

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Corporate Asset Sub Committee	15 September 2020
<b>Subject:</b> Barbican Highwalks Planned Maintenance of the Public Realm	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Community & Children's Services	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Paul Murtagh Assistant Director Barbican & Property Services	

## **Summary**

The purpose of this report is to seek Members views on, and approval to a proposal for the introduction of a planned programme of inspections and maintenance for the public realm areas of the Barbican Highwalk.

## **Recommendation**

Members are asked to:

1. To consider and discuss the proposal for the introduction of a planned programme of inspections and maintenance for the public realm areas of the Barbican Highwalk as set out in this report.
2. Consider whether to support a bid for additional funding of £125,000 per annum be submitted to the Resource Allocations Sub Committee for the introduction of a planned programme of inspections and maintenance for the public realm areas of the Barbican Highwalk.

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. At its meeting on 29 January 2020, Corporate Asset Sub-Committee (the Sub-Committee) received and considered a resolution from the Barbican Residential Committee relating to concerns about the poor condition and lack of maintenance of the public realm in and around the Barbican Residential Estate. The resolution is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
2. Members of the Sub-Committee heard that there are currently six Committees dealing with maintaining different parts of the Barbican and, responsibility for

maintenance of the Barbican Highwalk had been “kicked around by a number of Committees”. It had been proposed at the Street and Walkways Sub-Committee to refer the matter to this Sub-Committee.

3. The Sub-Committee agreed that the Director of Community and Children’s Services would lead on a discussion with officers on how to fill the obvious gap in funding the maintenance of the Barbican Highwalk and, report back to the Sub-Committee, at its next meeting, with proposals to address the problem.

## **Considerations**

4. On 10 May 2012, Summit Group considered a report from the City Surveyor entitled ‘Barbican Common Areas – Asset Stewardship’, that set out the operational considerations relating to the transfer of responsibility for the City Highwalk to the Director of Community and Children’s Services (please refer to Appendix 2 attached to this report).
5. Summit Group subsequently agreed to the following recommendations:
  - i. The Director of Community & Children’s Services accepts responsibility for the City Highwalk Crossing the Barbican Common Areas.
  - ii. A Service Level Agreement is entered into between the Department of Community & Children’s Services and the Department of the Built Environment to take effect nominally from 1 April 2012.
  - iii. A budget of £72,630 per annum to cover Contract Servicing and Breakdown Maintenance (including signage) be transferred from the Department of the Built Environment to the Department of Community & Children’s Services, with effect from nominally 1 April 2012.
6. At the time of the report to Summit Group, it was acknowledged that there were no anticipated staffing implications for either the Department of Community & Children’s Services or the Department of the Built Environment resulting from the above agreed recommendations.
7. Although, initially, the implementation of the recommendations agreed by Summit Group appeared to be successful, the accelerating deterioration of the surface of the City Highwalk and other elements of the public realm, meant that the transferred budget of £72,630 per annum soon became significantly inadequate to deal with the level of repairs required. In some years, expenditure on repairs to the surface of the City Highwalk exceeded £120,000 and, with the downward pressure on budgets, this was simply not sustainable.
8. The situation that the Corporation now finds itself in, is that £72,630 annual budget (which now equates to around £84,000 when taking into account subsequent annual inflationary increases) transferred to the Department of Community & Children’s Services in April 2012 to cover Contract Servicing and Breakdown Maintenance (including signage) of the City Highwalk Crossing the Barbican Common Areas, is wholly inadequate.

9. In effect, over time, the transferred budget has only been used for reactive repairs to the surface of the City Highwalk and, for some years, as outlined earlier in this report, the budget has been insufficient to cover the cost of these reactive repairs.

10. As Members will be aware from the resolution received from the Barbican Residential Committee, the concerns raised about the poor condition and lack of maintenance of the public realm in and around the Barbican Residential Estate go much further than the reactive maintenance of the surface of the City Highwalk. Other specific maintenance issues that need to be considered include:

- Inspection and maintenance of smoke vents and plinths;
- Inspection and maintenance of drainage and gullies on the City Highwalk;
- Maintenance of flower beds, planters and pond hard landscaping;
- Proactive maintenance regime for the surface of the City Highwalk (excluding water penetration repairs to properties below and future phased wider capital projects on the City Highwalk);
- Inspection and maintenance of benches and signage;
- Inspection and maintenance of railings;
- St Giles Terrace including the raised graves and monuments;
- Roofs and soffits of covered walkways within the Barbican Estate (Mountjoy House to Wallside for example).

11. The above list is not exhaustive but, due to the considerable strain on resources and, lack of funding across all departments within the Corporation, the absence of a structured inspection regime and proactive approach to maintenance has led to a deterioration of the City Highwalks.

## Proposals

12. In order to address the concerns about the poor condition and lack of maintenance of the public realm in and around the Barbican Residential Estate, it is recommended that a planned programme of inspections and maintenance be introduced for the public realm areas of the Barbican Highwalk. This will include for quarterly inspections and, a pro-active planned programme for the maintenance of those elements of the public realm not currently provided for and, as set out in Paragraph 10 above.

13. For indicative purposes only, the additional funding of £125,000 is broken down into the following:

Activity	Annual cost
Staff costs and fees	£35,000
Proactive works to the surface of the City Highwalk	£50,000
Smoke vents and plinths	£5,000
Drainage and gullies	£13,000
Flower beds, planters and ponds	£5,000
Benches and signage	£3,000

Railings	£11,000
Roofs and soffits to walkways	£3,000
<b>Total:</b>	<b>£125,000</b>

14. Members will be aware that the timing of a request for additional funding is not favourable particularly when, the City needs to take measures to mitigate the financial impact of COVID-19. It should be emphasised also however, that there is no scope for any of these additional measures to be absorbed in the existing Barbican budget managed by DCCS.
15. Members are therefore asked to consider whether to support a bid for additional funding of £125,000 per annum to the Resource Allocations Sub Committee for the introduction of a planned programme of inspections and maintenance for the public realm areas of the Barbican Highwalk. It is suggested that if Members are minded to support a bid for additional funding, this should be for the new financial year from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 onwards. This will ensure that the bid is considered in conjunction with all other budgets and bids for the City Fund for the new financial year.
16. If such a bid is made and approved, it is proposed that the responsibility for this planned programme of inspections and maintenance for the public realm areas of the Barbican Highwalk sits with the Director of Community and Children's Services as an extension to the decision taken by Summit Group in May 2012, relating to the transfer of responsibility for the City Highwalk to the Director of Community and Children's Services.
17. It must be noted however, that the ability of the Director of Community and Children's Services to take on this additional responsibility relies on the approval of the additional funding of £125,000 per annum and an equivalent increase in the Barbican Residential Estate budget to reflect this. It also relies on the successful completion and implementation of the previously approved restructure of the Barbican Estate Office to ensure that adequate staffing resources are in place.

## Financial Considerations

18. There is currently no budget available for the introduction of a planned programme of inspections and maintenance for the public realm areas of the Barbican Highwalk.
19. The estimated cost of £125,000 for this planned programme cannot be borne by existing budgets and, if Members wish to proceed with this proposal, a bid for additional funding of £125,000 per annum will need to be made to the Resource Allocations Sub Committee.

## Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Resolution from the Barbican Residential Committee  
 Appendix 2 – Summit Group – Barbican Common Areas – Asset Stewardship (May 2012)

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