

OPEN SPACES AND CITY GARDENS
Monday, 16 July 2018

Minutes of the meeting of the Open Spaces and City Gardens held at Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 16 July 2018 at 11.30 am

Present

Members:

Graeme Smith (Chairman)
Oliver Sells (Deputy Chairman)
Alderman Ian Luder
Wendy Mead
Barbara Newman
Jeremy Simons
Deputy Philip Woodhouse (Ex-Officio Member)
Karina Dostalova (Ex-Officio Member)

Officers:

Carl Locsin	- Town Clerk's Department
Alison Hurley	- City Surveyor's Department
Martin Rodman	- Superintendent, City Gardens
Mark Jarvis	- Chamberlain's Department
Edward Wood	- Comptroller and City Solicitor's
Natasha Dogra	- Town Clerk's Department
Colin Buttery	- Director of Open Spaces & Heritage
Madhur Gurjar	- Open Spaces Department
Michael Radcliffe	- City Surveyor's Department
Patrick Hegarty	- Open Spaces Department
Amelia Ehren	- Town Clerk's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies of absence had been received from Caroline Haines, Deputy John Tomlinson and Anne Fairweather.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

3. THE ORDER OF THE COURT OF COMMON COUNCIL

RESOLVED – that the Order of the Court of Common Council be received as an accurate record.

4. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

The Committee were invited to elect a Chairman for the ensuing year. A list of names of the Members who were eligible to stand was read. Graeme Smith expressed an interest in serving.

RESOLVED – that Graeme Smith being the only Member willing to serve was elected as Chairman for the ensuing year.

5. **ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN**

The Committee were invited to elect a Deputy Chairman for the ensuing year. A list of names of the Members who were eligible to stand was read. Oliver Sells expressed an interest in serving.

RESOLVED – that Oliver Sells being the only Member willing to serve was elected as Deputy Chairman for the ensuing year.

6. **APPOINTMENT OF A REPRESENTATIVE TO THE STREETS AND WALKWAYS SUB COMMITTEE**

The Committee were invited to elect a representative to the Streets and Walkways Sub Committee for the ensuing year. A list of names of the Members who were eligible to stand was read. Barbara Newman expressed an interest in serving.

RESOLVED – that Barbara Newman being the only Member willing to serve was elected for the ensuing year.

7. **MINUTES**

The Committee were invited to consider the minutes of the previous meeting.

RESOLVED – that the minutes be agreed as an accurate record.

8. **OPEN SPACES DEPARTMENT, CITY GARDENS AND WEST HAM PARK RISK MANAGEMENT**

The Committee were invited to consider the risk management report and noted the risks faced by the Department of Open Spaces and across the City Gardens and West Ham Park division. Risk was reviewed regularly by the Department's Senior Leadership Team as part of the ongoing management of the operations of the Department. Members noted that the plan also reviewed regularly by the Management team of City Gardens and West Ham Park.

A Member raised a query regarding Hampstead Heath Pond and the risk management at the site. The Committee were informed that the item had been removed as a corporate red risk and the report would reflect this amendment.

In response to a query regarding tree pests and diseases, Members noted that this risk was seasonal, and the direction of travel was difficult to ascertain. The Director said that Oak Processionary Moth may be a greater risk to the open spaces later this year. Members were informed that Officers consulted with their counterparts across Europe to keep abreast of changes in tree pests and diseases. The Forestry Commission was also undertaking work to investigate this matter across Europe.

The Chairman provided feedback on the template of the report and informed Members that the layout of corporate risk registers was being reviewed

Corporation-wide. Officers were advised to consult the designs of registers considered by the Police Committee.

RESOLVED – that Members approved the departmental risk register and approved the City Gardens elements of the City Gardens and West Ham Park risk register.

9. **REVENUE OUTTURN 2017/18**

Members were presented with a report comparing the revenue outturn for the services overseen by the Committee in 2017/18 with the final agreed budget for the year. In total, there was a break-even position for the services overseen by the Committee compared with the final agreed budget for the year.

RESOLVED – that the update be received.

10. **OPEN SPACES BUSINESS PLAN YEAR-END REPORT 2017/18**

Members noted that 2017/18 was a year of embedding change, with a new Director and new services joining the Department. Services have continued to perform well with high levels of customer satisfaction recorded and numerous accreditations from organisations such as Green Flag, London in Bloom and Visit England.

Members noted that there had been consistent achievement of performance measures with slight improvement upon the previous year. Net local risk expenditure for services that are the responsibility of the Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee came in very slightly (0.2% / £28k) overspent.

The Committee were informed that the Open Spaces Act received Royal assent on 15 March 2018 and this would enable the charities to enhance their ability to optimise income generation. Members noted that the Act would be very helpful in providing the City Corporation with greater freedom and powers in relation to our open spaces.

