

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
Open Spaces & City Gardens	04 February 2019
<b>Subject:</b> City Gardens Manager Update	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Open Spaces	<b>For Information</b>
<p><b>Summary</b></p> <p>This report provides an update to Members of the Open Spaces &amp; City Gardens Committee on management and operational activities across the City Gardens section since December 2018.</p> <p><b>Recommendation</b></p> <p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Note the report</li> </ul>	

## **Main Report**

### **Finance**

1. At the point of writing, the budgets for both City Gardens (City Fund) and Bunhill Fields (City's Cash) are in line with anticipated spend for this time of year. Members will be aware of the increasing pressure on budgets, which is only likely to get worse in future years as a result of any further budget reductions, and an anticipated reduction in the availability of Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy, against the background of a significant rise in the number of people using our gardens.

### **Personnel**

2. There is currently one vacancy for a Support Services Officer within the team, for which we are currently advertising.

### **Operational Activities**

3. The tree work contract that was entered into in 2018 has now been terminated. A new interim contract that will service City Gardens, West Ham Park and the Cemetery and Crematorium has been awarded, which will run until the end of June, at which time a new OJEU contract should be in place that will run for a longer contract term.

4. The team are progressing with the IT transformations programme, developing in-house software systems and trialling portable devices with an aim to roll out in April this year.
5. In order to combat air pollution in the capital, the Mayor of London is implementing an Ultra-Low Emissions Zone (ULEZ) in April this year. Despite being fewer than four years old, due to the type of engine they have, the City Gardens fleet of five vehicles do not meet the required emissions levels and consequently would incur daily penalty charges. Additionally, although an upgrade to a more modern, compliant diesel engine would be enough to satisfy the requirements of ULEZ, the City's Transport Policy includes a more stringent requirement in that officers will not be able to purchase or lease diesel vehicles unless there is no current alternative fuel option. This matter is of the utmost priority for the team which is working closely with City Procurement evaluating the options available to ensure that we are in the best position for April. It should be noted all possible solutions will have a significant impact on local risk budgets. As an interim measure the team is looking to temporarily swap non-compliant City Gardens vehicles with compliant vehicles from other Open Spaces divisions.

#### **Pets and Diseases**

6. **Box Disease:** The programme to replace all infected Buxus plants will commence within the next few weeks. The area around Carter Lane gardens has been identified as an early priority.

#### **Rough Sleeping**

7. Whilst rough sleeping remains an ongoing issue within the gardens, there have been no further incidents of long-term encampments since St Botolph's Bishopgate was cleared of tents in autumn 2018.

#### **Bunhill Fields HLF Funding Bid**

8. In August 2018 a grant funding application was submitted to Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for restoration of Bunhill Fields in partnership with London Borough of Islington (LBI). HLF's Board of Trustees had to make decisions on applications that totalled £125 million nationally with a budget of only £19 million available. Unfortunately, the City's application was rejected due to insufficient funds. Positive feedback was received from HLF as they thought that this was a well-planned project that has the potential to deliver good quality restoration, learning and training works. In future applications, HLF has indicated value in exploring additional partnership funding, outside of the 2 project partners (COL and LBI), which could help to reduce the overall grant requested. HLF's new funding programmes launches at the end of January 2019. The project officer board will reconvene in March 2019 to consider the way forward before making a recommendation to this Committee in April 2019.

## Project Updates

9. **Barbican Planters:** The final pieces of the new planters will be installed on the podium in early February with planting taking place later that month or early March. At Willoughby Tower, a planter base has been badly damaged. As part of the above project, City Gardens have been tasked with taking apart the planter and rebuilding it with new pieces.
10. **St Alphage's Garden:** Currently under construction, it is anticipated that planting will take place in February 2019, following a major refurbishment of the site.
11. **Monument Street/Lower Thames Street:** An enhancement of the area which now includes a large raised planter and a new street tree. Water has been provided within the project by means of a tap and protective cover. The team is due to carry out planting by end of March. This project is a 'test project' for City Gardens where one of the large planters has been filled with manufactured substrate whilst the lower smaller bed has normal soil infill. The same plant selection will be used in both planters and so comparisons can be drawn.
12. **Stonecutter Street – Goldman Sachs development:** Substrate has now been laid in the four planters along Farringdon Street. The infill for the planters on Shoe Lane will be carried out in February with planting being carried out in late March to meet the planting deadline. Due to working at height risks, bespoke systems have been designed and will be installed on all the planters to enable maintenance to be undertaken safely.
13. **60-70 St Mary Axe:** The design incorporates three raised planters with multi-stem trees, underplanting and automated irrigation. The installation date is anticipated to be early 2019.
14. **Artizan Street:** The former car park ramp has been transformed in to a sloping garden along with raised planters and screen planting to enhance the streetscape. Irrigation will be included, and the anticipated planting date is spring 2019.
15. **Senator House:** The garden, constructed by the developer's contractor under licence, is nearing completion; snagging works by the developer need to be carried out. The specimen trees are already in place and the City Gardens team will be completing the remainder of the planting in March, once the snagging is complete.
16. **Greening Cheapside:** The Department of Built Environment (DBE) are working on a project to reduce the impact of the 3 planters around the Sugar Building and the St Paul's tube station entrance/exit, including the two planters opposite the tube station entrance on the crossing island on St Martin Le Grand. Due to increased pedestrian numbers these beds are no longer fit for purpose and are causing congestion. The new scheme will see a reduction in their size and include seating. New street trees will also be included. The design is still being developed by an external consultant on behalf of DBE, but the planting will seek to deliver a cohesive design of sustainable species, helping to reduce

future maintenance requirements and therefore costs. Members should note that this will see the displacement of traditional seasonal bedding in this area.

17. **Millennium Bridge planters:** Two large planters, installed as part of the Riverside improvements will be planted in the coming months. These will include multi-stemmed trees and robust underplanting to complement that used outside the City of London School.

### **Planning**

18. A list of planning applications that have been received since the last Committee meeting can be found in Appendix 1.
19. Finsbury Circus – a brief update on Crossrail issues is attached at Appendix 2 (Non-Public).

### **Community, Volunteering and Events**

20. **St Michael Cornhill:** City Gardens are working with Friends of City Gardens, who have applied for funding, to improve the planting within the garden following an extensive refurbishment to the Vicarage which has had a detrimental effect on the garden.

- **Appendix 1** - Planning Application City Gardens Consultations December 2018 – January 2019
- **Appendix 2** – City Gardens update Non-Public item

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## Appendix 1

Planning Application Open Spaces Consultations December 2018 – January 2019

Application number	Location	Description
18/01198/FULL	Brewers' Hall Aldermanbury Square London EC2	Demolition of third floor mansard, erection of replacement floor and additional double mansard and change of use of second floor from livery hall (sui generis) to office (B1) to create an additional 631.5sq.m of lettable office space (B1); and works to Brewers Hall Garden.