

OPEN SPACES AND CITY GARDENS
Monday, 9 December 2019

Minutes of the meeting of the Open Spaces and City Gardens held at Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 9 December 2019 at 11.30 am

Present

Members:

Oliver Sells QC (Chairman)
Graeme Doshi-Smith (Deputy Chairman)
Alderman Ian Luder
Wendy Mead
Barbara Newman
Jeremy Simons
Deputy John Tomlinson
Deputy Philip Woodhouse (Ex-Officio Member)
Caroline Haines

In attendance:

Catherine Bickmore

Officers:

Richard Holt	- Town Clerk's Department
Carl Locsin	- Town Clerk's Department
Sufina Ahmad	- Town Clerk's Department
Alison Elam	- Group Accountant, Chamberlain's Department
Colin Buttery	- Director of Open Spaces
Martin Rodman	- Superintendent, Parks & Gardens Open Spaces Department
Gerry Kiefer	- Business Manager, Open Spaces Department
Patrick Hegarty	- Technical Manager, Open Spaces Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Verderer Dr Joanna Thomas.

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

There were no declarations received.

3. MINUTES

The Committee considered the public minutes and non-public summary of the previous meeting of the Open Spaces & City Gardens Committee on 14 October 2019.

RESOLVED- That the public minutes and non-public summary of the Open Spaces & City Gardens Committee on 14 October 2019 be approved as an accurate record.

Matters Arising

Committee Membership listing

It was questioned why the external observers appointed to the Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee were not listed on the front of the Committee Agenda. Replying to this it was clarified that the list on the front of the Committee Agenda detailed the Membership of the Committee and didn't list observers appointed to the Committee. It was noted that further consideration would be given to including observers on the list at the front of the Committee Agenda.

4. THE CITY OF LONDON CORPORATION'S DRAFT SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY STRATEGY FOR 2020-25

The Committee received a report of the Town Clerk on the City of London Corporation's Draft Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for 2020-25 (the Strategy). The Town Clerk highlighted the comments made by the committees which had previously received the report summarised in a document circulated to the Committee prior to the meeting.

It was noted by a Member that the Strategy needed to include adequate emphasis on the repair works for the existing facilities at the open spaces managed by the City of London Corporation. It was also noted that the open spaces outside of the City of London, including West Ham Park, should be appropriately recorded within the Strategy. Replying to this the Town Clerk confirmed that the inclusion of all the open spaces and the appropriate listing within the Strategy would be reviewed to provide the suitable emphasis.

In response to a query from a Member of the Committee the Town Clerk explained that the future governance of the Strategy and the membership of the Working Group had yet to be finalised.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

5. OPEN SPACES DEPARTMENT RISK REGISTER

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Departmental Risk Register which provided the Members with an update on the management of departmental risks. The Director of Open Spaces noted the escalation and separation, as recommended by the Audit & Risk Management Committee, of the Wanstead Reservoirs risk from the other water bodies risk due to the significantly greater risk present. A Member informed the Committee that an independent engineers report would be completed in the new year, noting that the Resource Allocation Sub-Committee had already allocated funds for any works necessary. In addition, it was noted that the Comptroller and City Solicitor had agreed with the reclassification of the Risk.

In response to a point raised by a Member of the Committee the Director of Open Spaces explained that the Department would be working with the Forestry Commission on the responses to Ash Dieback but noted that there was comparatively few Ash Trees on the open spaces the City of London Corporation manages.

RESOLVED- That: -

- I. The Committee endorsed the Departmental risk register as outlined in this report but amend risk OSD 007 as recommended by the Audit and Risk Committee and outlined in:
 - option 1 (paragraph 17)
 - option 2 (paragraph 18)
 - option 3 (paragraph 19)
- II. That the removal of risk OSD 011 – Budget Reduction Summary Risk as detailed in paragraph 20 be approved.

6. DEPARTMENTAL BUSINESS PLAN 2019/20 - SIX MONTH PERFORMANCE UPDATE: APRIL TO SEPT 2019

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Departmental Business Plan 2019/20 Six-month performance update for April to September 2019. The report provided Members with an update on progress and performance against the 2019/20 Business Plan by the services which report to the various Open Spaces Committees.

Members commented on the functionality issues for the City Corporation website Open Spaces webpages which had been experienced between May and September of 2019 noting the severity of this issue. The Director of Open Spaces agreed with Members' concerns explaining that the issue had not been resolved as quickly as hoped and that appropriate feedback to IT team had been provided. Replying to a query from the Deputy Chairman the Director of Open Spaces confirmed that the Website was monitored on a monthly basis. It was also noted that the preparation of the new City of London Website was in progress. The Chairman commented that the length of time the website experienced functionality issues was unacceptable and requested that a presentation on the new website be arranged for the February 2020 Committee meeting. In addition, it was suggested by a Member of the Committee that a note be sent to the Finance Committee, as the Grand Committee of the Digital Services Sub-Committee, noting Members displeasure and concern regarding the functionality issues experienced by the Open Spaces webpages.

It was observed by a member of the Committee that while the list of the Open Spaces Department's achievements was helpful it would be useful for a list of where the Department is not on target to be included.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

7. CITY GARDENS UPDATE

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces which provided Members of the Open Spaces & City Gardens Committee with a

summary of the management and operational activities across the City Gardens section since October 2019.

Members commended the Open Spaces Department on the integration of apprentices and commented that residents of the City often requested that more trees be planted. The Chairman highlighted that plants other than trees, such as shrubs and bushes, can be utilised to increase greenery in the City.

The Chairman stated that the current policy on the provision of Christmas Trees was too expensive and unsustainable noting that the alternatives for festive trees would be reviewed for 2020. A Member requested a corporate approach on this be taken noting the Christmas Trees provision at many City of London managed sites. The Director of Open Spaces confirmed that alternative options for festive trees in 2020 would be reviewed and a report would be considered at the February meeting of the Open Spaces & City Gardens Committee.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

8. **SENATOR HOUSE GARDEN**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on Senator House Garden. In response to a query from a Member of the Committee on different potential options for the Garden, the Director of Open Spaces explained that funding was the primary concern regarding these potential options.

RESOLVED- That the approved the content of this Outcome Report and that the Project be closed.

9. **2020/21 EVENTS FEES AND CHARGES - CITY GARDENS**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the 2020/21 Events and Charges for the City Gardens.

RESOLVED- That the 2020/21 fees and charges be approved.

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

There were no public questions received.

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

There was no urgent business considered in the public session.

12. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED- That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the following items of business on the grounds they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act.

13. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

The Committee considered the non-public minutes of the meeting of the Open Spaces & City Gardens Committee held on the 14 October 2019.

RESOLVED-That the non-public minutes of the Open Spaces & City Gardens Committee on the 14 October 2019 be approved as an accurate record.

14. **DEBT ARREARS - INVOICED INCOME FOR PERIOD ENDING 31 MARCH 2019**

The Committee received a report of the Chamberlain on the Debt Arrears Invoiced Income for the Period Ending 31 March 2019.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

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

There were no non-public questions received.

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

There were no non-public items of urgent business considered.

The meeting ended at 12.31 pm

Chairman

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