

Committee(s)	Dated:
Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee	2 December 2020
West Ham Park Committee	2 December 2020
Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queens Park Committee	7 January 2021
Epping Forest and Commons Committee	18 January 2021
Subject: Departmental Business Plan 2020/21 – Six month performance update: April to Sept 2020	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	N/A
Report of: Colin Buttery – Director, Open Spaces	For Information
Report author: Gerry Kiefer, Open Spaces	

Summary

This report provides Members with an update on progress and performance against the 2020/21 Business Plan. The Plan was agreed by Members in February 2020 before Covid 19 impacted on all our lives. Our Open Spaces and Parks have played a vital role during the pandemic, helping to keep the population well, both mentally and physically. However, managing additional visitors, working with a reduced staffing capacity, reacting to changes in Government legislation has impacted on our ability to deliver some aspects of the business plan and influenced our ability to achieve our performance measures.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report

Main Report

Background

1. The Open Spaces & City Gardens Committee approved the Departmental Business Plan 2020/21 (Appendix 1) on 3 February 2020.
2. The Department’s Vision is; *we enrich people’s lives by enhancing and providing access to ecologically diverse open spaces and outstanding heritage assets across London and beyond.*

3. The Business Plan identified the Department's three main objectives under which sit twelve outcomes which are set out on page one of the Business Plan (Appendix 1)
4. The Business Plan identified a range of activity that would help achieve the Department's twelve outcomes, and highlighted four key themes for progress in 2020/21 which were:
 - Maximise the value and opportunities of our built and natural assets
 - Protect and enhance our sites biodiversity and determine the value of our green infrastructure
 - Engage with the local planning processes to mitigate and protect against the negative impact of development on our open spaces
 - Develop innovative approaches to income diversification
5. The Business Plan identified annual capital bids that had been proposed to Resource Allocation Sub Committee (RASC) of which some were still awaiting decision when the Plan was agreed in February 2020.

Current Position

6. Before the financial year commenced, life as we had known it dramatically changed as the Coronavirus pandemic spread across the World and our Government introduced new regulations, asking us to; *Stay home, Protect the NHS, Save Lives*.
7. From March onwards it became clear that, particularly in and around London, where many people do not have access to gardens, our parks and green spaces would play a crucial role in keeping the population well, both mentally and physically.
8. During the last eight months, services have complied with changes in Government legislation seeing facilities and activities close, reopen and in some cases, close again. Our main aim has been to ensure the health and safety of our staff and visitors. Many new operational practices have had to be implemented and the provision of services have been re-prioritised to ensure delivery of key services with the resource capacity available.
9. Members have been regularly informed of the impact that Covid19 has had on the services through Committee updates and member briefing notes.

Progress of Key Themes

10. Below is detailed the progress that has been made against the four key themes of the Business Plan. Covid19 has required refocussing of resources and has resulted in some areas of work not progressing, or progressing less than would have been anticipated. However, the following progress has been made:

Key Theme	Activity Progress
Maximise the value and opportunities of our built and natural assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finsbury Circus Gardens reopened at the beginning of August. Architecture00 + Studio Weave with ReardonSmith Landscape were selected from a shortlist of five to redesign the Grade II-listed site. Anticipated completion now 2022/23 ➤ WHP Nursery Progress delayed due to Covid-19 and protracted correspondence with Charity Commissioners. Climate Action Strategy agreed by Policy and Resources Committee which includes a number of future actions that relate to Open Spaces.
Protect and enhance our sites biodiversity and determine the value of our green infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Engineering study for Wanstead Reservoirs has been completed and an Issues paper was taken to the Corporate Project Board on the 11th November 2020. The issues report details the initial findings from the Panel Engineer (which show a likely lower level of capital spend) and requests approval for further feasibility study to look at the flow of water through the cascade of reservoirs and the linkage to the Roding river in terms of water in and out of the waterbodies. ➤ Covid and the High Court judgement on the third runway has delayed delivery of the Heathrow Airport biodiversity net-gain project. A scaled down version is currently being discussed with the National Trust and tenants. The project officer is exploring other sources of funding, including HS2 and Comprehensive spending review.
Engage with the local planning processes to mitigate and protect against the negative impact of development on our open spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant and extensive correspondence between Epping Forest's Local authorities and other partners, with changes to local plans required to ensure proper mitigation and protection of Epping Forest. ➤ The Commons officers continue to influence and comment on various local authorities planning documents, at their different stages of development.
Develop innovative approaches to income diversification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Lockdown has required many facilities to temporarily close. On opening many introduced new on-line booking systems and cashless payments. ➤ First holiday let of a former Lodge was launched at Epping Forest through Sykes Holiday lettings. ▪ Projects were identified across the Department to attract public donations. Use of a third-party supplier to administer this and enable Gift Aid to be received was stalled due to the lack of Charity bank accounts and financial controls required by Chamberlains. As an interim, online payment through the COL's webpages has been developed and online donations should be available via the website from mid December 2020. A 'campaigns' approach has been adopted as the current financial regulations do not allow general donation income to be rolled across financial years.

