

<b>Committee(s)</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
West Ham Park Committee	27 July 2015
<b>Subject:</b> Review of Lodge Allocation at West Ham Park	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Open Spaces	<b>For Decision</b>

### Summary

The Open Spaces Department requires employees in certain roles to reside in residential accommodation on site for the better performance of their duties and to provide an out-of-hours callout service. West Ham Park has 10 such properties. Due to historic reasons, not all lodges were allocated in accordance with the best fit for the service and it is desirable to rectify this situation for the future. The simplest way to achieve this is through natural turnover, as staff retire or leave the organisation. The allocation model identifies that only 8 lodges are required to fulfil a fair but fit-for-purpose callout rota.

By relocating some staff, it is possible to free up 2 neighbouring lodges that are self-contained, in that they can be easily separated from the Park and nursery complex, and have direct access to the main road. It is recommended that these lodges be redecorated and let to the open market as residential accommodation in order to generate income that will contribute to a sustainable future for West Ham Park.

### Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Agree the revised model for lodge residency, recognising that this will be implemented over time through natural turnover of staff;
- Agree that 240 and 242 Upton Lane, identified as surplus to service need, be let to the open market as residential accommodation on the best terms that can reasonably be obtained;
- Delegate authority to the Director of Open Spaces, Comptroller & City Solicitor and the City Surveyor to undertake the necessary works to render the properties suitable for letting, to agree appropriate terms and management arrangements, and to complete the necessary documentation;
- Agree that officers report back to a future meeting of this Committee to advise Members of the letting arrangements agreed under Recommendation 3 above.

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. Across the Open Spaces department there are a number of residential properties in which staff are required to reside for the better performance of their duties. In general, these properties are allocated to specific roles based upon a requirement to work a call-out rota or to be otherwise available outside normal office hours.
2. There are a number of benefits to the organisation of having staff living on site, including:
  - Dedicated on site staff presence 24 hours a day, providing added security of City assets;
  - A first point of contact in emergencies or for urgent works, allowing emergency services to access enclosed sites outside of normal working hours;
  - On site presence by members of the management team during weekends;
  - The ability to respond to callouts quickly and effectively;
  - The ability to call on off-duty staff as an additional resource to assist an individual or team in the event of a major incident during opening hours.
3. In exceptional circumstances, the Superintendent may grant permission for employees applying for residential posts the right to reside in their own private accommodation off-site should they prefer, subject to the following criteria being met:
  - the member of staff is prepared to continue being part of the callout cascade for a handover period and beyond if deemed necessary, and prepared to travel to the site in an emergency situation;
  - the employee does not move more than 20 minutes normal travelling distance from the site;
  - the number of residential staff in service accommodation does not fall below the number specified in the site criteria.
4. West Ham Park is enclosed on all sides by a perimeter fence with gates which are locked at dusk. Outside of normal working hours, calls go through to an out-of-hours call-handling service and are relayed to the duty keepers according to the rota with which the service company has been provided.

### **Current Position**

5. West Ham Park contains 10 residential lodges; 8 within the park and 2 within the nursery complex (see Appendix 1 for a map showing their locations). For Health & Safety reasons, a minimum of 2 people are required to be on call at any one time and, in order for the rota to be fair and not overly onerous, it is considered

reasonable that relevant staff are not on call more than 1 week in 4. It is therefore necessary to have 8 staff residing on site in order to fulfil the rota.

6. The keepers are split into 2 teams that work 4 days on and 4 days off in order to staff the park 365 days a year. It is not considered desirable or practical to have staff regularly covering the call-out rota on their days off; therefore it is preferable to have a balance of keepers from both teams to be resident on site. The gardening team work Monday to Friday and their roles do not require them to reside in a lodge.
7. Historically, it was considered undesirable to have lodges standing empty for too long. A local policy led to one lodge being allocated to a member of staff in a post that was not previously considered residential, although appropriate additional responsibilities were added to the role as a result. This staff member has recently retired, providing an opportunity to review the allocation of lodges and move towards a more consistent model for the future.
8. There are currently 7 lodges occupied by staff, two are vacant and one is being used as an office/mess room for the nursery team. They are allocated as follows:

• East Lodge	Park Manager
• Park Cottage	Keeper- Team 1
• South Lodge	Keeper - Team 2
• 1 Linden Cottages	Team Leader - Team 1
• 2 Linden Cottages	Vacant
• 1 Margery Cottages	Keeper Team 2
• 2 Margery Cottages	Nursery Supervisor
• 240 Upton Lane	Keeper – Team 1
• 242 Upton Lane	Nursery Office and Staff Room
• Portway Lodge	Vacant

9. The Team Leader of keeping Team 2, formerly a resident on site, has in the past been permitted to move to private accommodation away from site, although this role ideally falls within the residential category.

## Proposals

10. Ideally, the 8 residential posts required to cover the callout rota would be the Park Manager, the Nursery Supervisor, the 2 keeping Team Leaders and 2 staff from each of their respective teams. There is no intention at this point to move towards this allocation model other than by natural turnover of staff. Until this can be achieved, a suitable interim model can be implemented without impacting adversely on any team member, or the service.
11. Portway lodge is vacant and conversations are ongoing with Team 2 to identify a member of staff to reside in this lodge. This would result in three members of Team 1 and three members of Team 2 residing on site, providing balance to the call-out rota. Along with the Park Manager and Nursery Supervisor, this provides

the 8 staff (including 3 members of the Section's management team) necessary to fill the rota.

