

OPEN SPACES, CITY GARDENS & WEST HAM PARK COMMITTEE
Monday, 8 October 2012

Minutes of the meeting of the Open Spaces, City Gardens & West Ham Park Committee held at Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 8 October 2012 at 11.30 am

Present

Members:

Alderman Robert Hall (Chairman)
Dr Peter Hardwick (Deputy Chairman)
Alderman Ian Luder
Deputy Janet Owen
Deputy Michael Welbank
Catherine Bickmore
The Rev. Stennett Kirby
Councillor Joy Laguda
Charlotte Evans
Barbara Newman (Ex-Officio Member)
Jeremy Simons (Ex-Officio Member)

Observer

Tony Ghilchik

Officers:

Edward Foale	- Committee & Member Services Officer
Esther Sumner	- Policy Officer, Town Clerk's Department
David Pealing	- Committee & Member Services Assistant
Alison Elam	- Group Accountant, Chamberlain's Department
Edward Wood	- Comptroller and City Solicitor's Department
Deborah Cluett	- Comptroller and City Solicitor's Department
Paul Beckett	- Department of the Built Environment
Victor Callister	- Department of the Built Environment
Sue Ireland	- Director of Open Spaces
Denis Whelton	- Support Services Manager
Martin Rodman	- Superintendent, West Ham Park and City Gardens
Simon Lee	- Superintendent of Hampstead Heath, Queen's Park & Highgate Wood
Louisa Allen	- City Gardens Manager

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Deputy Stella Currie, Deputy Wendy Mead, Alderman Gordon Haines, Robert Cazenove and Richard Gurney.

WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Louisa Allen, who had recently been appointed City Gardens Manager, to her first Committee meeting.

2. **DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF ANY PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA**

There were no declarations.

3. **MINUTES**

The public minutes and summary of the meeting held on 23 July 2012 were approved as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:

Present

Observers

Tony Ghilchik – Representative of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee

Peter Adams – Representative of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee

AMENDMENT OF AGENDA ORDER

The Chairman advised that, as there was much to consider regarding the report on the National Planning Policy Framework and Neighbourhood Planning, it was proposed to amend the agenda order. This item would be considered immediately after the report on Green Flag and London in Bloom Awards in order to allow for a full consideration of the subject matter without placing unnecessary time pressures upon the consideration of other agenda items.

4. **DECISION TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY PROCEDURES**

The Committee considered a report of the Town Clerk. In accordance with Standing Order 41(b), the report provided details of a decision taken under delegated authority:

- Review of the Governance Arrangements Implemented in 2011.

RECEIVED

West Ham Park

5. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

The Committee received a verbal update from the Superintendent of City Gardens & West Ham Park relative to West Ham Park matters. The following points were made:

- Finance – the Park and nursery budgets were in line with the budget profile for this time of year. Due to the Jubilee functions and two state banquets, the nursery floral income was considerably healthier than it was at October 2011.

- Staff – A Keeper/Gardener and part-time support services officer had recently joined the team. The new starters were settling in well and the team was now at full complement.
- Community – The Friends of West Ham Park group recently held a bat walk that attracted 50 attendees. These events were often oversubscribed, but presented a fun evening activity for adults and children. The Friends' next scheduled event was to build a giant leaf pile, which would take place on the 4 November 2012.
- City Bridge Trust Funding – The funding had been used to allow local scouts to assist with bulb planting in the new orchard area. It was also anticipated that local schools would be sowing new meadow areas.
- Nursery – The first order from the seven-year Royal Parks contract had recently been delivered to Greenwich. Bedding was also scheduled to be dispatched to the City in the weeks following the meeting. The nursery would also provide the flowers for the Indonesian and Kuwait State visits due to take place in November 2012.
- Awards - the park had achieved a Gold award and Park of the year from London in Bloom for the second consecutive year, scoring an impressive 196/200.

A Member nominated by the London Borough of Newham thanked the Committee and the West Ham Park Estate Office staff for the events held in the Park around the Olympics and queried whether there was any additional funding to continue occasional sports coaching. The Superintendent undertook to investigate this possibility.

In response to a question from the Deputy Chairman, the Superintendent advised that it may not be possible to arrange a visit to the Olympic Park in spring 2013 as it was scheduled to be closed for refurbishment. The Director believed it may be possible to receive a small number of visitors and undertook to investigate this possibility.