The Chairman said the report was very encouraging and the Committee expressed their thanks to the ongoing support from the volunteers and friends of the City Corporation's open spaces.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

11. **CYCLICAL WORKS PROGRAMME**

Members noted the provisional list of cyclical projects being considered for properties under the management of Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee under the cyclical works programme. The Committee noted the draft cyclical project list for 2019/20 totals £118,500 and would continue the on-going programme in the maintenance of the property and infrastructure assets.

Members noted that the works included in the programme were mainly focused on Bunhill Fields. The Superintendent agreed to raise the issue of breakdown and repairs maintenance programmes with the City Surveyor's department to ensure that funding was set aside for works such as repairs to footpaths.

RESOLVED – that Members approved the Cyclical Works Programme for the ensuing year.

12. CORPORATE VOLUNTEERING STRATEGY

Members received the final version of the Corporate Volunteering Strategy 2018-23. The strategy set out the City of London Corporation's vision for volunteering, in which the organisation 'had a positive volunteering culture, with clear and consistent practices, which support volunteers and their beneficiaries to flourish in the Square Mile, London and beyond' and how it will work towards achieving it.

Members queried the possibility of an overarching policy to recognise the work of long-time serving volunteers. The Committee noted that the Hospitality Working Party were due to consider hosting an event to thank all City Corporation volunteers. Members agreed that a consistent approach would be very helpful though it was noted that the opportunities offered at different locations varied a great deal.

RESOLVED – that the strategy be received.

13. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

The Committee received an update of activities in the City's Open Spaces and were informed that the late delivery of the Aldgate project required a large amount of our resources at a time that coincided with good weather and the public starting to use our sites heavily. The good weather also increased horticultural maintenance as we try to stay on top of watering during what was becoming a rather protracted dry spell. The summer bedding had now all been planted, and we are busy preparing for London and Britain in Bloom.

Members noted that the problem with rough sleepers at St Botolph's Bishopsgate was continuing to be a challenge. The City Gardens team had been working with the Outreach Team who had been engaging with the rough sleepers, and have provided regular rough sleepers with accommodation, however they are choosing not to use it. In response to a query it was noted that there were two tents on site. Officers would continue to focus on resolving this and exploring all options for tackling this problem. This was challenging for the Gardeners who take great pride in their sites.

The Committee noted that the City Gardens would be judged for Britain in Bloom on the 3 August and London in Bloom on the 12 July.

Members were made aware of a document circulated by the Deputy Chairman in relation to the input of the Committee to planning applications, in particular relating to an application regarding Inner Temple. Members were informed that Officers had submitted a letter stating their concerns regarding the planning application at Inner Temple. Members agreed that this Committee's remit included protecting open spaces and Members had the responsibility of overseeing this. The Committee wished to express their severe concerns on the detrimental effects on the garden at the site at Inner Temple. Members

conveyed their concerns regarding the long period of time during which Inner Temple garden would not be used and the detrimental effect on the garden itself. Members wished to submit these concerns to the Planning and Transportation Committee stating their objection to the use of part of the gardens for temporary building works due to the destruction it would cause to this unique area at Inner Temple. The proposal was put to the Committee and upon being seconded was agreed unanimously by Members of the Committee who did not serve on the Planning and Transportation Committee, who abstained from voting.

RESOLVED – that the update be received, and a resolution be submitted to the Planning and Transportation Committee relating to the planning application at Inner Temple Gardens.

14. **CHURCHYARD ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE REPORT**

Members noted the progress to date on the development of the Churchyards Enhancement Programme and the results of the recent public consultation exercise.

Members were informed that a programme board was established to steer the programme's development and to work closely with the Diocese of London and St Paul's Cathedral. The development of the programme to date had resulted in:

- ☑ Detailed site assessments of all City churchyards;
- ☑ A prioritisation exercise to identify those churchyards most in need of improvement. This includes 11 proposed transformational projects;
- ☑ Development of cross-cutting work streams such as signage, historic interpretation and smart interventions;
- ☑ A detailed consultation exercise involving all parishes as well as the wider public.

The Committee noted that work that was still to be completed included:

- ☑ A delivery plan and funding strategy;
- ☑ Detailed project briefs for the 11 transformational projects.

In response to a query Members noted that the full programme would be finalised in September and submitted to the Committee for approval in October, after which individual projects could be initiated and implemented, subject to funding.

RESOLVED – That Members approved the prioritisation of 11 churchyards to make progress on detailed project briefs and develop a delivery plan.

15. **CITY GARDENS EVENTS POLICY REVIEW**

Members noted that the Events Policy was approved by Open Spaces Committee on the 6 June 2016 following a trial of a draft policy presented to Committee on the 20 April 2015. Some minor amendments were made as result of feedback from users and to assist with the administration of events. It also incorporated some minor changes to align it with the Open Spaces departmental events policy that was presented to committee in April 2018.

