant City Solicitor, Comptroller and City Solicitor's Department
Sue Ireland	- Director of Open Spaces
Martin Rodman	- Superintendent of Parks & Gardens
Jennifer Allott	- Open Spaces Departmental Business Manager
Louisa Allen	- City Gardens Manager
Patrick Hegarty	- Open Spaces Technical Manager
Bob Meldrum	- Assistant Director, City Surveyor's Department
Roger Adams	- Senior Principal Surveyor, City Surveyor's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Deputy Robert Howard.

2. DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

There were no declarations

3. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting dated Monday 17 February be approved as a correct record subject to Deputy Stanley Ginsburg and Virginia Rounding being removed from the list of Members present.

Matters Arising

Dog Control Orders

The Director of Open Spaces updated the Committee on the progress of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill that was currently going through Parliament, noting that the report considering the application of Dog Control Orders (DCOs) under the bill would come to the Committee for consideration in June 2014.

Epping Forest Emergency Plan

The Director of Open Spaces noted that she was awaiting confirmation from the City Surveyor's Department that the Epping Forest Emergency Plan had been completed and a rehearsal arranged with the London Borough of Waltham Forest. She committed to getting confirmation on the issue as soon as possible.

4. **OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

The Committee received a list of outstanding actions.

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5. **OPEN SPACES DEPARTMENT BUSINESS PLAN 2014-2017**

The Open Spaces Department Business Manager introduced a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Open Spaces Department Business Plan 2014-17. She outlined some of the strategic objectives for 2014/15, including a review of City Churchyard management arrangements and the rollout of the Open Spaces visual identity. She noted that the rollout of the new identity had commenced with the recent publication of the Epping Forest Diary 2014/15 and would continue with the forthcoming publication of the Hampstead Heath Diary on 14 April 2014.

She went on to draw the Committee's attention to the one page summary of the business plan, which had been drawn up at the request of frontline staff. She concluded by noting that the departmental risk register had also been included in the plan, and that a new strategic risk had been added to the register concerning the impact of anti-social behaviour across the City's Open Spaces at the request of staff from West Ham Park.

Two observers attending the committee expressed concern that the Business Plan was being presented to the other open spaces management committees for information only, with one observer commenting that that this represented a 'top down' approach rather than a 'bottom up' approach to formulating policy and priorities. In response the Chairman agreed that policy was best informed by a bottom up approach and this was reflected in the fact that many of the strategic objectives within the plan before the Committee had been included after having been identified by the various open spaces management committees throughout the previous year. The Director of Open Spaces confirmed that staff across the open spaces were involved in informing

the business plan to ensure local issues were addressed effectively, and that the plan was submitted to the Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee ahead of the wider open spaces management committees to avoid delay in its timely adoption.

The two observers went on to express concern that the plan referenced projects involving Wanstead Flats and both a West Ham Park café, and the West Ham Park Nursery, despite these projects not having been discussed by the Epping Forest & Commons and the West Ham Park Committees, respectively. In reply the Chairman noted that the projects referred to were at a very early stage in the City of London's project procedure, and were by no means confirmed. He added that it was necessary to reference them in the business plan should it be determined that they were to proceed. In response to a suggestion from an observer, officers agreed to amend reference to West Ham Park Café as a 'feasibility study'.

In response to a suggestion from a member, the Open Spaces Department Business Manager agreed to reference the Hampstead Heath STEM education project to the Hampstead Heath Ponds Project strategic objective.

In response to a request from a member for consistency in terminology throughout the document, the Director of Open Spaces noted that the current plan represented a condensed version of what had been a much larger and unwieldy document and no doubt explained the inconsistency in terminology between what had previously been different papers and reports— she commended the hard work of the Open Spaces Department Business Manager in achieving this reduction and further noted that the document would be reviewed and amended further in future years as appropriate.

In response to comments from an observer and a member, the Chamberlain replied that the inconsistency in figures listed in the financial information section of the plan arose from the use of estimated figures. The Business Manager confirmed the end of year figures would be used.

RESOLVED –

- That the Open Spaces Department Business Plan 2014-17 be approved;
- That key projects and performance indicators be subject to quarterly reports to be submitted to the Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee.

