

Committee:	Date:
Epping Forest and Commons Committee	19 November 2018
Subject: The Commons Events Policy Report	Public
Report of: Superintendent of The Commons	For Decision
Report Author: Hadyn Robson	

Summary

The Commons Division, in common with many of the City Corporation's Open spaces, has a history of hosting public events on the portfolio of sites.

To reflect the increasing volume and complexity of event requests being considered by each open space, as well as to address the new opportunities and obligations under the City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Act 2018, which received Royal Assent on 15 March 2018, and in line with the Open Spaces Department and Epping Forest, the Commons has now developed a site-specific local policy.

The proposed policy will ensure that events are properly managed; the impact of any event on the open space, areas under statutory protection and adjoining communities is minimised and the costs of hosting the event are properly reflected in any licence fee.

The Open Spaces Department Events Policy was approved by the Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee on 16 April 2018.

The Epping Forest Events policy was approved by the Epping Forest and Commons Committee on 16 July 2018 and we wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge their work in and the assistance in drafting this report.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the approved Open Spaces Departmental Events Policy attached as Appendix 1.
- Approve the policy approach outlined in the report and the site-specific Events Policy for The Commons and schedule of event locations attached Appendix 2.

Main Report

Background

1. The Commons has a strong history of hosting public events on the portfolio of sites including sporting events, community based and charity events. In some cases, long standing arrangements for managing these individual events do not fully reflect best practice for event management.
2. The proposed policy framework which has been developed draws upon current best practice experience of licensing and running events; the existing statutory obligations for each site and wider legislative requirements regarding public safety and local authority licensing procedures.
3. The City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Act 2018 has recently received Royal Assent. This Act makes additional provision for events, subject to a suitable events policy being in force.

Current Position

4. In recognition of the differing characteristics of the open spaces assets managed by the City of London Corporation, an Open Spaces department wide policy framework has been developed in collaboration with officers from all Divisions. The policy seeks to protect the environment and character of each distinct site from the pressure of events, whilst recognising the value and amenity events can bring to the spaces. The Policy is attached as Appendix 1 (as approved by the Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee in April 2018).
5. More detailed site-specific policies, with associated charges, have been developed by the individual Open Spaces. These should be read in conjunction with the Departmental Open Spaces Events Policy. The site-specific policy for The Commons Division, with charges and application form can be found at Appendix 2.
6. The sites across The Commons have been the venue for several types of events and activity. A policy is necessary to ensure that a fair and transparent system exists for decision making and to regulate the number, type and frequency of events that can take place. Such regulation is also particularly important given the environmental sensitivity of the sites and the statutory protections for nature and heritage conservation. The policy will also help to minimise the impact of such events on other site users.

Proposal

7. Events will be accommodated on sites across The Commons Division according to conditions outlined in the policy.
8. The timing, location and frequency of events will necessarily be restricted as detailed in Appendix 2.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

9. The Open Spaces and site-specific events policy framework will help deliver two aims of the Corporate Plan 2018-23, to;

Contribute to a flourishing society.
Shape outstanding environments.

In particular will help achieve the Corporate Plan outcomes

Contribute to a flourishing society

1. People are and feel safe
2. People enjoy good health and wellbeing
4. Communities are cohesive and have the facilities they need

Shape outstanding environments

11. We have clean air, land and water and a thriving and sustainable natural environment.
12. Our spaces are secure, resilient and well maintained.

It will also deliver the Open Spaces Department Business Plan top line objectives:

- A. Open spaces and historic sites are thriving and accessible
- B. Spaces enrich people's lives
- C. Business practices are responsible and sustainable

Financial

10. The scale of hire charges for events has been benchmarked, where available, with neighbouring local authorities and is well within the usual pricing range. The charges cover the administration and consideration of the event by officers but also raise the revenue for re-investment and maintenance of The Commons.
11. Charging also provides a method of regulating the number of events and activities that take place on the sites of The Commons.

Environmental

12. The number, type, frequency and location will be considered for every event application to ensure the ecology and conservation status of the sites is not harmed. Seasonality and special designations may prevent events in some locations. In addition, for events that may be considered by type, size or scale to have the potential for adverse impacts on the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Nature Reserve (NNR) or Special Area of Conservation (SAC) consent (assent) would be sought from Natural England.

Conclusion

13. The Commons frequently receives applications to hold events. This policy framework creates a fair and transparent system for assessing these applications and regulating the number. Location and frequency of events that are permitted whilst minimising nuisance to other site users and maintaining the conservation and ecological value of the sites.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Open spaces Events Policy Part 1
- Appendix 2 – Open Spaces Event Policy Part 2 – The Commons site-specific Policy

Andy Barnard
Superintendent
The Commons