

Committees	Dated:
Open Spaces & City Gardens	17 July 2017
Hampstead Heath	17 July 2017
Epping Forest & Commons	3 July 2017
West Ham Park	17 July 2017
Subject: Open Spaces Business Plan annual report 2016/17	Public
Report of: Director of Open Spaces	For Information
Report author: Esther Sumner, Business Manager	

Summary

2016/17 was a year of development within the department. The programme approach gathered pace and delivered a number of successes including the new learning team, sales of surplus fleet which were invested in energy efficiency and disposals of surplus lodges. Sites have done well to continue to deliver excellent services (as reflected by our high customer satisfaction) while delivering these changes. Having reflected on the last year, this report identifies a number of areas for improvement.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note this report

Main Report

Background

1. The Open Spaces & City Gardens Committee approved the departmental business plan for 2016/17 in April 2016. This plan was based on:

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|-------------------------|--|
| Vision | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve and protect our world class green spaces for the benefit of our local communities and the environment |
| Charitable Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preservation of the open spaces • Provision for recreation and enjoyment of the public |
| Departmental Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and conserve the ecology, biodiversity and heritage of our sites • Embed financial sustainability across our activities by delivering identified programmes and projects • Enrich the lives of Londoners by providing a high quality and engaging educational and volunteering opportunities • Improve the health and wellbeing of community through access to green space and recreation |

2. These objectives were to be delivered and monitored through a series of key actions and performance indicators.

Current Position

3. This report includes a summary of progress against each key action in appendix 1 and the key performance indicators in appendix 2. Highlights from each site are presented in the next section. A separate report is made to the Port Health & Environmental Services Committee in respect to the Cemetery & Crematorium.
4. The Business Plan set some stretching actions to support our objectives which have been achieved. The Department continued to utilise the programmes approach which was first agreed in 2015. This approach promoted cross departmental working.
5. Learning Programme: The Learning Programme which saw the transformation of the learning services model across the department was mainstreamed as “business as usual” during the course of 16/17 having achieved a three year funding grant from the City Bridge Trust.
6. Sports Programme: A partnership arrangement was agreed with the Lawn Tennis Association to support tennis at West Ham Park and this has resulted in a substantial increase in tennis played there.
7. City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Bill: the Bill has taken longer than first anticipated to go through Parliament, partly due to the referendum. The Bill will need to be revived for its Third Reading in the House of Commons after the 2017 General Election and may pass into law by the end of 2018.
8. Promoting our Services: Each division has considered additional income generation which has supported the Service Base Review savings. More recently the board has been focusing on the Events Policy.
9. Energy Efficiency: This programme has seen funds raised through the sale of surplus fleet and equipment invested back into renewable energy and energy saving projects, in particular solar panel installation projects at Hampstead Heath Lido and Harrow Road Changing rooms and changes to LED lighting at the Warren, Epping Forest and Parliament Hill Athletics track Hampstead Heath.
10. Fleet and Equipment Review: This programme identified surplus equipment which could be sold to support the energy efficiency programme and reduce maintenance costs. The programme has also examined the approach to fleet procurement and management, and a new policy has been agreed. Each Division is now required to produce its own Sustainable Fleet and Plant Management Plan to ensure a safe and cost effective fleet.
11. Wayleaves: A review of domestic wayleaves was successfully undertaken. for a valuation model for commercial wayleaves based on Non-Domestic Rate valuations is being piloted.
12. Lodges: Lodge reviews were carried out across the department and a number of properties were subsequently declared surplus at West Ham Park, Hampstead Heath and Epping Forest. A number of lodges (not on Open Spaces land) have generated capital receipts for the City, and two lodges at West Ham Park have been rented privately and two lodges at Epping Forest have been rented commercially..
13. Car Parks: This board supported the price reviews at Hampstead and Burnham Beeches. It has been closed down for now but should any further car park charges be introduced it will be reinstated to share best practice.