Capital Funding Requests

11. When the Business Plan was approved in February 2020, in principle capital funding had been agreed, subject to the usual gateway process, for West Ham Park Playground refurbishment, East Heath Car Park resurfacing and Chingford Golf Course. Subsequently RASC approved in principle funding for Finsbury Circus Reinstatement, ParkLife (Wanstead Football) both with

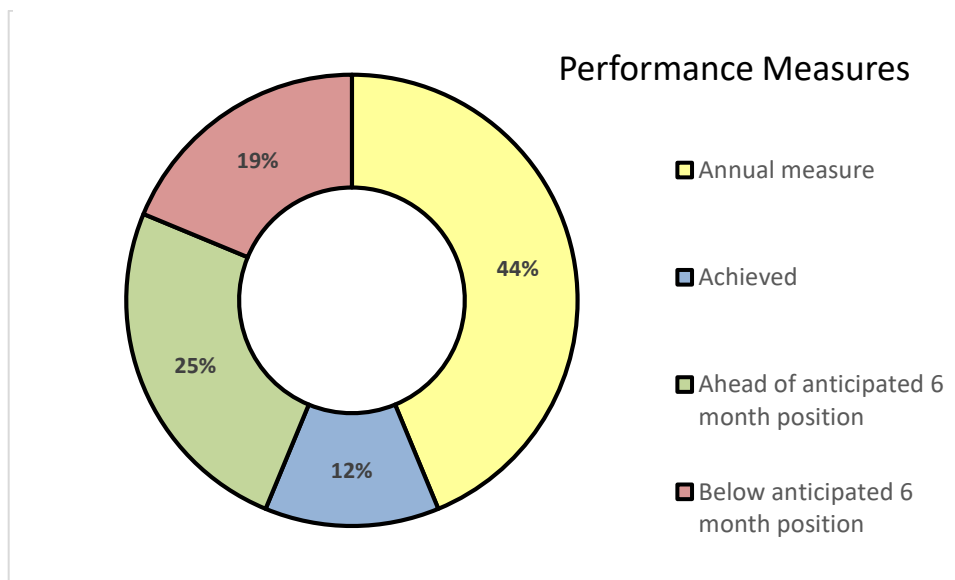
conditions. Funding was agreed at the start of the year for The Monument Visitor Centre and Queens Park Toilets, but a subsequent mid-year review withdrew this 'in principle' funding and these projects should be resubmitted annually if they remain a priority for the Department. Funding for Parliament Hill athletics track was turned down by RASC.

12. The relevant Service Committees have received more detailed reports on the progress of these 'approved in principle' capital projects.

Performance Measures

13. The Business Plan report identified sixteen performance measures. The majority of these are collated annually, but we have retained our 15 Green Flag Awards and 13 Green Heritage Site accreditations.
14. At 6 months we are above target for tennis participation following a large increase in court usage once lockdown was lifted. The pandemic has seen a significant increase in the number of people visiting our open spaces and this is mirrored in the number of visits to the open space's pages on the City of London's website.
15. Due to the impact of Covid19, apart from the Cemetery and Crematorium, the Department is below its expected position on income generation. The closure of our visitor attractions and then the significant reduction in capacity to meet social distancing guidelines means that our visitor numbers at our visitor attractions are significantly down on the same period last year.

