

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
West Ham Park Committee	4 <sup>th</sup> December 2023
<b>Subject:</b> Assistant Directors Update	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	<b>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12</b>
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>If so, how much?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Bob Roberts, Executive Director Environment Department	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Charlotte Williams, Head of Operations and Parks, Environment Department	

## Summary

This report provides an update to Members of the West Ham Park Committee on management and operational activities at West Ham Park since July 2023. The funding for the work stated is met through the West Ham Park local risk budget (City's Cash).

## Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the content of the report.

## Main Report

### New Positions for the North London Open Spaces

1. We are currently recruiting for a Head of Horticulture who will provide support and assistance across the North London Open Spaces (NLOS), including the gardening team at West Ham Park. The second interviews are being held at West Ham Park the week commencing 20<sup>th</sup> November.

### Tree inventory at West Ham Park

2. The arboriculture team at North London Open Spaces are eagerly acquainting themselves with the tree population at West Ham Park following the park joining NLOS. The team is developing reliable data on the age, species range, and condition of the trees in the park. There are currently 1,438 trees in our digital TreePlotter database, which is believed to be accurate and up-to-date since our records are carefully updated each time work is performed. The three most

abundant tree species in the park are: 1) London Plane (268 trees, 28% of the park's trees), 2) Small-leaved Lime (124; 13%), and Holly (117; 12%).

3. We believe that there are likely to be four trees that date to the late eighteenth century Fothergill era. The West Ham Park site was then part of the Upton Estate and Dr John Fothergill, the owner and apothecary, created a botanical garden that matched Kew Gardens at the time. Fothergill era. All are located within the ornamental gardens, and include one Black Mulberry, one Ginko, and two Fulham oaks. There are also two Beech trees and a deciduous Oak that are approximately 100 years younger, also within the ornamental gardens. While managed as part of the park's wider tree population, all of our old trees are afforded additional management where needed, including fencing, propping and mulching to ensure that they remain in good health for as long as possible. The City of London Corporation is a signatory to the Ancient Tree Forum Concordat, which aspires for ancient trees, their wildlife, and their heritage and cultural values to be safeguarded now and in the future. The Concordat's principals guide how we manage our current and future veteran and ancient trees.

#### Gardening/Horticulture update

4. A new Level 2 Amenity Horticulture Apprentice has joined the gardening team, which includes a day release of study at Capel Manor College.
5. Daffodil bulbs were planted along Cherry Tree Avenue, which is within the ornamental gardens, on 24<sup>th</sup> October using the bulb planting machine. They have been planted in two long wavy drifts, one on either side of the avenue path. Each drift is 50m x 7m. The daffodils are a double pleasure mix, which are a succession of early to late flowering varieties, yellow and white, which will flower from February through to April.
6. Plants have been ordered for the raised beds inside the playground, as part of the playground project and to provide aesthetic value and pleasure to visitors. The plants originate from New Zealand, Asia and the Mediterranean and are most suited to our climate. They cover three areas of the world, which link to the Fothergill story, as he commissioned plant collections from around the world.

#### Sports, recreation and events update

7. The football season is now underway, and two teams are using West Ham Park as their home ground. The autumn maintenance has been completed on the cricket wickets. They have been scarified, aerated and seeded in preparation for the start of the season in spring 2024.
8. The use of the tennis courts is being reviewed, which includes the licence with the tennis coaches. This is to ascertain whether a number of the tennis courts could be converted and used for padel, and if there is a demand for this fast-growing sport within the local community and neighbourhood.

9. The playground has been inspected and audited, which is part of a safety audit being conducted on all the playgrounds across NLOS. This is to ensure inspections and maintenance are up to standard and the play equipment is safe and fit for purpose. Guidance notes will then be produced to ensure we maintain a consistent approach with design, creation, installation and maintenance of all the playgrounds across NLOS going forward.
10. Councillor Joy Laguda and seven members of the Newham Rotary Club donated crocuses and came to West Ham Park on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> November to plant 1000 crocuses in the pollinators area of the park. This was a great and appreciated addition to the park and a most welcome partnership with the community.
11. The annual 'Newham's Biggest Leaf Pile' event will take place on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> December in partnership with the Friends of West Ham Park. This annual event brings the park staff, Friends group, and community together to celebrate the season and have some fun creating, and then climbing on and running through, a huge pile of leaves from trees in the park.
12. 'Park in the Dark' will take place on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> December. A lantern guided walk will start from South Gate and pass through the park to the bandstand, and will end with festive tunes from the Park Primary Choir, mince pies and warm drinks.
13. It will be 150 years since West Ham Park was transferred to the City of London Corporation and became a public park on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2024, so work is underway to plan a series of events next year to celebrate the anniversary. NLOS is forming a steering committee to guide the celebration and engage stakeholders, and we would welcome two Committee Members to join us in planning for this important occasion to celebrate the park, its users, and the Corporation's long-standing commitment to its preservation.

#### Friends of West Ham Park (Friends) update

14. As planned, the Friends have applied for a bid for funding from the "People Powered Places" group for the planting around the mounds to create wildlife area visible to everyone. We support their application and hope that it will be successful.
15. The native hedgerow being funded by Friends Roger and Lyndsay Jones near the playground will start this coming month, and the planting of the hedgerow will be carried out in the new year by the Friends, local schools and community groups such as the scouts. Several of the planting days will be open to the public in January and February 2024.

#### Corporate and Strategic Implications

16. The works and activities outlined in this report contributes towards the achievement of the three aims set out in the City of London Corporate Plan 2018-23. Contribute to a flourishing society (1-4), Support a thriving economy (5) and Shape outstanding environments (9-12).

17. Financial Implications

N/A.

18. Legal Implications

N/A.

19. Risk Implications

Risks are recorded and monitored via the Departmental Risk Register.

20. Equality Implications

N/A

21. Climate Implications

The City of London Corporation has a Climate Action Strategy which seeks to achieve Net Zero by 2037. There will be a range of measures implemented to realise this including increasing carbon sequestration and storage across the Open Spaces alongside biodiversity enhancement and resilience measures including relaxing grass cutting regimes and hedge planting.

**Conclusion**

22. The Park continues to be a great asset for community participation with successful engagements of businesses and schools. The Friends of West Ham Park continue to be a key partner to keep the Park well managed and to involve the local communities. Staff are remaining engaged in the implementation of the wider Natural Environment strategic framework which includes nature recovery and community engagement.

**Charlotte Williams**

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