14. Cafes: A tendering process was undertaken for the cafes at Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park. Although a new operator was appointed there was significant public opposition and the operator withdrew. Following further consultation, the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee have now agreed to negotiate a new three year lease with the current operators. The Caddie House at Epping Forest has been successfully tendered.
15. Funding: This board was suspended pending new terms of reference and membership. It was re-established in May 2017.

Performance Indicators

16. The Performance Indicators are attached at Appendix 2. Members will note the mixed picture. With the exception of gas consumption, energy usage has increased. This is a cause for concern both in terms of environmental impact but also in terms of utility prices. This matter will be refer to the Energy Efficiency Board to consider more fully.
17. The H&S accident investigation target has also been missed with only 62% of accidents investigated within 14 days. The Health & Safety Manager has reviewed the incidents and has noted that indicator does not recognise the difference in approaches required between simple incidents and more complex or serious ones which may legitimately take longer than 14 days, or the complication of shift patterns in conducting an investigation. He is content that that the Department takes a robust and serious approach to accident investigation. Improvements to the indicator will be considered by the Health & Safety Improvement Group.
18. Sports performance has been mixed. West Ham Park have achieved significant increases in tennis court usage following the partnership with the LTA. There has been a decrease in football at Epping which in part reflects the loss of the Football Development Officer. New booking software was introduced part way through the year it is thought this has led to some inconsistencies in reporting.
19. The learning programme has performed strongly against targets.

Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park

20. The construction phase of the Hampstead Heath Ponds Project was successfully completed in October 2016.
21. Formative engagement with stakeholders and local interest groups has successfully contributed to the delivery of various projects across the Division.
22. To improve visitors experience when visiting the iconic Parliament Hill view point, works have been undertaken to install new benches, realign the path and address compaction to improve the grassland. In partnership with Heath & Hampstead Society, the Parliament Hill view point sign was updated as part of the project.
23. In September Heath Hands Volunteers celebrated achieving 100,000 hours of volunteering across Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and the Kenwood Estate.
24. The control of Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) and Massaria continues to be a focus for the Tree Team. 20 trees across the Division had OPM nests removed, and the affected trees were sprayed this spring.
25. The Southern Counties Cross Country Championships took place in January. In May the Parliament Hill Athletics Track hosted the Highgate Harriers Night of the 10,000m. This was one of the qualifying events for the 2016 Rio Olympics, and was exceptionally well supported.

26. Community events continue to be held on Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park to promote culture, health, sport and wellbeing.
27. Highgate Wood and Queen's Park retained their Green Flag statuses for the 20th Consecutive year. They are two of only a handful of sites to have achieved a Green Flag award every year since the start of the scheme. Hampstead Heath also achieved a Green Flag for the 18th year. Golders Hill Park achieved a Gold London in Bloom award for the Hill Garden and Pergola, and was the overall category winner (Walled Garden Category). The Park also won Gold in the Large Park category for the 3rd year.

City Gardens

28. In addition to the day-to-day maintenance tasks needed to keep the City Gardens looking good, each year the team undertakes numerous planting and infrastructure improvements both within the gardens and on the highway. This year has been no exception with replanting and other works taking place at Postman's Park, Carter Lane and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Garden, Tower Hill Garden and St Andrew's by-the-Wardrobe. Work has also continued apace on the public realm enhancement project at Aldgate, including 32 new street trees planted so far. And finally just within the past few months, work has taken place to reinstate Seething Lane Garden in the south-east of the City.
29. The team has been grateful for the continued support of Friends of City Gardens, whose fantastic work this year has included Open Squares Weekend, walks, talks, visits and activities across a range of green spaces and attended by over 700 visitors and the City in Bloom campaign. City in Bloom is an annual campaign that recognises the work of community groups, businesses and residents in making the Square Mile a greener place to live, work and visit
30. The City Gardens apprentice has just started his 2nd year NVQ level 2 horticulture. He will shortly be joined by 4 other apprentices in the autumn, as part of the corporate initiative to support more young people in the workplace.
31. Awards – Green Flag and Green Heritage awards were retained both at Bunhill Fields. 7 awards in London in Bloom, including a special award for the new planting at the Beech Gardens in the Barbican, and a level 5 'outstanding' award for the Friends of CG in recognition of the amazing work they do. The team also achieved a silver gilt in Britain in Bloom – the national horticultural awards campaign.
32. Events – Festival Gardens hosted a very successful open air film screening in August, organised by Nomad Cinema and sponsored by both Brookfield Property Partners and Cheapside Business District. The event sold out and received very positive feedback from the sponsors, organisers and members of the audience. We are partnering with Nomad again this year and hoping to recapture the magic of last year's event.

