

OPEN SPACES AND CITY GARDENS
Tuesday, 9 December 2014

Minutes of the meeting of the Open Spaces and City Gardens held at Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Tuesday, 9 December 2014 at 11.15 am

Present

Members:

Alderman Ian Luder (Chairman)
Deputy Alex Deane (Deputy Chairman)
Deputy Robert Howard
Wendy Mead
Jeremy Simons
Deputy Michael Welbank
Virginia Rounding
Verderer Peter Adams (Ex-Officio Member)
Graeme Smith

In Attendance:

Catherine Bickmore
Tony Ghilchik

Officers:

Natasha Dogra
Sue Ireland
Martin Rodman

Louisa Allen
Alison Elam

Lisa Russell
Edward Wood
Tony Halmos
John Park

Town Clerk's Department
Director, Open Spaces
Superintendent, West Ham Park and City
Gardens
Open Spaces Department
Group Accountant, Chamberlain's
Department
Department of the Built Environment
Comptroller and City Solicitor's Department
Director, Public Relations
Public Relations Office

1. **APOLOGIES**
Apologies had been received from Alderman Gordon Haines and George Abrahams.
2. **DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF ANY PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA**
There were no declarations of interest.
3. **MINUTES**
Resolved: that the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as an accurate record.
4. **UPDATE ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

The Director provided Members with an update drawing their attention to her recent meeting with the Minister for Parks, Steven Williams MP. The Director informed Members that the Member of Parliament had a number of interesting views for the future of parks, including the possibility of making park services a statutory requirement. Members were also informed that controlling Oak Processionary Moth had proved to be challenging this year. Officers hoped to be more successful in controlling the disease next year, as the funding from DEFRA was due to end next year.

5. ANNUAL PUBLIC RELATIONS UPDATE

Members were updated on Public Relations activities in support of the services for which the Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee was responsible during the period October 2013 to November 2014. The activities in this report are also in support of the *Communications Strategy 2014- 2017*.

Highlights of the support for the services of the Committee included:

- Media
- Public Affairs
- Events
- Website
- Digital communications and social media
- Literature and related activities
- Member and internal communications
- Filming
- Sponsorship

Members thanked Officers from the Public Relations department for their continuous hard work throughout the year. Members noted that Twitter feeds were a useful way to share information with the public regarding various projects taking place. Officers informed Members that the website was receiving an increasing number of hits, with the downloadable maps proving to be very helpful.

Resolved: That Members agreed to receive the report on Public Relations activities during the period October 2013 to November 2014 in support of the services for which the Committee is responsible.

6. THE CITY OF LONDON OPEN SPACE STRATEGY-DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

Members were informed about the consultation process regarding the production of the draft of the City of London Open Space Strategy.

Following a period of public consultation, proposed changes were added where appropriate. Members were asked to agree the final draft of the City of London Open Space Strategy and allow its adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document within the City of London Local Plan. Comments from the consultation have been summarised and collated.

Members noted that a number of green spaces owned by the City of London Corporation are in fact outside of the square mile. Therefore, Officers would need to ensure that they work in coalition with their colleagues in local authorities to ensure the emerging local plans of these boroughs took into account the importance of these green spaces.

Resolved: Members approved the final draft of the City of London Open Space Strategy Supplementary Planning Document for adoption and publication.

7. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS - 2014/15 AND 2015/16

Members were updated on the latest approved revenue budget for 2014/15 and were asked for approval of a provisional revenue budget for 2015/16, for subsequent submission to the Finance Committee. The budgets were prepared within the resources allocated to the Director.

Overall the provisional Original budget for 2015/16 totalled £1.897M, which was an increase of £79,000 when compared with the latest approved budget for 2014/15.

In response to a query regarding the on-street parking reserve Members noted that with many new schemes came the ability to apply for funding to cover establishment costs, formerly for five, now twenty years. As there were a number of these schemes open at any one time, funded from different sources, Officers apply to the Chamberlain in arrears for establishment costs expended during the year. The sum applied for varies slightly from year to year as older schemes drop off and new ones are taken on board. It was not possible to show a projected figure for future years as this funding does not appear as expected income in my local risk budget, but was instead adjusted by the Chamberlain at outturn.