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6. WEST HAM PARK TRUSTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2012

The Committee received a report of the Chamberlain that presented the Trustee's Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2012 for West Ham Park in the format required by the Charity Commission.

Members noted that, rather than being individuals, the registered Trustee of West Ham Park was the City of London Corporation. In response to a Member's query, the Chamberlain undertook to investigate the possibility of whether the names of the co-opted Committee Members could be included in 2013.

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7. **RISK MANAGEMENT - WEST HAM PARK LOCAL RISK REGISTER**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces that provided Members with an opportunity to examine the main strategic risks for West Ham Park. Members noted that the Director of Open Spaces was accountable for ensuring that significant risks in relation to the operational responsibilities of this Committee were escalated to Members on a timely basis.

In response to a Member's query, the Director advised that significant changes to adjusted risks could be reported to the Committee via the Superintendent's update.

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City Gardens

8. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

The Committee received a verbal update from the City Gardens Manager relative to City Gardens matters. The following points were made:

- Finance – budgets were on target for this period of the year. An additional £47,000 had been spent over the Olympic and Paralympic period to cover payment for existing staff overtime, additional casual staff, additional planting and rubbish clearance. This was to be reimbursed through the finance pot allocated by the 2012 Sub Committee.
- Staff – two assistant gardeners had recently been recruited, making a full complement of staff for the City Gardens team.
- Works update – the team had a very successful summer working collaboratively with many departments and partners to make the Olympics and Paralympics such a success. Shard planters and the decorative 'Look and Feel' decorations associated with the events had been removed and the team were preparing for a busy winter work season.
- Planned works included:
 - Converting fifteen existing annual bedding areas into more sustainable planting schemes using shrubs, perennials and herbaceous planting to create planting schemes that give seasonal interest as well as introducing biodiversity features. Notices would be posted where works were to be carried out and ward members would be notified of any major works in advance.
 - 27 trees would be planted, with a further potential 23 trees associated with the three-year Green Corridors project when trial holes were confirmed.
 - A mixture of spring and summer bulbs would be planted in Tower Hill gardens, funded by local area funding. Planting would be undertaken in partnership with local scout groups and schoolchildren in the next month.
 - Tree, grass and lavender planting would include the landscaping improvements at St Paul's walkway, to be completed by March 2013.
- Awards – City Gardens had retained both Green Flag and Green Heritage Awards this year, and had received gold in the London In Bloom campaign. Team members were recently awarded the Luder Cup

for Festival Gardens by the Flowers in the City Campaign and the team was currently awaiting the results of the London Squares competition this coming week.

- Children's Festival – The City Gardens team represented the Open Spaces Department at the Children's Festival, which was held in the Leadenhall Market a couple of weeks ago. The team handed out information leaflets, talked to and advertised all our open spaces to a wide range of families and people. The stall attracted a large number of children who learnt how to plant hyacinth bulbs and create grass heads, which they took home to observe plant growth. Families' details were collated to enable them to be invited to future events.
- Insurance Claim – City Gardens had received £13,000 from a developer in compensation for damage caused to a tree in Warwick Square. This was the first successful claim and was evidenced using the CAVAT valuation system. An additional £5,500 has also been awarded to pay for the tree's removal and its replacement with a new specimen.

Members recorded thanks to the City Gardens staff for their efforts over the Olympic period and the Chairman undertook to write to all officers to convey the Committee's gratitude.

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9. ROBERT HOOKE BELL

The Committee received a report of the Town Clerk that provided details of an application for installation of the Robert Hooke Bell. Members noted that the Culture, Heritage & Libraries Committee and Streets & Walkways Sub Committee had approved the installation of the Robert Hooke Bell immediately outside the south gate of St Paul's garden for a period of six months commencing in November, subject to planning permission being granted.

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10. LITTER MANAGEMENT IN THE CITY'S OPEN SPACES

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces relative to a proposal to undertake a one-year trial, to replace all current bins with a type that accepts only mixed recyclables in the City Gardens, lasting from January to December 2013. The key objectives would be to reduce the cost of processing waste from the City Gardens and to increase recycling rates for the City as a whole.

RESOLVED: That,

- i) all 27 'blast-proof' bins from the City Gardens be replaced with Envirobank 140L recycling bins, with an objective of minimising contamination to no greater than 5% in accordance with the requirements of the City's Materials Recycling Facility, on a one year trial between January and December 2013.
- ii) the Superintendent report the trial results to the Committee in early 2014.

