

OPEN SPACES AND CITY GARDENS
Monday, 2 February 2015

Minutes of the meeting of the Open Spaces and City Gardens held at Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 2 February 2015 at 2.30 pm

Present

Members:

Deputy Alex Deane (Deputy Chairman) - In the Chair
George Abrahams (Ex-Officio Member)
Alderman Gordon Haines (Ex-Officio Member)
Deputy Robert Howard
Wendy Mead
Barbara Newman
Virginia Rounding
Deputy Michael Welbank

Observers:

Verderer Peter Adams
Catherine Bickmore

Officers:

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| Natasha Dogra | Town Clerk's Department |
| Sue Ireland | Director of Open Spaces |
| Sam Cook | Remembrancer's Department |
| Louisa Allen | City Gardens Manager |
| Martin Rodman | Superintendent, West Ham Park and City Gardens |
| Lucy Murphy | West Ham Park Manager |
| Esther Sumner | Open Spaces Business Manager |
| Steven Chandler | City Surveyor's Department |
| Patrick Hegarty | Open Spaces Department |
| Alison Elam | Group Accountant, Chamberlain's Department |
| Edward Wood | Comptroller and City Solicitor's Department |

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Alderman Luder, Graeme Smith and Jeremy Simons.

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: The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

4. **UPDATE ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

The Committee received an update from the Director of Open Spaces and noted:

- The NASA report was published on 16/1/15 and it confirmed that 2014 was the world hottest year, with 38 consecutive years when the temperature rise has been above average and 2014 was Europe's warmest year since 1880.
- DEFRA's Natural Capital committee published its 3 year research report, charting the decline in natural capital and calling for a 25 year plan to halt decline. As well as plans for woodland, peat and wetlands; the recreational value of urban green spaces for health and wellbeing and urban air quality are recognised.
- The Green Infrastructure Task Force, which was to report for the (50yr) London Infrastructure Plan, met on 30/1/15. The force started by considering the functions of GI; Primarily - amenity, recreation and heritage conservation
It would now focus on health, well-being, transport (walking and cycling), ecological resilience. In the future it would investigate storm water, cooling and air and water quality.
- The Greater London National Park campaign was promoted by Daniel Raven – Ellison a National Geographic Emerging Explorer. The Director attended a workshop on 28/1/15 with AECOM who were offering support. Benefits were not currently but benefits for education and promotion resulting in behaviour change would be proposed.
- Later in 2015 a Basic Payments Scheme would replace Single Payments (after 10 years). Currently Open Spaces received £240kpa. Initial concerns were that we would not be able to be classified as farmers but lobbying from RSPB and the National Trust. Environmental Stewardship and English woodland grants would be transformed to NECMS – a new environmental land management scheme operated by Natural England.
- Various Powers Bill was in informal consultation stage before reporting to Management Committees in May and Open Spaces in June.
- The Annual Report presented a change to the 3 year promotional report with annual data inserted. Copies of the report were now available.

5. **SCHEDULE OF VISITS 2015**

Members noted that the visit to the Open Spaces and City Gardens would be rescheduled from 20th June 2015. The Superintendent would arrange a new date in consultation with the Chairman. Members also queried the dates of two consecutive visits by the Epping Forest and Commons Committee and asked the Town Clerk to investigate whether these could be rearranged.

Resolved: That the Schedule of Visits was agreed for 2015.

6. **INFRASTRUCTURE BILL**

The Committee noted the relevant provisions of the Infrastructure Bill, currently before Parliament, which would introduce a new regime to facilitate the control of non-native invasive species. Under this regime, Government bodies would

be able to enter into voluntary agreements with landowners, setting out what measures are to be taken in order to eradicate or control an invasive species. Where the voluntary process was unsuccessful, it would be possible to make binding orders requiring the landowner to take action or to pay the costs of doing so.

A Member asked whether or not a new Electronic Communications Code might have consequences for the City Corporation's open spaces and Officers asked to answer this query via email after the meeting.

RECEIVED.

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

The Committee noted that the Hampstead Heath Ponds Project remained the highest risk and highest profile departmental project. Planning permission was granted by the London Borough of Camden Development Control Committee on the 15th January 2015. This project had slipped as a result of a delay in appointing an independent Panel Engineer Reviewer, which the London Borough of Camden determined was required. In December, the outcome of the Judicial Review decision was received, the Heath and Hampstead Society's (the Society) claim was dismissed by the Honourable Justice Lang and the Society decided not to appeal.

