

Committee	Dated:
West Ham Park Committee	5 Dec 2016
Subject: West Ham Park Nursery – project update report	Public
Report of: Director of Open Spaces	For Decision
Report author: Martin Rodman - Superintendent Parks and Gardens	

Summary

In July 2015 your Committee resolved to cease trading at West Ham Park Nursery. Since that time clients have been informed of the decision, glasshouses and associated buildings decommissioned, lodges let to private tenants and Lambert Smith Hampton appointed as consultants to provide expertise in the field of planning, development and market research in order to evaluate potential options for the Nursery site. This report seeks Members' support for the formation of an Options Review Group to help steer the next stage in the development of the project and inform the upcoming Gateway 3/4 options appraisal report.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the progress made on the Nursery project to date;
- Agree to the formation and composition of an Options Review Group to consider the options appraisal for the future use of the Nursery site to help inform the Options Appraisal Report that will be brought to committee in spring 2017;
- Nominate two members of your Committee appointed by the heir-at-law of the late John Gurney to attend the Options Review Group.

Main Report

Background

1. The 2.69 acres of West Ham Park Nursery sit in the north east corner of West Ham Park. In July 2015 your Committee approved the proposal to cease trading at the Nursery. Nursery clients were immediately given notice of cessation of trading. A Nursery Project Board was formed with officers from Open Spaces, City Surveyor's, Comptroller & City Solicitor's, Remembrancer's and Chamberlain's departments.

Current Position

2. The Superintendent of Parks and Gardens has been negotiating with officers from the Royal Parks in order to agree terms to exit the contract to grow their annual bedding plants.
3. Two members of staff were directly affected by the Nursery closure. One was employed under a fixed term contract, which was aligned to terminate at cessation of trading. One permanent employee chose not to undergo redeployment and so redundancy negotiations were commenced. This post terminated in September 2016.
4. The nursery glasshouses and other outbuildings have been decommissioned with surplus equipment and machinery being disposed of to raise funds to help reduce the deficit in the Nursery Reserve. All utilities have been closed down and a vacant building inspection regime implemented in consultation with the City Surveyor's Facilities Manager and the Health and Safety Property Manager.
5. The former nursery office and neighbouring residential lodge at 240 and 242 Upton Lane were vacated and renovated, and have been leased to private tenants through a property management company.
6. In July 2016 Lambert Smith Hampton (LSH) were appointed to act as the City's consultants to provide expertise in the field of planning, development and market research in order to evaluate potential options for the Nursery site. They have completed a Planning Appraisal and have submitted the first draft of an Options Appraisal Report for the future use of the nursery site, which is currently being reviewed by officers.

Proposals

7. The options appraisal considers six different outline options and contains detailed information which will need to be carefully considered and evaluated. In order to allow for this dialogue to take place it is proposed that an Options Review Group be formed. The role of this group would be to review the Options Appraisal report in the capacity of a 'critical friend', ensuring that the report findings are evidence-based and providing challenge where appropriate. The comments and feedback from this meeting will then help inform a report that would be brought to West Ham Park Committee in early 2017 for decision, ahead of onward journey through the projects procedure gateways. Given the impact that this decision will have on the future of West Ham Park, such input at this stage is felt to be beneficial.
8. It is proposed that the group comprise of the following representatives:
 - a. Chairman, West Ham Park Committee (Chair)
 - b. Two members of the West Ham Park Committee appointed by the heir-at-law of the late John Gurney
 - c. Superintendent of Parks and Gardens
 - d. A Councillor from the London Borough of Newham

- e. West Ham Park Manager
 - f. Consultants from Lambert Smith Hampton
 - g. A representative from the Friends of West Ham Park
 - h. Head of Commissioning – Leisure and Sport (London Borough of Newham)
 - i. Officers from the City Surveyor's Department
 - j. West Ham Park staff representative
9. The group will be supported by advisors on specialist aspects (such as sport, schools, cafés, and biodiversity).

Corporate & Strategic Implications

10. The Nursery review project forms part of the departmental Service Based Review, and should be considered in that context. The Open Spaces Department has identified £2.2m savings by 2017/18 financial year. Although the Nursery service contributed positively to enhancing West Ham Park, it did not contribute directly to the objects of the West Ham Park Charity, nor did it meet the Department's core aims.
11. The project also aligns with the Corporate Property Review, and is identified in the Open Spaces Departmental Business Plan 2016-19.

Implications

12. Financial, legal, reputational and other implications will be included in the options appraisal report to follow.

Conclusion

13. A number of key milestones have been achieved since the decision was taken to cease trading at the nursery in 2015. A draft options appraisal report from appointed consultants LSH was received in late November. Due to the level of detail contained in the report and the significance that this decision will have for the future of the park, it is proposed that an Options Review Group be formed, the views of which will help inform a report to this committee for decision in spring 2017.

Appendices

- None

Background Papers

- Committee Report - West Ham Park Nursery Service Review, 27 July 2015

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