

OPEN SPACES AND CITY GARDENS
Monday, 25 November 2013

Minutes of the meeting of the Open Spaces and City Gardens held at Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 25 November 2013 at 3.00 pm

Present

Members:

Alderman Ian Luder (Chairman)
Deputy Alex Deane (Deputy Chairman)
Deputy Robert Howard
Wendy Mead
Barbara Newman
Jeremy Simons
Deputy Michael Welbank
Alderman Gordon Haines (Ex-Officio Member)

Observers:

Verderer Peter Adams (Epping Forest and Commons Committee)
Catherine Bickmore (West Ham Park Committee)

Officers:

Alistair MacLellan	- Town Clerk's Department
Alison Elam	- Group Accountant, Chamberlain's Department
Edward Wood	- Principal Legal Assistant, Comptroller and City Solicitor's Department
Sue Ireland	- Director of Open Spaces
Martin Rodman	- Superintendent of Parks & Gardens
Louisa Allen	- City Gardens Manager
Jennifer Allott	- Departmental Business Manager, Open Spaces Department
Victor Callister	- Department of the Built Environment
Tony Halmos	- Director of Public Relations
Greg Williams	- Assistant Director of Public Relations (Press)
John Park	- Press Officer, Public Relations Office

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Deputy Stanley Ginsburg, Virginia Rounding and Tony Ghilchik.

2. MEMBER'S DECLARATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

There were no declarations.

3. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED: that the minutes and public summary of the meeting held on 7 October 2013 be approved as a correct record, subject to the Observers being listed as present.

Matters Arising

The Value of Green Spaces to London and Londoners

The Director of Open Spaces noted that the report on *The Value of Green Spaces to London and Londoners* was submitted to the Health and Wellbeing Board on 6 November, and that its potential to form part of a PhD thesis continued to be explored.

Planning Commitments for Open Spaces

In response to a suggestion from a member that a record of how much staff time was currently absorbed by dealing with planning applications affecting City of London Open Spaces, the Director noted that the £25,000 allocated to dealing with planning commitments in Open Spaces was to pay for formal advice only and did not take officer-time into account.

The Chairman concurred with the Director and noted that when he had first discussed this issue with the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee it had been agreed that the additional money was needed to primarily cater for external planning advice in order to reduce the burden on City of London staff. Nevertheless he noted that it would be desirable to secure continued funding for this issue and so detailed information on the impact planning commitments were having on City of London staff, and detail on how the current £25,000 was spent would help build a case for this continued funding.

4. **OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

The Committee received a list of Outstanding Actions.

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5. **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Committee considered a report of the Town Clerk on its Terms of Reference.

RESOLVED:

- That, subject to any comments, the terms of reference of the Committee be approved for submission to the Court of Common Council on 1 May 2014 and that any further changes in the lead up to the Court's appointment of Committees be delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman.

6. **OPEN SPACES IDENTITY - OUTCOME OF THE MEMBERS' WORKING PARTY AND PRESENTATION OF DESIGNS**

The Open Spaces Departmental Business Manager introduced a report of the Director of Open Spaces on Open Spaces identity. She noted that the report outlined the outcome of the Members Working Group that had met over the

summer. She emphasised that the work sought to strengthen the overall brand of City of London Open Spaces and that design work had been carried out by external consultants. Furthermore she added that the process had seen significant amount of consultation carried out, particularly with staff across the Open Spaces Department, and that colleagues in the Public Relations Officer had provided excellent advice. She concluded her introduction by noting that some of the designs needed some minor refinement and that the finalised designs would be rolled out gradually to avoid significant additional costs.

In response to some observations from a member, the Business Manager confirmed that charity numbers would not be listed on vehicles and staff uniforms, and that clarification would be sought over the use of the coloured box on the bottom left of the publication cover sheets. Furthermore she would revisit the description of Hampstead Heath as a 'park' in the literature.

A member commented that the coloured boxes on cover sheets should correlate in colour with the header colour – for example the example of Ashted Common in the report appeared disjointed.

The Director of Open Spaces placed on record her thanks to the Member Working Group.

RESOLVED:

- That the Committee note the work of the Member Working Group
- That the Committee approve the new visual identity for City of London Open Spaces.

7. PUBLIC RELATIONS UPDATE

The Director of Public Relations introduced an update report on Public Relations activity during the period October 2012 – September 2013. He noted that this was the third annual update to come before the Committee and invited members to comment on the format and structure of the report to ensure information was presented to them as relevantly as possible.