Resolved:

- Members reviewed the provisional 2015/16 revenue budget to ensure that it reflected the Committee's objectives and, approved the budget for submission to the Finance Committee;
- Members approved the draft Capital Budget;
- Members authorised the Chamberlain, in consultation with the Director of Open Spaces, to revise the budgets allowing for any further implications that would arise from Corporate Projects, departmental reorganisations and other reviews, and changes to the Additional Works Programme. Members agreed that works over £50,000 would need to be considered by the Committee;
- Members agreed that if specific service based review proposals included with this budget report are rejected by the Committee, or other Committees request that further proposals are pursued, that the substitution of other suitable proposals for a corresponding amount will be delegated to the Town Clerk in discussion with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the relevant Committee. If the substituted saving is not considered to be straight forward in nature, then the Town Clerk shall also consult the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee prior to approval of alternative proposal(s)

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

Members noted the departmental performance at the end of the second quarter of financial year 2014/15. Members were updated on details of progress made delivering key projects and achievements against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and changes to key risks during the first half of the financial year.

Progress in delivering the current year's business plan will continue to be monitored and the remedial action will be taken.

Resolved: Members approved the information received.

9. **RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

Members noted the new Risk Management Strategy which was approved by the Audit and Risk Management Committee on 13 May 2014. All committees were provided information about the new Risk Management Strategy and progress on its implementation. This report covered the Open Spaces Department.

In line with the Cabinet Office's Management of Risk (M_O_R) principles, a Risk Management Strategy has been developed to provide a clearer and dynamic framework for managing organisational risks. Key changes in the Risk Management Strategy included a new framework to define risks, a new 4x4 risk scoring model, the introduction of a target risk score and a clearer route to escalate risks.

Resolved: Members noted the new Risk Management Strategy and plans for the phased roll-out of the strategy within departments and City of London Institutions.

10. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

The Superintendent provided Members with the following update:

Finance

The City Garden budget was in line with agreed budget profiles.

Staff

A full complement of staff is in place.

Projects and winter works programme

The team have been undertaking a comprehensive winter works programme. As follows:

St Andrew's Holborn

Both parts of the garden have been redesigned, funded through S106 and funds raised by the church. The City Gardens team have undertaken the soft landscaping which has included; the planting of 4,000 flowering shrubs and herbaceous plants, 2 small lawn areas, a tree and hedging. The latter will be planted by the end of March 2015. A celebration opening event is planned for the spring organised by the church.

The City of London Boy's School

The frontage of the school has undergone a transformation in line with the Riverside Walk Way strategy and in consultation with the school. Seven trees, 4,000 seasonal flowering shrubs and herbaceous plants have been planted.

St Olave churchyard has also been re landscaped, the planting will be undertaken in the spring including a herb garden in acknowledgement of William and Peter Turner (father and son) both notable 16th and early 17th Century physicians and naturalists.

During November the team have planted seven additional trees, four Acers in Sun Street, three Acers in Silk Street and a further four to be planted in the coming months to replace failing trees.

Britain in Bloom - Officers attended the finalists RHS Britain in Bloom event on the 16th October, held in Bristol. The City of London won Gold in the Champions of Champions category.

City in Bloom Campaign celebrations - On the 27th October awards were handed out to 17 category winners, the full list is published on the City of London, City Gardens website. 130 guests attended the event held in Middle Temple Hall including residents, schools and businesses. The event was funded through sponsorship and organised by the Friends of City Gardens.

Events and activities - Christmas Tree Lighting ceremony took place on the 4th December attended by the Lord Mayor, sheriffs and consorts. Guests were entertained by the St Paul's Cathedral Choir school, Bread Street Choir. The Chairman noted that the event clashed with a number of meetings and asked the Town Clerk to consult Members of the Committee when setting the date for 2015.

Over the course of two weekends in November, Barbican residents assisted the City Gardens team plant 26,000 bulbs and 500 primroses in the Barbican grounds for on-going naturalised displays in the spring months.

Also during November, volunteers from the Friends of City Gardens undertook two days of gardening activities in Christchurch Greyfriars, lifting and dividing herbaceous plants, this was followed by the planting of 2,000 bulbs by adults with learning disabilities taking part in a horticultural training programme based in Bromley.

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

There were no questions.

12. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED**

There was no urgent business.

13. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

MOTION: 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 Local Government Act.

14. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as an accurate record.

15. **FINSBURY CIRCUS GARDEN - REINSTATEMENT UPDATE**

The Committee received the report of the Director of Open Spaces.

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

There were no questions.

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

There was no urgent business.

The meeting ended at 12.20 pm

Chairman

Contact Officer: Natasha Dogra
natasha.dogra@cityoflondon.gov.uk