West Ham Park

33. Tennis – refurbished tennis courts opened in June 2016 at the parks first "Give it a Go" day, partnership with the LTA continues to blossom – instrumental in recruitment of new coaches and in helping to build coaching programme, tournaments and active schools programme. Exceeded target of increasing tennis played on site by 65% since last year with 2823 hours played on court in 2016/17

34. Cricket Newham has been identified as a priority area for cricket development. The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) is already working extensively with London Borough of Newham, the Essex County Cricket Board, West Ham Park and a range of sports development partners to promote and develop the game in the borough. This is part of the ECB's national initiative to work with the communities of South Asian origin to build on their traditional high levels of interest and participation in cricket.
35. Originally founded in 2011 by Capital Kids Cricket, West Ham and Stratford 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. It provides an important pathway to cricket for young people, over 200 local children attended their multi faith festival during summer of 2016
36. Horticultural highlights – 170m² tennis court turned into a woodland walk, rose garden replanted with new roses & herbaceous to provide extended season of interest for people and wildlife and has been delighting visitors. Rotary Club of Newham donated and helped to plant 5,000 crocus bulbs on site. Keeping team have planted over 180m native hedging on site, as well as 11 new trees and relocated 15 pine trees.
37. Corporate volunteers – the park has worked in partnership with East London Business Alliance, utilising the enthusiasm of corporate volunteers from Lockton, JP Morgan and others to help to deliver key maintenance tasks in the park and gardens – spreading mulch, working in the wildlife gardens, painting bins, benches & railings in the playground

Epping Forest

38. A Policy Officer has been recruited to drive forward a Management Plan Strategy for Epping Forest.
39. The Environment Agency's provisional designation of High Risk for the Wanstead Park Lakes system continues to be challenged by Officers. A decision by the Environment Agency due in 2015 is awaited.
40. Scoping Reports have been completed for sub-Large Raised Reservoirs at Baldwins Pond and Birch Hall Park Pond which are expected to be subject to further regulation by Government. Project proposals are expected to be considered by Committee in September 2017
41. The Emergency Plan for Highams Park Large Raised Reservoir was subject to a desktop test scenario and was revised and updated based on the results.
42. A Master Plan to guide the future of the Wanstead park Grade II* Registered Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest has been developed with partners. Further changes are required following consultation with landowning partners.
43. A Floating Pennywort eradication programme at Perch Pond has temporarily prevented the refilling of The Ornamental Water.
44. As part of the Sports Programme, the Wanstead Flats 'Parklife' bid to the Football Foundation has passed Expression of Interest stages. Work is now underway on a Stage One bid, in partnership with the London Borough of Redbridge.
45. A range of Energy Efficiency measures totalling £150,000 and funded by the Fleet Disposal programme will see anti-glare window film, energy efficient lighting and Photovoltaic Panels installed during summer 2017.
46. A divisional vehicle replacement strategy is being developed as part of the wider Fleet and Equipment Review.