12. This would leave 2 lodges surplus to service need, thereby creating a potential opportunity for leasing. As things currently stand that opportunity cannot be fully realised as, aside from any other restrictions, one of the vacant properties sits within the physical confines of the Park.
13. The Nursery team consists of 3 members of staff; 2 full time posts (1 permanent and 1 fixed-term contract) and one summer casual. They currently use 242 Upton Lane as an office and mess room. This is an inefficient use of the property as much of the building is not utilised. It is proposed that this team relocate to the main mess room, using a desk in the Superintendent's office for computer access, printing and administration.
14. It is further proposed that the occupier of 240 Upton Lane relocates to 2 Linden Cottages. Informal discussions have been held with the employee and they are willing to accommodate the move.
15. This would result in two neighbouring properties, 240 and 242 Upton Lane, becoming vacant. It is proposed that these properties be let on appropriate terms, in order to provide a sustainable income stream towards the upkeep of the Park.

### **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

16. Identifying surplus property and seeking to find alternative uses is in line with the 'Lodges and Operations property review' programme identified in the Open Spaces Business Plan 2015/16-17/18. This programme is one of the strands that will help to deliver the departmental objective of embedding financial sustainability across our activities.
17. The Open Spaces department has set up a number of boards to review the services that it provides and the income that it generates in order to help oversee the delivery of £2.2m savings identified for the Department as part of the Corporate Service Based Review. The potential to generate additional income from surplus property is being looked at across the Department as part of the Lodges Programme. In this instance, the additional income generated will be a welcome contribution towards the maintenance and future enhancement of West Ham Park.
18. The proposed changes meet with City Surveyor's DSA1 Strategic Asset Management plan: To develop and add value to the strategic management of the City of London's corporate and investment property assets; and in accordance with the Corporate Property Asset Management Strategy SO5: Opportunities to maximise income generation will be explored and promoted where feasible.

## Implications

19. **Financial Implications:** relocating the nursery team will reduce overheads and maintenance costs associated with housing them at 242 Upton Lane. Utilising the vacant lodges in a different way has the potential to generate additional income which would contribute towards the savings identified through the Service Based Review.
20. In order to offset the inconvenience of moving house from one side of the Park to another, it is proposed that reasonable relocation costs are made available to the current resident of 240 Upton Lane, using the “Relocation Assistance on Appointment Lodging, Travelling and Disturbance Scheme” within the Employee Handbook as a guide.
21. A certain amount of redecorating of 240 and 242 Upton Lane is to be expected in order to render them suitable for letting. Other adaptations may be required. A carry forward of £40,000 from 2014/15 financial year has been requested, in order to cover these works. Any unspent funds will be returned to the Chamberlain.
22. As stated above, an employee from Keeper Team 2 is being sought to reside in Portway lodge (subject to consultation), in order to provide balance between the number of staff from both keeping teams living on site. The move from a non-residential grade to a residential one will result in a reduction in take home salary for that employee. However this will be offset by reduced living and travel costs. The reduction in salary will represent a small saving for the Park’s local risk budget.
23. **Property implications:** As both 240 and 242 Upton Lane are self-contained and have direct access from the street (rather than having to enter through the park as with the majority of the other lodges) they have potential to be let on the open market. Initial on-line research suggests that the properties could deliver £1,600 - £1,800 per month in rental income. Suitable arrangements would also need to be agreed between the Open Spaces Department and The City Surveyor with regard to servicing the properties and ongoing maintenance.
24. **Legal Implications:** 240 and 242 Upton Lane are not located within West Ham Park itself, but on adjoining land constituting investment permanent endowment, which can be used to generate income for the West Ham Park charity. In accordance with the conveyance of West Ham Park to the City dated 20 July 1874, which is the principal governing document of the Charity, these properties can be let for terms of up to 99 years, provided that the rent is applied towards the expense of managing and maintaining West Ham Park.
25. Under the general provisions of Part 7 of the Charities Act 2011, Members must be satisfied, having taken appropriate advice, that the terms of any lease are the best that can reasonably be obtained. For a lease of more than 7 years, the advice must be in writing, and from a qualified surveyor. The proposed lease must also be advertised, unless the surveyor advises otherwise. See also the additional legal implications in Appendix 2 (non-public).

**26. Human Resources Implications:** As it is not intended at the present time to move towards the new allocation model other than through natural turnover of staff over time, detailed consultation with staff and union representatives is not considered necessary.

## **Conclusion**

27. Staff employed in certain roles are required to reside in the Park as part of their terms and conditions of employment, which includes providing an out-of-hours callout service in case of emergency. The allocation model set out in the report identifies that, of the 10 lodges in West Ham Park, 8 are required to fulfil the needs of the service.

28. The remaining 2 lodges offer an opportunity to identify an income for the future maintenance and enhancement of the Park. By relocating one residential employee and freeing-up another lodge being used as temporary office accommodation, 2 self-contained lodges (240 and 242 Upton Lane) could potentially be let on the open market to provide an income stream for the Park.

29. At a time when officers are tasked with identifying savings and generating more income, opportunities such as this one should be maximised in order to help contribute to the corporate Service Based Review.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Map of West Ham Park showing the residential properties
- Appendix 2 – Additional legal implications (non-public)

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