

OPEN SPACES AND CITY GARDENS
Monday, 5 December 2022

Minutes of the meeting of the Open Spaces and City Gardens held at Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 5 December 2022 at 10.00 am

Present

Members:

Caroline Haines (Chair)
Andrew McMurtrie (Deputy Chairman)
Alderman Ian David Luder
Wendy Mead
Oliver Sells KC

In attendance:

Catherine Bickmore (Observer)

Officers:

Sally Agass	- Environment Department
Chloe Ainsworth	- Town Clerk's Department
Melanie Charalambous	- Environment Department
Joanne Hill	- Environment Department
Juliemma McLoughlin	- Environment Department
Simon Owen	- Chamberlain's Department
Jake Tibbetts	- Environment Department
Edward Wood	- Comptroller and City Solicitor's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Deputy Graeme Doshi-Smith and Benjamin Murphy.

The Chair informed Members that Catherine McGuinness had stepped down from the Committee and that a new appointment would be made at the next meeting of the Court of Common Council on 8 December 2022.

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

There were no declarations.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED – The public minutes and non-public summary of the meeting held on 7 July 2022 were approved as a correct record.

3.1 Matters Arising

The Committee received a verbal update from the Executive Director of Environment on Finsbury Circus, which had been subject to the corporate projects review led by the Resource Allocation Sub Committee (RASC).

The Committee noted that Finsbury Circus had received a Crossrail contribution of approximately £3.2 million to fund the core part of the scheme and that there had been a commitment to increase this budget by £2.5 million from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). It also noted that costs had since increased and at the previous meeting the Committee had been informed that Officers were considering additional funding sources.

Members were informed that at the meeting of the RASC on 9 November, the Sub Committee had enquired if the scheme could fit within the existing Crossrail envelope of £3.2 million. Officers advised that Environment and the City Surveyors would obtain current market prices and consider this, but pointed out that revising the scheme to fit solely within the Crossrail contribution would mean deviating from the scope originally agreed by the Open Spaces & City Gardens Committee and for which planning approval had been obtained.

The Committee was extremely concerned with the delays to the Finsbury Circus scheme and the resulting increase in cost. The Committee noted that it would need to consider whether to retain the original scope of the scheme and seek the additional funding from RASC or whether to try to fund the scheme with the existing £3.2 million.

In response to a question, the Committee was informed that there was not a time limit on spending the Crossrail contribution and that this did not include the western leg of Finsbury Circus. In response to another question, Officers advised that they would explore whether any interest was being accrued by the Crossrail contribution and, if this was the case, where it was allocated to.

The Executive Director of Environment informed Members that going forward a Priorities Board would deal with projects that were legally capable of gaining CIL or on-street parking and that these would be reported to RASC on a quarterly basis. RASC would then determine which activities should be prioritised. The Committee was mindful that there was no guarantee that RASC would prioritise granting funds to Finsbury Circus.

RESOLVED, that - The Committee is extremely concerned with the ongoing delays in the reinstatement of Finsbury Circus and requests that the Resource Allocation Sub Committee consider treating the Crossrail contribution like section 106 monies and that the interest accrued be added to the sum.

4. NOTE OF INQUORATE MEETING

RESOLVED – The public note of the inquorate meeting held on 6 October 2022 was approved as a correct record.

5. **DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY OR URGENCY POWERS**

The Committee received a report of the Town Clerk setting out the decisions taken by the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair, in accordance with Standing Order Nos. 41(a) and 41(b), since the last meeting.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

6. **BUSINESS PLAN 6 MONTH PROGRESS REPORT**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director Environment updating Members on the progress made against the 2022/23 high-level business plan of the Open Spaces Department which was approved by the Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee in December 2021.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

7. **DEPARTMENTAL AND SERVICE COMMITTEE BUDGET ESTIMATES 2023-24**

The Committee considered a joint report of the Chamberlain and the Executive Director Environment presenting the revenue and capital budgets for the Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee for 2023/24.

A Member sought clarity on the estimated costs for the Committee's current approved capital and supplementary revenue projects.

RESOLVED – That Members agree that amendments for 2022/23 and 2023/24 budgets arising from changes to recharges or for any further implications arising from corporate contracts, Target Operating Model (TOM), energy price increases, changes to the Cyclical Works Programme (CWP) and capital charges during budget setting be delegated to the Chamberlain in consultation with the Executive Director Environment.

8. **OPERATIONAL FINANCE PROGRESS REPORT (PERIOD 6 APRIL - SEPTEMBER) 2022/23 - NATURAL ENVIRONMENT DIVISION**

The Committee received a report of the Chamberlain updating Members on the operational finance position for period 6 (April - September) 2022/23 for the Natural Environment Division's local risk revenue budget to date and projected year-end outturn position, current live capital projects and outstanding debt position. The report also provided additional information on the various reserve funds and endowment balances held and other relevant finance information for the Natural Environment Division service.