Six month progress against annual performance measures



Implications

Financial Performance

16. Covid 19 has had a significant impact on the Department's finances. Many income generating services have been partly closed during the year including golf, tennis, swimming, sports pitches, wedding venues, visitor attractions (Tower Bridge, Monument, Keats house) and car parks. When allowed to open a few of these services such as golf and tennis were busier than normal and their projected 6 month income levels were achieved.
17. COVID19 has also impacted on expenditure with additional resources needed for health and safety equipment, waste and recycling, additional security costs and transport. In April the Department successfully bid for £65k internal COVID19 contingency fund money to help with the cost of additional health and safety equipment and changes to public reception areas.
18. On October 13 the City of London Corporation's Finance Committee received a Chamberlains report to address the deficit in lost income due to the COVID-19 pandemic and set realistic budgets that Chief Officers can be held to in this financial year (2020/21). For those services overseen by the Open Spaces Committee there has been a £66k readjustment of the local risk budget. This report titled '*resetting of Departmental Budget 2020/21*' is due to be an information report to this Committee on 2 December 2020.
19. Two further submissions for COVID19 contingency fund money were made in August 2020, but as the expenditure had already been captured in the budget forecasting that informed the budget readjustment report, these submissions were unsuccessful.
20. In order to track additional spend arising from COVID 19, the Chamberlains Department introduced a specific code for use on all expenditure. At the end of October 2020, £364.5k actual expenditure had been coded to the COVID19 special by the services for which this Committee is responsible. This includes approx. £100k loss of income from leases due to deferrals, rent holidays, discounts.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Open Space Charities

21. Many of the Open Spaces sites are registered charities. Officers have been asked to remind Members that decisions they take in relation to the relevant charity must be taken in the best interests of the charity.

The Corporate Plan

22. The Open Spaces Department actively contributes to all the Corporate Plan aims:
 - Contribute to a flourishing society
 - Support a thriving economy
 - Shape outstanding environments

Conclusion

23. The Open Spaces Department has seen progress against some of the prioritised actions within its business Plan delayed due to COVID19 and some performance measures are below where they should be at 6 months.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 - High-level Business Plan 2020 -21
- Appendix 2 - Performance measures – position at 6 months, where available

Background Reports

Final Departmental Business Plan 2020/21 – Open Spaces, February 2020.

Gerry Kiefer

Business Manager – Open Spaces Department

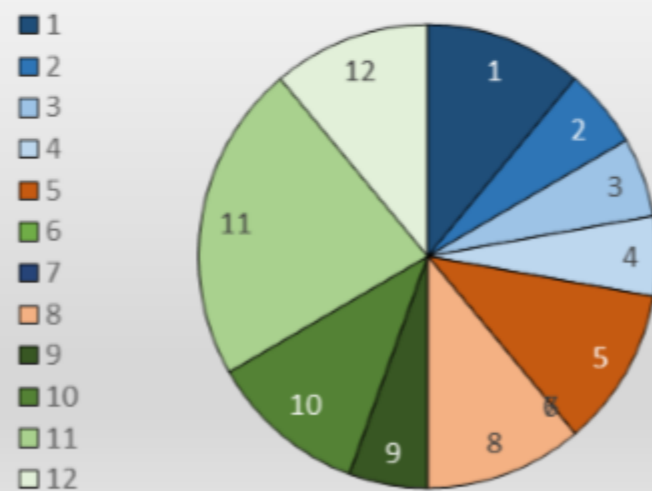
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DEPARTMENT VISION:	We enrich people's lives by enhancing and providing access to ecologically diverse open spaces and outstanding heritage assets across London and beyond.
Department objectives:	Open Spaces Department's twelve outcomes:
A. Open spaces and historic sites are thriving and accessible.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Our open spaces, heritage and cultural assets are protected, conserved and enhanced (12) London has clean air and mitigates flood risk and climate change (11) Our spaces are accessible, inclusive and safe (1) Our habitats are flourishing, biodiverse and resilient to change (11)
B. Spaces enrich people's lives.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> People enjoy good health and wellbeing (2) Nature, heritage and place are valued and understood (3) People feel welcome and included (4) People discover, learn and develop (3)
C. Business practices are responsible and sustainable.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Our practices are financially, socially and environmentally sustainable (5) London's natural capital and heritage assets are enhanced through our leadership, influence, investment, collaboration and innovation (10) Our staff and volunteers are motivated, empowered, engaged and supported (8) Everyone has the relevant skills to reach their full potential (8)