6. OPEN SPACES ANNUAL REPORT

The Open Spaces Department Business Manager introduced a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Open Spaces Annual Report. She noted that currently the annual report cost £8,000 to produce each year and yet, generally, 300 copies of the 500 printed overall were not used. Therefore three options were proposed within the report, with the recommendation being that option B be adopted - an A5-sized 12 page document be produced capable of containing a single side insert detailing annual performance highlights. This would produce a saving of £16,000 over three years.

The Chairman welcomed the report, recognising the scope that existed for achieving a saving whilst making the production and distribution of the report more efficient, particularly given the important role of digital media.

A member commented that a hardcopy annual report had its uses, given it served as useful promotional material that could be handed out at events. He therefore endorsed option B. Another member concurred, but suggested that whilst size of the overall publication be reduced, the same proportion and quality of visual images be retained. A further member welcomed option B, and suggested that whilst it was useful to have portrait photographs of the Director of Open Spaces and her Superintendents within the report, arguably portrait photographs of Chairmen were not required given the shelf-life of the document and the fact Chairmen were replaced according to three year cycles.

The Chairman agreed with the members' comments, noting that option B represented the best of both worlds in securing circulation and savings. A member added that officers could put some more creative thought into ensuring the report was circulated as widely as possible.

RESOLVED –

- That the current Annual Report production process be replaced by 'Option B' - an introductory document with a shelf life of three years, of A5 size and 12 pages. The new introductory document would be supplemented by a single page insert, to be produced annually, detailing annual performance highlights and financial data.

7. PRESENTATION - OPEN SPACES HEALTH AND SAFETY ACCIDENT REPORTING

The Director of Open Spaces presented an update to the Committee on Health and Safety Accident Reporting across the Open Spaces Department. She made the following points:

- The number of reported injuries during 2013/14 had remained static compared to previous years, but the number of reported 'near-misses' had increased. This was because of improved reporting processes and greater awareness among staff.
- Examples of incidents reported included staff knee ligament injury (Hampstead Heath), a member of the public breaking their hip (Epping Forest) a contractor damaging underground cabling (West Ham Park) a contractor causing a Mobile Elevated Working Platform (MEWP) to sink into soft ground (City of London Cemetery) and a fatality (Hampstead Heath).
- Staff at Epping Forest were to be congratulated for their work to increase the reporting of 'near-misses'.
- 'Near-misses' were commonly associated with vehicles and poor work practice or equipment handling. Examples included a carabineer-failure resulting in the supply contract being cancelled (City Gardens) and a

contractor cutting roof tiles using power equipment whilst balanced on a step ladder (Epping Forest).

- Information from the last quarter included a vehicle accident (City of London Cemetery), a volunteer scratching an eye on a branch (City Commons) contractor commencing works before given approval and health and safety clearance (West Ham Park) and a staff member being threatened with a knife (West Ham Park).
- Each case reported is investigated locally and then reported to the Open Spaces Technical Manager to be shared across the other open spaces divisions as appropriate. Incidents are then discussed and reviewed at regular departmental health and safety meetings.
- Recent changes to reporting processes included the creation of distinct categories for physical and verbal abuse, and for assault; and 'near-misses' now being differentiated from damage to property.

The Chairman thanked the Director for her presentation and welcomed the fact that there was evidence for better reporting. He expressed concern at the level of incidents of physical and verbal abuse of staff and requested that liaison take place at open spaces sites with the local police.

8. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

The City Gardens Manager provided an update on recent activity across the City Gardens and made the following points:

Finance

The City Gardens budget was in line with agreed budget profiles.

Staff

A new assistant gardener would join the team at the end of April 2014.

Gardens

John Carpenter Street – Blackfriars

A new green landscaping area comprising hedging and trees had been installed using funding from J.P. Morgan.

St Andrews-Holborn

The garden was now closed and demolition work had now been completed. Hard landscaping would begin shortly and soft landscaping would commence in September 2014.

Fenchurch Plaza

A new landscaped area had been created outside Fenchurch Street Station, with hedging and trees to be installed shortly.