11. **QUEEN ELIZABETH II FIELDS**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces relative to the City Gardens' response to the Queen Elizabeth II Fields Challenge.

The Superintendent advised that the proposed unveiling ceremony could take place on the day of the Christmas Tree lighting up ceremony and that the possibility of the Lord Mayor formally unveiling the garden would be investigated.

RESOLVED: That,

- i) the new garden on the site of St. Paul's Cathedral coach park be recognised as the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Garden;
- ii) Members note that the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Garden and Tower Hill Garden have been dedicated as Queen Elizabeth II Fields;
- iii) Members agree that officers should continue to pursue opportunities for recognising the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Garden through an unveiling ceremony (or similar) and potential sources of funding be identified in conjunction with the Chamberlain.

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

A Member appointed by the heirs at law of the late John Gurney advised that they were concerned that, if the proposed West Ham Park Committee had a regular meeting start time later than the proposed Open Spaces & City Gardens Committee, sufficient time may not be provided for the consideration of West Ham Park business. Discussion ensued and Members decided that the response submitted to the Governance Review Implementation Working Party for consideration, received by this Committee under agenda item 4, sufficiently addressed this concern. A Member advised that the Committee should also consider the potential implications of increased staff hours in relation to the proposed Committees.

13. **URGENT ITEMS**

Green Flag and London in Bloom Awards

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces that informed the Committee of the City Corporation's overall success in the Green Flag Awards this year, and provided feedback on the judging process and compared performance with the national results. The report also informed Members of the success achieved by the City Gardens and West Ham Park in the annual London in Bloom Awards.

The Director noted that a consultation exercise on the future of the Green Flag Awards had been undertaken by civil servants over the summer, but a response from the Government was still awaited. The Director expressed her disappointment with the approach taken and advised that the future of the Green Flag Awards remained unclear.

RESOLVED: That,

- i) the great success achieved by the City Corporation's Open Spaces in the Green Flag and London in Bloom Awards be noted and reported to the Court of Common Council meeting on 25 October 2012.

- ii) the staff and volunteers at all the Open Spaces be congratulated on their hard work throughout the year to ensure their sites won these prestigious Awards.

14. NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK AND NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING - IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CITY OF LONDON'S OPEN SPACES

Members considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces that outlined the implications of the National Planning Policy Framework to the City.

Members discussed whether the City should submit representatives to sit on Neighbourhood Forums. Neighbourhood Forums could submit planning applications relevant to a Forum's local planning authority, however it remained unclear as to whether this power extended to the City of London's Open Spaces function. A policy could be developed on whether to oppose or support the inclusion of City of London Open Spaces within Neighbourhood Forum areas, although ultimately this would be a matter for the planning authority.

Concerns were expressed about the inclusion of the City's Open Spaces, given the other legislative provisions applying to these sites. The Chairman advised that this matter required more detailed consideration and a decision regarding this matter should be made at a later date.

Members noted that the Superintendents were currently required to undertake a considerable amount of work in monitoring planning applications made near open spaces and challenging applications where appropriate. The Department of the Built Environment's planning expertise was currently dedicated to matters relating to the City's Corporation's role as the local planning authority for the City. Considering the current capacity and workload required (and costs involved) Members agreed that a report should be submitted to the Policy & Resources Committee regarding this matter.

RESOLVED:

- i) That Members support an approach to the Greater London Authority to both review the report and consider the most appropriate way of amending existing policies in order to address the concerns raised in the report.
- ii) That Members agree to officers engaging with the All London Green Grid initiatives to identify ways in which greater recognition can be achieved for the Corporation's Open Spaces.
- iii) That Members agree that the City should not seek to achieve Statutory Consultee status for planning applications.
- iv) A report be submitted to the Policy & Resources Committee that would: highlight the Superintendents' current use of resources on local planning matters, address issues concerning the legal status of Neighbourhood Forums' powers in relation to key legislation and make suggestions as to what the City's Open Spaces' relationship with neighbourhood forums should be.
- v) efforts should be made to engage with the County and District local planning authorities surrounding the City's Open Spaces so that, as far as possible, we become aware of any Neighbourhood Forum proposals affecting the Open Spaces, and any potential implications.

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 Local Government Act as follows:-

Item No.

16

Paragraphs in Schedule 12A

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16. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2012 were approved as a correct record.

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

There were no questions.

18. **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 1.24 pm

Chairman

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