

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
West Ham Park Committee	27 July 2015
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Public</b>
Superintendent's update July 2015	
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>For Information</b>
Superintendent of Parks & Gardens	
<b>Summary</b>	
<p>This report provides an update to Members of the West Ham Park Committee on management and operational activities at West Ham Park since April 2015.</p>	
<b>Recommendation</b>	
<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Note the report.</li> </ul>	

## **Background**

West Ham Park is a 77 acre park in the London Borough of Newham, owned and managed by the City of London Corporation since 1874. It provides valuable green space for the enjoyment, leisure and well-being of the local community and London as a whole. This report provides information and updates on activities that have taken place in the park since April 2015.

## **Main Report**

### **Budget**

1. After the first quarter of the year West Ham Park is currently on track with spending and income generation from sports. The nursery has recently distributed summer bedding plants to internal and external clients. Invoices for these activities are due to be issued over the coming weeks. Requests to provide floral decorations for a couple of events have been received and replied to, the nursery is awaiting to hear if it has been successful in securing these bookings.

### **Personnel**

2. The nursery now has a full complement of staff - the one year post was secured by the previous casual member of staff bringing continuity and stability to the team. An external candidate was appointed the six month post;

she brings sound horticultural experience of working at Ham House as well as other London gardens and open spaces. In the park team the permanent Keeper-Gardener role has been filled by a gardener from the City's Cemetery and Crematorium. He started in June and is settling in well to his new role. A previous candidate applied for the six month Gardener-Keeper role and was successful in his application and has been providing valuable support to the team with the recent spell of dry weather. One summer casual worker is currently being advertised for to assist in the gardens and park during the school summer holidays.

3. There is currently no sickness absent management issues within the park or nursery team.

### **Operational Activities**

4. Following the visit of the Lord Mayor in April the park has been a hive of activity. Summer bedding displays have been planted throughout the park, hedges clipped, grass mown and sports pitches marked ready for the influx of summer visitors. Watering of summer bedding displays and young trees has been a high priority for the gardening and keeping teams due to the high temperatures and dry weather. The paddling pool in the children's play area was opened in June and continues to be a popular facility with local children.
5. Cricket continues to be popular in the park with 61 matches played by youth teams and 26 by adult's teams. The park is also a popular location for local schools to hold their sports days; eight schools have held their sports days in the park over thirteen days. New leaflets have been produced to promote the facilities that are available for local schools and groups to use and are being distributed to teams by the keepers over the summer. The Park Manager is involved with the Open Space Sports Board, to ensure that the right sports are being provided in the right places across our department
6. The park has entered London in Bloom and Green Flag competitions this year, but will be 'mystery shopped' for both competitions rather than facilitating a formal judging visit. This is due to the consecutive high scores that the park has received in the previous years. Results will be announced in August and September.
7. Public consultation has been taking place during June and July in regards to three benches that are situated adjacent to Aileen walk. Antisocial behaviour has been taking place in and around the benches in the evening and at weekends. A number of residents have requested the benches are removed, but wider opinions are being sought before any action is taken.

### **Community, Volunteering, Outreach and Events**

8. A total of 351 volunteer hours have been delivered over a range of projects in the park. The community food growing project was launched on the 7 May with a public planting day, attended local school children and residents.

Volunteers have been meeting on a weekly basis cultivating a wide range of crops including sweetcorn, chilli and aubergine.

9. West Ham Park received 423 local school children between May and June, engaging them in fun, interactive outdoor learning activities such as pond dipping, habitat restoration, food growing, minibeast hunts and species identification, including many children from deprived neighbourhoods who have no access to an outside space at home and who really benefitted from having the opportunity to get hands on with nature.
10. The parks Outreach, Biodiversity and Education officer has been working closely with Newham College of Further Education to deliver practical volunteering sessions to students with special educational needs. Our collaboration supports the college's "work preparation" scheme for the students, to encourage greater independence and responsibility. The success of the initial sessions and the benefits to the student's wellbeing from working outside is hopefully the beginning of a longer term volunteering partnership.
11. At the end of June, West Ham Park hosted our wildlife themed summer fayre 'Wild About West Ham Park' educating visitors about the different wildlife and habitats that can be found throughout the park through interactive treasure hunts, craft stalls, pond dipping and educational lectures at our apiary and wild flower meadows, highlighting the importance of urban green spaces as a home for wildlife. The family fun day out was attended by supporting wildlife charities the RSPB, the London Wildlife Trust and The Dogs Trust and was thoroughly enjoyed by all those who took part.
12. As we move into July we are busy planning for the upcoming herbarium art exhibition which we will be hosting in West Ham Park as part of 'Love Parks Week' and the 'Forest Gate Arts Trail' between 18 July and 2 August. *The Story Without* continues the exploration of links between nature, art, books and local history by local artist, writer and editor Sonya Patel Ellis with a pop-up library in the park bandstand. Situated in West Ham Park between 18 July and 2 August 2015, the library will be open to visitors during park hours and encourages people to form their own narratives about the park's hidden treasures and to look more keenly at the world around them. It pays particular homage to physician and botanist Dr John Fothergill who, in 1762, established an esteemed botanic garden in the grounds of the Ham House estate, which we now know as West Ham Park. The park's ornamental gardens, plant nursery and rich biodiversity, including wildflower meadows and tree trails, form part of his legacy.
13. The park is also working in collaboration with The Challenge Network to deliver the National Citizen Service to students and young adults from the local Newham area. We will be opening our gates to inspire the participants to engage with and make a positive contribution towards local community initiatives on the 20 July, and will be welcoming them back in September to follow up their visit with a practical volunteer project

14. The summer entertainments programme on the bandstand has been reviewed and the programme updated. The parks wildlife garden will be open one day a week throughout the summer holidays, to provide local children access to the space which is normally closed and only open for schools groups. The remaining budget is being used to fund music on the bandstand. Three different acts have been chosen in consultation with our friends group.

9 August - Taru band, 2.30-4.30pm

TARU Arts is a non-profit arts and educational organisation, which creates and delivers fun and exciting programmes and activities to children, young people and communities. Interactive percussion with recycled drums and other items to resonate sound, followed by Brazilian music. TARU have performed on stage at Greenwich's annual 'Great Get Together' community event as well as taking part in many walking parades including the Thames festival and Sadler's Wells Carnival Parade.

16th August 3pm-5pm East London Brass.

An award winning traditional section brass band This ultra-talented band has its roots way back in the 19th century and is still going strong! Local east London brass band who also played from the Minstrels' Gallery in Guildhall.

30 August - 1345:14:45. Mike Edmonds Band

Local musician Mike Edmonds will be playing smooth jazz music. Mike and the band are resident at many local venues including the Wanstead tap.

## **Property Matters**

15. The Park Manager and the City Surveyor have met with the Lawn Tennis association to discuss and agree the technical specifications for the resurfacing of the remaining 9 tennis courts at West Ham Park. A tennis development plan and application for additional funding is also being finalised with the LTA. This will be the main focus over the summer to ensure that the resurfacing starts on time in the autumn.
16. Meetings have taken place with Park Primary school and Newham Council regarding the installation of an additional gate into the park. Final designs are being drawn up and a further update will be provided to committee after the summer recess.

## **Martin Rodman**

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