Progress has also been made on the Highams Park Dam Project. Lake desilting was completed in December 2014 with removal of 5000m³ of silt. The reinforced concrete works for the floodwall are complete with the brick cladding almost complete. The drawdown structure is currently under construction with the reinforced concrete works for the inlet and outlet structure installed. Project completion is on target for March 2015.

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8. **OPEN SPACES HEALTH & SAFETY AUDIT 2014**

The Committee noted that the Health and Safety audit was carried out across the Open Spaces Department annually to monitor arrangements under twelve H&S indicators. The twin aims of the process were to provide assurance as to the effectiveness of our management of H&S and support managers in carrying out their H&S roles.

During the summer and autumn of 2014 self-assessments were carried out across the Department. West Ham Park, the Cemetery & Crematorium, City Commons and Burnham Beeches were then selected to have their self assessments validated through site visits to look at management practices, procedures and the safety culture on the ground against the twelve H&S indicators.

As an innovation during 2014, the H&S Team within the Town Clerk's Department carried out an audit which followed on from a review of the corporate H&S Management System in 2013. This audit was carried out over

a sample of departments, including Open Spaces, comprising interviews with the Director and senior management and the assessment of two sections, City Gardens and Ashted Common

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9. **CONSOLIDATED REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS - 2014/15 AND 2015/16**

Members noted the annual submission of the consolidated revenue and capital budgets overseen by the Committee. In particular, it updated the Committee on the latest approved revenue budget for 2014/15 and the proposed revenue budget for 2015/16, as approved by the relevant Open Spaces Committees.

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10. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

The Committee received an update from the City Gardens Manager and noted the following:

Finance

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

Staff

A full complement of staff are in place.

Horticultural supplies tender

City Gardens officers were about to embark on a comprehensive tender for the supply of horticultural goods. The predicted volume of spend will mean that this will be an OJEU tender and the creation of a framework agreement. Once the contract is in place this will benefit Open Spaces, City of London departments and other boroughs with their procurement duties.

Project and work update

The team are nearly at the end of a comprehensive winter works programme due to be completed by the end of March. As follows:

St Andrew's Holborn

Hard and soft landscaping has been completed, except a hedge which will be planted by the end of March.

The City of London Boys' School

Soft and hard landscaping has been completed.

St Olave's Churchyard

Hard and soft landscaping has been completed except the planting of an herb garden which will be planted in warmer weather.

St Dunstan's in the East

Soft and hard landscaping improvements were about to take place and to include: tree pruning, realigning landscaped areas to respond to the heavy

wear and tear of the garden, relaying turf, comprehensive pruning of the climbers, re design and re planting of flower and shrub borders.

Barbican Estate – Beech Gardens

14 trees and 22,000 plants will be planted at the end of March as part of the Professor Nigel Dunnett scheme. Professor Dunnett will be supervising the layout and leading a resident planting day on the 20th March.

Events and activities

Friends of City Gardens led on the RSPB bird watch survey which took place at the end of January; a report will be published on the website, 15 people attended.

Customer feedback

City Gardens undertook 140 face to face surveys during the summer months, 90% of our customers considered the service either 'good or very good'.

Volunteer Hours

There was a significant increase in the amount of volunteers hours undertaken in City Gardens this calendar year, increasing from 3,207 hours (2013) to 4,264 hours (2014). This increase is most likely due to the establishment of the Friends of City Gardens who are now leading on a number of events and activities within City Gardens including City in Bloom.

11. BUNHILL FIELDS BURIAL GROUND DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN (2015 - 2020)

The Committee received information regarding the production of a Bunhill Fields Burial Ground Draft Management Plan (2015 – 2020). Members noted the vision, objectives and priorities for the management of Bunhill Fields for the ensuing five years and has been prepared by the City Gardens team.

Officers asked Members to agree to the draft plan being made available for public consultation. Following consultation, any proposed changes to the draft plan will be brought back to Committee for approval and for formal adoption as a management plan. Members agreed that Bunhill Fields was used as a thoroughfare and must be this must be referred to in the management plan.

Resolved: That Members approved the draft text of the Bunhill Fields Burial Ground Draft Management Plan 2015 - 2020 for public consultation.

12. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

There were no questions.

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

There was no urgent business.

14. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

It was agreed 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.

15. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

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

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 3.10 pm

Chairman

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