He noted in particular the lead role played by the Public Relations Office (PRO) in the Hampstead Heath Ponds Project. He noted also the triennial polling work carried out by the PRO on the City of London Open Spaces that had indicated net positive satisfaction among City residents, businesses, workers and senior executives. He added that the polling work generated a lot of data that required detailed analysis and therefore a dedicated presentation would be given to members on its findings in December 2013.

The Assistant Director of Public Relations added that the PRO was exploring platform development, including YouTube videos and the use of audio files on mobile devices that would allow users to listen to an explanation of a particular City of London Open Space when they visited it.

The Chairman placed on record his thanks for the work of the PRO, in particular during the recent fire of Epping Forest.

In response to a question from a member, the Open Spaces Press Officer confirmed that the City of London had a good working relationship with local press and that details of this could be included in future reports. A member added that he had attended a productive meeting with the Editor of the Ham & High recently which indicated a strong relationship – he noted however that a similar relationship did not exist with the Camden New Journal.

A member placed on record his thanks for the work of the PRO across the City Commons. He too added that he had been engaged in a productive chat with the Editor of the Ham & High recently also.

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8. OPEN SPACES DEPARTMENTAL SAFEGUARDING POLICY

The Open Spaces Departmental Business Manager introduced a report of the Director of Open Spaces on a proposed Departmental Safeguarding Policy. She noted her thanks to staff from the North London Open Spaces Division and the Children and Community Services Department for their input in drafting the policy. She concluded by saying that the policy had been produced to ensure best-practice and not in response to a particular incident.

In response to a question from a member she confirmed that the policy covered City of London staff only, and not members attending events at Open Spaces sites. The Chairman and Director of Open Spaces noted that when members were attending such events a common-sense approach should be adopted by members – for example, it was appropriate to shake hands with minors who were prize winners. The Director advised members that if they were in any doubt in a given situation they should not hesitate to approach staff to ask for advice.

An observer to the Committee noted that he felt the policy was too ambiguous and broad in its definitions and that whilst it covered staff, it was not clear if it covered volunteers in Open Spaces. The Director pointed out that the Committee was be asked to agree the policy in principle and that the observer's comments could be taken into account when finalising the policy on points of detail.

A member requested that the list of venues on Appendix 4 be expanded to include those at Queen's Park and Highgate Wood.

RESOLVED:

- That members note the report
- That subject to the comments made by members the Departmental Safeguarding Policy be agreed.

9. **POLICY ON THE USE AND COLLECTION OF IMAGES OF CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS**

The Departmental Business Manager introduced a report of the Director of Open Spaces on a policy on the use and collection of images for children, young people and vulnerable adults. She noted that the policy was linked with work that had been carried out on both Open Spaces identity and departmental safeguarding, and that it outlined steps on how the necessary consent for collection of such images would be obtained. She concluded by noting that the policy had already been piloted and there had been no reported issues.

In response to an observation from a member that at a recent Cross Country event on Hampstead Heath saw unrestricted photography taking place, the Business Manager replied that it was felt necessary to adopt the policy given many other organisations who held events had already adopted such a policy.

RESOLVED:

- That members note the report
- That the Committee agree the Departmental Policy on the use and collection of images of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

10. **BUSINESS PLAN: QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE UPDATE**

The Departmental Business Manager introduced a quarterly update report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Open Spaces Departmental Business Plan. She noted that there had been good progress across all areas but wished to highlight two areas in particular.

The first area she drew the Committee's attention to was the amendment of the Departmental Risk Register to include a new risk relating to anti-social behaviour on Open Spaces sites. This had been done in response to an increase in such activity across a number of the City's Open Spaces and reflected the fact that such incidents cost time and money to deal with.

Secondly she noted that a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) on reducing energy consumption had been listed as amber given unseasonably cold weather during April-early June 2013 and the likelihood of a cold winter.

In response to some observations from a member the Business Manager agreed to amend dog 'attacks' to dog 'incidents' and to ensure that site emergency plans were regularly rehearsed.

The Chairman, commenting on anti-social behaviour, emphasised the Committee's zero tolerance approach to the issue of fly-tipping at Epping Forest.

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11. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS 2013-14 AND 2014-15

The Group Accountant introduced a joint report of the Chamberlain and the Director of Open Spaces on revenue and capital budgets for the period 2013-14 and 2014-15. She noted that the report only considered areas on which the Committee had responsibility for spending. She added that the report had been prepared using guidelines set down by the Policy and Resources Committee and that overall outturn figures were expected to be in line with forecasts.

