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| Committee(s):   | Date(s):                    | Item no. |
| Open Spaces, City Gardens and West Ham Park   | 25 <sup>th</sup> April 2012 |          |
| Subject:<br>West Ham Park Nursery Business Plan: Progress Report 2011- 2012   | Public                      |          |
| Report of:<br>Director of Open Spaces   | For Decision                |          |
| <p><b><u>Summary</u></b></p> <p>This report is to update Members on the progress made over the past year in delivering projects set out in year two (2011– 2012) of the Nursery Business Plan.</p> <p><b>Recommendations</b></p> <p>It is recommended that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• this report is received</li> </ul> |                             |          |

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. As part of the annual review process for the Nursery Business Plan, it was agreed at your Committee on 5 February 2010 that a report is prepared each year setting out the progress made against each of the objectives and related improvement plan actions.
2. This is the second such report and will, in accordance with the Plan, form the basis for a short progress summary to this Committee each April.
3. Members will recall that the Nursery Business Plan acknowledges the past achievements, though primarily sets out a clear vision, aims, and objectives and includes the following five key objectives.
  - **Quality** – Establish SMART processes that measure and ensure that customers receive, and the Park users benefit from, value for money services and effective use of land and infrastructure.
  - **Trading** – Review and adjust trading terms and apply an innovative approach that maximises returns and opportunities from our Nursery capital assets and contributes to the objectives of the Park.
  - **Environment** – Ensure that processes and measures to reduce our impact on the environment are embedded in the Nursery’s work.
  - **Promotion** – Develop initiatives that maximise opportunities for community use and expand our client base to achieve sustained sources of income.

- **People** – Involve Members, staff, clients and the community in achieving the outcomes and requirements set out in the business plan.

### **Current Position**

4. The Nursery supplies over 200,000 annual bedding plants per annum to City of London Open Spaces. It also supplies floral decorations for City of London formal dinners and occasions (average 50 per annum). These core activities are delivered through a team of 4.8 full time equivalent employees.
5. In addition to the ‘day to day’ work carried out by the Nursery team and office staff in delivering the Nursery service, the plan sets out a wide range of projects to be delivered within the second year. To date, 91% of these projects have been completed, with acceptable reasons for non-completion of the remainder. Incomplete projects will either be deferred to the 2012/13 financial year, or will be revised to take account of business changes.
6. All the remaining projects planned for the year are in progress. A full breakdown of all the progress made against all 2011/12 projects is included in appendix A to this report.

### **General progress update**

#### Performance surveys

7. Customer satisfaction surveys completed by our clients rated the product quality and service provided by the Nursery as 90% very good and 10% good. In addition to the surveys, a number of favourable letters of appreciation and thanks were received by the nursery in recognition of the quality of displays and material provided.

#### Floral Decorations

8. The nursery team provided floral decorations for a number of high profile City events, which provides income for the Nursery. These included the state visit of the President of Turkey, HRH the Prince of Wales visit to the City of London School and decorations for The Lord Mayor’s Banquet. The team also dressed the Bankers Dinner at the Mansion House and provided flowers for the Establishment Committee Dinner.

#### Supply of Bedding Plants

9. Throughout the year, the Nursery has provided over 226,000 peat free bedding plants. In addition to the supply of plants to the Park, City Gardens and Hampstead Heath Open Spaces, we also supplied Buckingham Palace, the Middle Temple and Lincoln’s Inn gardens for the first time.

## Environment and sustainability management

10. In May 2011 the nursery installed a borehole which enables us to extract water from an underground layer of water-bearing rock. A long vertical pipe placed inside maintains stability and prevents contamination entering the borehole. Water is pumped back to the surface and stored in a 50,000 gallon header tank. We are able to draw up to 4400 gallons of water daily without the need to use mains water supplies thereby substantially reducing our costs.

## Education and Apprenticeships

11. A number of school placements, including students with special needs, assisted in the Nursery last year. In addition to our regular school groups and existing apprenticeship scheme the Nursery provided placements for two horticultural students from Capel Manor Horticultural College.

## **The year ahead**

12. Following the completion of the 2011/12 Nursery Business Plan projects, work will commence on delivering the 2012/13 projects. These include:
  - Provision of bedding for Bushy, Richmond and Greenwich Parks
  - Production of meadows for Chelsea Flower Show and for the City of London Festival outside Liverpool Street Station
  - A six monthly 'What's New' newsletter to send to clients and community contacts
  - Exploring potential partnerships with local colleges to develop enhanced learning for business students, florists and horticulturalists
  - Holding a public open weekend including plants sales
13. There is little doubt that the year ahead will be challenging. The Nursery is not only directly affected by its own budget reductions, but also indirectly through its clients' cuts, meaning that they have less to spend with us. Staff are working hard to identify further efficiencies and to maximise income, thereby ensuring the future of this valuable resource.

## **Financial Considerations**

14. The Nursery Reserves fund was established to offset the financing of improvements, equipment and machinery, and to balance any reported under achievement in forecasted income targets. The outturn for the previous financial year is reported to your Committee at its July meeting each year.

15. The actions under the improvement plan objectives provide a cautious and controlled approach which is supported by the Chamberlain.

### **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

16. The draft Nursery Business Plan supports the following City Together Strategy themes of The Heart of a World Class City which is:

- Competitive and promotes opportunity;
- Supports our communities;
- Protects, promotes and enhances our environment;
- Is vibrant and culturally rich;

17. The business plan also supports all five strategic aims and objectives within the Open Spaces Department Business Plan.

- Quality
- Environment
- Promotion
- People
- Inclusion

### **Conclusion**

18. Throughout the year, the plan has provided clear direction taking into account charity and business objectives and trading difficulties. It provides a clear set of aims, objectives and improvement plan actions to enable the monitoring of performance that supports and contributes towards the objectives of West Ham Park.

### **Background Papers:**

- The West Ham Park Nursery Business Plan 2010 – 2015

### **Appendices**

- Appendix A: The Nursery Business Plan Improvement and Project Plan 2011-2012

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