47. A commercial wayleave review is being piloted using Non-Domestic Rates valuations to calculate new crossover values.
48. The Lodge Residency Strategy is being implemented to ensure multi-skilled teams are available to each callout shift. Training including Emergency Plan; Local Authority Liaison Officer (LALO) and Deer Vehicle Collision skills have been completed.
49. Epping Forest was awarded full Museum Accreditation status by the Arts Council England during 2016/17. Accreditation framework in place.
50. The Epping Forest and Commons Committee declared a series of properties surplus for disposal as part of the Operational Property Review, and continues to consider further properties.
51. In-house management of Chingford Golf Course has been completed including a £50,000 refurbishment of the Caddie House building; course improvements; the appointment of a golf manager, the introduction of a new online booking system; online promotion via Group-On reward systems; the tendering of onsite catering and the attraction of a new cycle hire adjacent to the Caddie House.

The Commons

Kenley Common

52. Kenley Airfield sits within Kenley Common and is reputed to be the best preserved example of a World War II Fighter Airfield in Great Britain. Whilst the airfield itself is actively used the MOD the City's adjacent land contains many of the legally protected heritage features associated with it.
53. The Kenley Revival Project entered year two of the HLF funded programme. The project team was appointed in early 2016 and to date has worked closely with partner organisations to deliver all targets within budget and to the timescales agreed with the Heritage Lottery Fund. Highlights include the provision of the Kenley Revival website, delivery of the Kenley Heritage Day, development of the volunteers, learning/education and community archaeology programmes.
54. Planning consent was sought and granted to carry out conservation works on the site's blast pens and to move the monument to those who were killed during the Battle of Britain) to allow the restoration of an important blast pen.

Stoke Common Site of Special Scientific Interest.

55. Year 8 of the 10 year programme to restore the heathland habitat at Stoke Common was completed, having formerly been encroached upon by very dense secondary woodland. Natural England has recently reassessed Stoke Common and concluded that the City has achieved very substantial improvements in restoring the valuable heathland habitats since the site came into its ownership.

Burnham Beeches Special Area of Conservation

56. Local development in the vicinity of Burnham Beeches continues to be of primary concern. The City's Officers continue to work closely with several local planning authorities and Natural England to mitigate the impact of housing and other developments on the site. Several mitigation principles are being considered for incusing in Local Plans to protect the site from harm.

57. Officers continued to be engaged in the process of converting Dog Control Orders to Public Space Protection Orders. The public consultation process commenced January 2017 and is nearing conclusion.

Ashted Common National Nature Reserve.

58. Ashted Common has established a partnership approach with Surrey Wildlife Trust to graze the Common. The agreement provides excellent value for money and precisely the right type and number of cattle necessary to enhance the habitats found on the site. The team are also drawing up plans to extend grazing across more of the Common including the possible use of invisible fencing.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

59. Business plans demonstrate the link between the corporate plan and the activities of the department. The Open Spaces Business Plan contributes to:

- SA2: To provide modern, efficiency and high qualities local services, including policing, within the Square Mile for workers, residents & visitors
- SA3: To provide valued services, such as education, employment, culture and leisure to London and the nation
- KPP2: Improving the value for money of our services within the constraints of reduced resources
- KKP4: Maximising the opportunities and benefits afforded by our role in supporting London's communities
- KKP5: Increasing the outreach and impact of the City's cultural, heritage and leisure contribution of the life of London and the nation

Implications

60. **Finance:** The Open Spaces 2015/16 Service Based Review identified that £2,189,000 savings would be made over three years. Savings of £699k have been achieved in year 1 (2015/16). Savings of £721k were due to be delivered in 2016/17. Although the department managed to deliver to this reduced budget, the powers required to generate some of the savings have not yet been achieved and so alternative savings were substituted during the year. Further savings of £769k are required in 2017/18.

61. **Property:** the Open Spaces Department worked with the City Surveyor during the year to review property requirements. A number of properties were declared surplus. This work will continue.

62. **Health:** the activities of the Open Spaces Department contribute to the good health of our communities by providing facilities and opportunities for recreation, sport and wellbeing.

Conclusion

63. The Department performed well against targets in 2016/17, particularly in the face of financial challenges related to the delays in the Open Spaces Bill.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Key Actions
- Appendix 2 – Performance Indicators

Background Papers

Open Spaces Business Plan 2016/17-2019-20 (approved April 2016)

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