Bury Court

A small landscaped area near St Mary Axe (the Gherkin), including two trees, had been created.

World War I Remembrance

A poppy wildflower mix had been planted on 25 March 2014 in St Paul's Cathedral Garden by the choir school.

Friends of City Gardens and Volunteer Activities

Roof Top Survey

A roof top survey of City Gardens would take place on 27 April and 11 May beginning at 0400, overseen by Dusty Gedge and the Friends of City Gardens – ten City rooftops would be included in the survey.

Planting Workshop

The Friends would be undertaking herb planting on 27 April in the containers located on Fann Street.

Open Squares Weekend 14/15 June

The Friends would be running a plant stall and selling tea and coffee in Postman's Park as well as organising a heritage quiz at Bunhill. The City of London Guides would also be running tours of the Gardens aimed at families and young people.

Barbican Station

A 'pop up' vegetable garden would be planted in June 2014 by the Friends on a disused platform at Barbican station. The project was organised in partnership with Transport for London, and the planters had been designed pro bono by Gensler, the international landscape company. The planters would be constructed of recycled building material and sponsorship was currently being sought.

City in Bloom

The Friends were currently leading on a City in Bloom campaign on behalf of the City Gardens.

9. **LITTER MANAGEMENT IN THE CITY'S OPEN SPACES**

The City Gardens Manager introduced a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the trial replacement of litter bins in the City Gardens with recycling bins February 2013 - February 2014.

She noted that overall the trial had been a success, with some issues identified that included some contamination of recyclable waste with non-recyclable waste, increased loading times, and half-loads during winter months.

Deputy Michael Welbank departed at this point of the meeting.

In response to a question from a member, the City Gardens Manager replied that an acceptable level of contamination of recyclable waste with non-recyclable waste was around 5%-7%.

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10. **OPTIONS APPRAISAL - ST OLAVE'S CHURCHYARD, HART STREET, EC3**

The Open Spaces Technical Manager introduced a report of the Director of Open Spaces on options for the renovation of St Olave's Churchyard in Hart Street. He noted that option 1 (total funding requirement £66,000) was the preferred option.

The Chairman referenced the contribution to be made to the project by the Church and noted that an additional recommendation further to those detailed in the report – to grant the Town Clerk delegated authority to enter into an agreement with the Church authorities – would need to be resolved by the Committee.

RESOLVED –

- That Option 1 be approved for progression to Gateway 5
- That authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, for the City Solicitor to enter into an agreement with the Church authorities in order to carry out the improvement works on Church land.

11. **SENATOR HOUSE GARDEN, EC4 - DELEGATED AUTHORITY REQUEST**

The Open Spaces Technical Manager introduced a report of the Director of Open Spaces. The Chairman welcomed the report and suggested that the Committee seek to utilise the £24,000 goodwill payment from AG Senator House GP Ltd as seed funding for a City Gardens endowment fund, to secure the financial maintenance of the City Gardens in the longer term. He requested therefore that a report outlining the feasibility of such a fund be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED –

- That delegated authority be granted to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, to approve the terms of a transaction and the detailed re-landscaping proposals, once they can be reported that will enable the developer to undertake renovations to Senator House Garden at no cost to the City.
- That officers prepare a report for a future meeting of the Committee on the potential to use the £24,000 goodwill payment as seed funding for a City Gardens maintenance endowment fund.

12. **PROVISIONAL ADDITIONAL WORKS PROGRAMME 2015/16**

The City Surveyor introduced a report on proposed bids for the Additional Works Programme 2015/16, noting that the bids for 2015/16 totalled £171,700.

RESOLVED –

That the contents of the report be noted.

13. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

There were no questions.

14. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

15. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED – that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act:

Item(s) 18-20

Paragraph(s) 3

16. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2014 be approved as a correct record.

17. ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL GARDEN - MOBILE REFRESHMENT FACILITY TRIAL PERIOD

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces.

18. DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY OR URGENCY POWERS - RENNIE GARDEN

The Committee received a report of the Town Clerk.

19. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

There were no questions.

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

There was no other business.

The meeting ended at 12.37 pm

Chairman

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