

Committee:	Date:
West Ham Park Committee	18 th April 2016
Subject:	Public
Superintendent's update April 2016	
Report of:	For Information
Superintendent of Parks & Gardens	
Summary	
<p>This report provides an update to Members of the West Ham Park Committee on management and operational activities at West Ham Park since December 2015.</p>	
Recommendation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members are asked to note the report. 	

Main Report

Budget

1. The West Ham Park budget is in line with agreed budget profiles. The Nursery budget is not expected to reach its income targets. This is due to reductions in the amount of bedding requested by internal and external clients, it is anticipated that there will be an underachievement of income in line with the previous two years' figures.

Personnel

2. The nursery, keeper and gardening teams have a full complement of staff. The fixed term (maternity cover) Education, Outreach and Sustainability Officer post was extended until the 31st March, however this role has now been deleted. Recruitment has been taking place for the new learning programme and officers are expected to be in post at the end of April/early May to deliver environmental educational, outreach and other activities in the park.

Operational Activities

3. Keepers and gardeners have been dealing with the unseasonably mild weather. One of the national Liquidambar collection trees unfortunately became victim to the mild winter and strong winds, being severely damaged in early January. The ornamental gardens also suffered from vandalism one

evening which resulted in a commemorative Oak tree being very badly damaged and having to be removed. Both trees will be replanted in autumn 2016.

4. Rose garden renovation works began in mid-January. Over 100 David Austin Roses were planted in March. New mixed herbaceous planting will be added to the garden over the coming month. This will provide a much greater successional planting scheme for this part of the ornamental gardens, adding interest for visitors and nectar sources throughout the seasons for insects.
5. New Victoriana style benches will be installed along the terrace area (see Figure 1 below). As new benches are required in the ornamental gardens they will be replaced with this more traditional style in recognition of the historic significance of the gardens.

Figure 1: A postcard from early 1900's showing 'The terrace – West Ham Park' and the Broxap 'Rotherham' bench that will be installed in March 2015 and used to replace benches once they come to the end of their life in the ornamental gardens.



6. **Tennis Update:** During the autumn of 2015 a consultation exercise was carried out with tennis users across the City's Open Spaces Department. A summary of key findings is below:
 - i. 135 people completed on-line surveys, with a further 12 being interviewed in more detail.
 - ii. For West Ham Park the highest satisfaction levels were for the "accessibility" of the court and the value for money of the courts, the lowest satisfaction levels were for the booking system.
 - iii. There was significant interest in coaching, with 33% saying they were interested in "one to one" sessions and another 44% saying that they were interested in "group coaching".
 - iv. Comments were made regarding the poor surfacing of some of the courts.

The comments received were discussed with the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) in December and are helping to inform future plans for tennis provision in West Ham Park. Refurbishment works of the nine old courts started on the 18th January and are on schedule to be completed by June 2016. The

LTA are assisting with the development of a programme of coaching and courses that will be launched when the courts reopen. The LTA have proposed a strategic partnership with the City of London in order to 'get people playing tennis more often in London' - the detail of this is the subject of a separate report to this committee.

7. **Cricket:** Originally founded in 2011 by Capital Kids Cricket, West Ham Cricket Club (WHCC) continues to be popular with local children. Primarily based in West Ham Park, the club has grown from entering one team into the Essex Metropolitan Cricket League to now entering four teams across a range of age groups. In addition to this, some of the players are currently taking part in trials to join the London Schools Cricket Association team. Last year the multi-faith cricket festival organised and run by WHCC attracted over 200 children to the park. This year's event to celebrate that start of the cricket season is being held in the park on the 16th April.

Property Matters

8. Lodges update: Refurbishment works to 240 and 242 Upton Lane were completed in March. City Surveyors are working with the City's Procurement team to draw up a tender to appoint an estate agent to lease the properties.
9. Park Primary School – sole use access gate: The Committee's comments and questions were fed back to Park Primary School and the London Borough of Newham (LBN) following December's meeting. LBN officers contacted the London Fire Brigade regarding the need for the gate, but they are awaiting a response.

Community, Volunteering, Outreach and Events

10. The friends of West Ham Park have been active in hosting events in the park this spring. Two stargazing sessions were held in the park with a total of 45 attendees, the majority being local residents although an advert in the Newham Recorder attracted several from further afield. In addition to the weekly bird monitoring, two Big Bird Watch events were held in January and March, the results from which are currently being analysed by our friends group.
11. The park's Outreach, Biodiversity and Sustainability officer held an Orchard management and Wassail workshop in January. This was led by an expert orchardist from the Urban Orchard Project and included a traditional Wassailing, an English folk custom celebrating the apple. A further orchard volunteer session is being planned in conjunction with the Friends of West Ham Park and the local scout group to complete pruning of the trees and carry out other maintenance tasks.
12. In February representatives from The Ramblers visited West Ham Park to deliver Walk Leader volunteer training to help support the delivery of the popular West Ham Park 'Walking for Health' scheme, which meets every Wednesday. The training was attended by 10 enthusiastic volunteers including the Chair of the Friends of West Ham Park, and was visited by

journalists from the Newham Recorder who were keen to learn about healthy living initiatives taking place within Forest Gate. The training will enable the volunteers to take over the 'walk leader' and 'backstop' roles, which have previously been delivered by park keepers.

13. The Jubilee food growing project has been launched for 2016. Volunteers attended a seed sowing day in March. Our new gardener will be leading these sessions on a monthly basis to teach local people how to grow fruit and vegetables. The importance of raising the profile of healthy eating in the area was highlighted during a 'Clean for the Queen' event that was held with the friends group. A spot check of what people throw away revealed that only a quarter of the rubbish collected in the park is derived from healthy drinks and foods. 60% of the rubbish collected was from sugary drinks, sweets and fast food. A further 15% was alcohol bottles and cans.
14. The Linden wildlife garden has been rejuvenated with new features being installed so that it can be used for Forest School Sessions. The philosophy of Forest Schools is to encourage and inspire individuals of any age through an innovative, long term, educational approach to outdoor play and learning in a woodland environment. Park Primary School has been instrumental in the preparation works, supplying volunteers to help with the work in the garden. One of their teachers has been trained to lead forest school sessions and is using the garden on a weekly basis with junior classes from the school.

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