In response to a query from a Member, the Committee was informed that the Parliament Hill Athletics Track was being taken forward.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

9. **CITY CLUSTER AREA - PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director Environment providing an update on the delivery of the City Cluster programme.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

10. **LEARNING ACROSS OPEN SPACES PRESENTATION**

The Committee received a presentation on the topic of learning across open spaces.

In response to a query from a Member, the Committee was informed that Transport for London (TfL) provide free transport for teachers and pupils travelling for school trips. The Committee was also informed that schools can apply for the culture mile learning fund if they require financial support for coach travel.

In response to another query from a Member, the Committee was informed that the City Corporation runs community programmes during the school holiday period and that at West Ham Park, Officers had been working with Ambition Aspire Achieve. The Committee was also informed that the community engagement and volunteering post was vacant.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

11. **CITY GREENING AND BIODIVERSITY**

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director Environment relating to Phase 3 of the Cool Streets and Greening programme.

In response to a query from the Chair, Members were informed that the key risks to the project included: maintenance costs, the reduction of the scope of the project and its affordability.

The Committee discussed the utilisation of above-ground planters. Members were informed that the most sustainable approach was planting into the ground.

A Member noted that the report did not refer to flight paths for pollinators and stated that it was important to take a holistic approach to greening and biodiversity.

In response to a query from a Member, the Committee was informed that the City Corporation had been involved in the design development of the Thames Tideway Tunnel in order to maximise the greenery incorporated into the project.

In response to a query relating to the Finsbury Circus 'Western Arm', the Committee was informed that this project was funded from section 106 contributions and it was anticipated to proceed in 2023/24.

RESOLVED, that -

- a) The proposals for re-landscaping and re-planting strategically located sites in the City are approved to reach Gateway 5 as described in this report;
- b) The additional budget of £95,000 for design development of the re-landscaping and re-planting proposals is approved to reach the next Gateway, funded from the On Street Parking Reserve (OSPR) Climate Action Strategy funding agreed for the Cool Streets and Greening programme;
- c) Members note that the tree planting proposals have already been approved at Gateway 5 at a total estimated cost of £755,000 (excluding risk) and are to be implemented across the next two planting seasons;
- d) Members note the total estimated cost of the project (Phase 3) at £2.5m (excluding risk).

12. CITY GARDENS MANAGER'S UPDATE

Members received a verbal update from the Executive Director of Environment on the following points:

- a) The City Gardens team was in the process of moving to a fully electric fleet and was awaiting information regarding the delivery time of the vehicles.
- b) A horticultural project manager had been appointed and had begun work with the team in October 2022. She was working on developing a new planting scheme for St Mary Aldermanbury.
- c) Friends of City Gardens had been assisting with leaf collection at Bunhill Fields and bulb planting at Postman's Park.
- d) The Christmas tree was on display to the south of St Paul's Cathedral and the tree lighting event would be taking place the next day on 6 December.

The Chair of Epping Forest & Commons Committee informed the Committee that there were two tree planting events taking place over the coming weeks. The first event was a project with Epping Town Council and the second was a tree planting of over 70 trees as part of the Queen's Green Canopy.

RESOLVED – that the update be noted.

13. BUNHILL FIELDS COMMUNITY ARTS PROJECT

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director Environment presenting the final design for the installation at Bunhill Fields.

Members were informed that the installation would be in place for one year.

RESOLVED – That Members approve the proposed art installation to be exhibited in Bunhill Fields.

14. **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director Environment providing an update on matters relating to the work of the Natural Environment Division of the Environment Department since the previous meeting of the Committee in October 2022.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

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

There were no questions.

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

There were no items of urgent business.

17. **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 as follows:-

Item	Paragraph
16&17	3
18	3, 5&7

18. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

RESOLVED – The non-public minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2022 were approved as a correct record.

19. **NON-PUBLIC NOTE OF INQUORATE MEETING**

RESOLVED – The non-public note of the inquorate meeting held on 6 October 2022 was approved as a correct record.

20. **DEBT ARREARS - NATURAL ENVIRONMENT DIVISION**

The Committee received a joint report of the Executive Director Environment and the Chamberlain.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

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

There were no questions.

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

There were no items of urgent business.

23. **CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES**

RESOLVED – That the confidential note of the inquorate meeting held on 6 October 2022 be approved as an accurate record.

24. **TARGET OPERATING MODEL PROPOSALS OF THE ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT - PHASE 2**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director Environment.

The meeting ended at 11.45 am

Chairman

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