RESOLVED – that Members:

- Approved the updated version of the City Gardens Events Policy;
- Agreed the updated schedule Fees and Charges.

16. **FINSBURY CIRCUS BANDSTAND REMOVAL**

Members were informed that there had been a bandstand located at Finsbury Circus Garden since 1955, and this feature had been relatively unaffected by Crossrail's construction work within the garden. As Crossrail's work nears completion, preparation was underway to reinstate the garden landscape and refreshment building, and concept designs were being prepared.

Members noted the background to and evidence for not including a bandstand within the reinstated landscape at Finsbury Circus. As this conflicted with a previous instruction from the Committee, Members were asked to reconsider their original decision, on the basis of aesthetics, competition for space, cost of maintenance, unfitness for purpose and lack of heritage value.

Discussions ensued regarding the future of the bandstand, were it to be removed from Finsbury Circus. Members wished to explore the relocation of the bandstand and asked Officers whether it could be moved to be enjoyed at another of the City Corporation's open spaces

The Superintendent said that a decision regarding the bandstand was required by the Committee to allow for the progression of the current scheme. Members were informed that the area outside Finsbury Circus garden would be removed from this scheme as work was not progressing positively. Road awareness schemes would be prioritised going forward due to increased footfall in the area and the number of accidents along the highways close to the site.

In response to a query regarding the history of the bandstand. Officers said it is the property of the City Corporation and was not listed. Members were supportive of the recommendation for the bandstand to not be include in the proposals and advised Officers to investigate the relocation of the bandstand.

RESOLVED – that Members agreed that the Finsbury Circus bandstand should not be included in the design proposals for the new landscape, but that other locations within and without the Square Mile should be considered before disposal.

17. **GATEWAY 3 REPORT FINSBURY CIRCUS REINSTATEMENT PROJECT**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Open Spaces and noted that once Crossrail vacate Finsbury Circus Garden then COL will need to reinstate the landscape. It was also decided to replace the Pavilion. The previous GW1/2 report included public realm works which are now being considered independently and will be presented through a separate report by Department of the Built Environment as appropriate.

The garden landscape and layout has seen several changes in its lifetime, thus there is no imperative to retain an historic setting. However, considering wider

issues of climate change, sustainability and biodiversity, the reinstatement proposals are seeking hard and soft landscaping which reflect those objectives and functionality and to accord with the City of London Open Space Strategy Supplementary Planning Document.

The former pavilion was a converted sports facility, housing a wine bar and appealing to a niche market. The new pavilion should be sited sympathetically within the landscape and appeal to the broader public requirements and designed to ensure its commercial viability and sustainability for the long term.

Crossrail has occupied well over half of the garden for the last 10 years as a works site and when it vacates, will only be responsible for reinstatement of that part. The garden infrastructure was dated and reinstatement of part only would not enable the implementation of a new landscaping design or reflect the spirit and requirements of the approved planning strategy.

The Committee considered option 3 as the way forward, with the plans including a roof terrace and reinstating the garden. Members deemed this proposal to be innovative and viable, however there was greater risk involved with this option. Officers stated that planning permission could be more difficult to gain if option 3 was pursued.

A Member proposed that a resolution be submitted to the Planning and Transportation Committee requesting an order for the permanent closure of the highway open to vehicle access between Finsbury circus and Moorgate. Upon being seconded the proposal was agreed unanimously by Members of the Committee. Officers agreed to convey these suggestions to colleagues in the Department of the Built Environment.

RESOLVED – that Members supported option 3 and asked Officers to pursue this option.

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

Wanstead Flats Fire on Sunday 15th July 2018

In response to a query regarding emergency response coordination to the fire at Wanstead Flats, Officers informed Members that the response was coordinated with London Fire Brigade, the local authority and staff at Epping Forest. A chain of communication would be established to ensure that Members were aware of emergency situations going forward.

Members noted that all Superintendents had been nominated to undertake Silver Command training relating to such emergencies, and the Director was a trained Gold Commander. The Committee agreed that a meeting should be arranged between those leading the emergency response, staff at Epping Forest and the Director of Open Spaces to ensure that lessons are learnt from the process during the fire at Wanstead Flats. Members agreed that smoking during the hot weather at open spaces should also be discouraged to avoid such circumstances reoccurring, and the Director would investigate this matter.

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

There was no urgent business.

20. **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 Local Government Act.

21. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

The Committee were invited to consider the minutes of the previous meeting.

RESOLVED – that the minutes be agreed as an accurate record.

22. **LONG TERM FUNDING OF THE LEARNING PROGRAMME**

The Committee were invited to consider and approve the report of the Director of Open Spaces.

23. **DEBT ARREARS - INVOICED INCOME FOR PERIOD ENDING 31 MARCH 2018**

The Committee were invited to consider and receive the report of the Director of Open Spaces.

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

There were no questions.

25. **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 1:00 pm

Chairman

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