RESOLVED:

- That the Committee had reviewed the provisional 2014-15 revenue budget to ensure it reflected the Committee's objectives and approved the budget for submission to the Finance Committee.
- That the draft Capital Budget had been reviewed and approved.
- That the Chamberlain be authorised, in consultation with the Director of Open Spaces, to revise the budgets to allow for any further implications arising from Corporate Projects, departmental reorganisations and other reviews, and changes to the Additional Works Programme.

12. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

The City Gardens Manager updated the Committee on current issues in the City Gardens.

Finance

She noted that the City Garden's budget was in line with agreed budget profiles.

Staff

She noted that City Gardens staff were currently recruiting an assistant gardener, and that there had been a slight delay in the recruitment process due to the team wishing to change the post's rota hours to accommodate business needs, and that City Gardens staff were working with HR to complete this.

Projects

Guildhall Pond: she noted that the pond is undergoing a refurbishment. Works had included cleaning out the entire pond, a pump repair and replanting. The project was expected to be completed by mid-December.

St Andrew's Holborn: she reported that the redesign and landscaping programme was progressing well. Planning permission for the works is would be sought in January, with works to begin on site in February and a completion date towards the end of summer 2014.

Tree inspection contract: the City Gardens team had undertaken a tender exercise for the inspection of tree stock. Traditionally, the tender process and inspection works had been undertaken annually. This year the team had taken the opportunity to work with City of London Procurement Service (CLPS) and had designed a specification to include West Ham Park and an award of the

contract for five years with the potential for two, one year extensions. The contract has identified savings, officer time and included Massaria inspections for both areas for the duration.

Tree works contract: using the same principle as that adopted for the tree inspection contract, the team were currently preparing contract documents for a tree works contract, using a government framework. The City of London legal team were currently carrying out due diligence before a four year contract could be awarded.

Britain in Bloom

The City Gardens Manager reported that officers and the Chairman had attended the Britain in Bloom finalist award celebrations in Cleethorpes on 12 October. The City won an overall Gold for the Town category and due to consistent high quality applications over the years, the City had been picked, alongside five other entries across the country to enter the Champion of Champions category for 2014.

Friends of City Gardens and Volunteer Activities

The City Gardens Manager reported that 14 volunteers from the friends and the City Guides 'put to bed' Christ Church Greyfriars during mid – October and that the sessions had been a great success and were due to be repeated in spring 2014.

She added that 16,000 naturalised bulbs had been planted in some of City Gardens, at sites including the Barbican Estate; Thomas More and Ben Johnson High Walk, Postman's Park and Bunhill Fields. The volunteer groups involved included: Pricewaterhouse Coopers, Thyme Out (a group of adults with learning disabilities from Bromley), Scouts from the City Group and the Friends of City Gardens.

She concluded by noting that the Friends of City Gardens are now an officially constituted group and had held their first Annual General Meeting on the 19 October, which had been attended by 300 persons. She added that the Friends had recently secured a small grant from the Skipton Building Society to undertake biodiversity workshops with disadvantaged groups.

Finally, she noted that the Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony would take place on Thursday 5 December at 4:00pm.

In response to a question from a member the City Gardens Manager confirmed that St Jude's Day storm damage across City Gardens had been limited to the loss of one tree at Bunhill Fields and some minor damage to branches across City Gardens as a whole.

In response to a question from the Deputy Chairman regarding the works at St Andrew's Holborn, the Superintendent confirmed that the City of London would assume responsibility for the expanded area of open space by the church, and that this would be funded by s106 monies.

13. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

Observers to the Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee

In response to a query from an Observer, the Committee clerk agreed to look into whether Observers could be incorporated into the Committee's terms of reference.

14. **URGENT ITEMS**

There was no urgent business.

15. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED: that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Item(s)	Paragraph(s)
16-18	3

16. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

RESOLVED: that the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 7 October be agreed as a correct record.

17. **DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER URGENCY POWERS - TREE INSPECTION CONTRACT**

The Committee received a report of the Town Clerk detailing action taken under under urgency powers since the last meeting of the Committee.

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18. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

There were no questions.

19. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED**

Blackfriars Bridge

The City Gardens Manager updated the Committee on the unauthorised installation of a food kiosk near Blackfriars Bridge.

The meeting ended at 4.00 pm

Chairman

Contact Officer: Alistair MacLellan
alistair.maclellan@cityoflondon.gov.uk