The numbers in brackets show how the Open Spaces outcomes link to the 12 Corporate Plan 2018 - 2023 Outcomes

Open Spaces Activity mapped to the 12 Corporate Plan Outcomes



Corporate Aim	%
A. Contribute to a flourishing society	28%
B. Support a thriving economy	22%
C. Shape outstanding environments	50%

The table overleaf lists all the activities we will be working on and developing this year.

Our key activities for 2020/21 will be:

- j) Maximise the value and opportunities of our built and natural assets (10c)
- f) Protect and enhance our sites biodiversity and determine the value of our green infrastructure (11b)
- d) Engage with the local planning processes to mitigate and protect against the negative impact of development on our open spaces (12b)
- q) Develop innovative approaches to income diversification (8d)

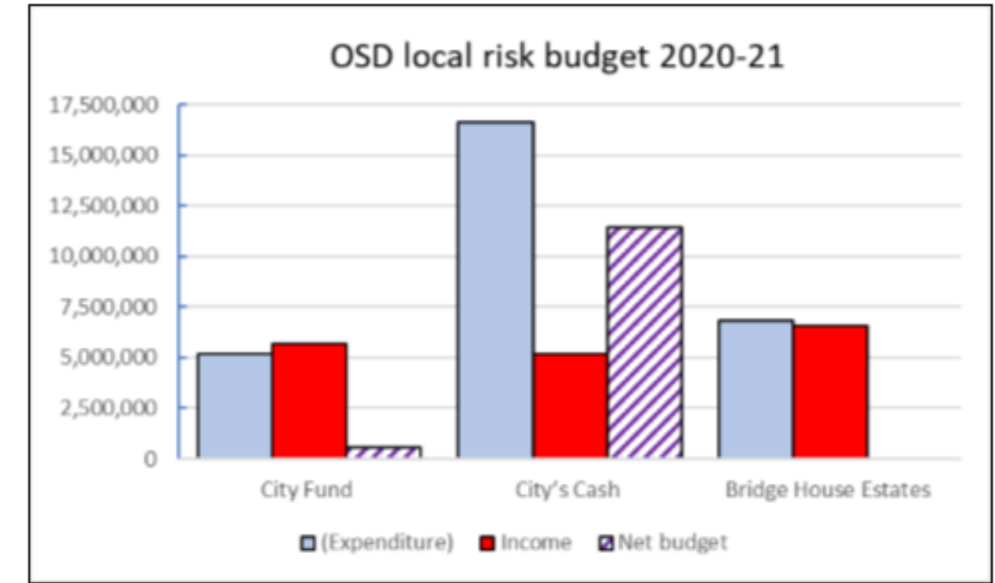
We will also be supporting the work of the Fundamental Review.

Appendix 1 provides the detail that sits behind these key activity statements.

Numbers in brackets show links to the outcomes and actions within the Corporate Plan 2018-2023

How we are funded

Appendix 1



Bids for Capital Funding Agreed in principle by RASC:

- ◆ West Ham Park Playground
- ◆ East Heath Car Park
- ◆ Chingford Golf Course

More information requested by RASC:

- Finsbury Circus Reinstatement
- The Monument Visitor Centre
- ParkLife (Wanstead Football)
- Parliament Hill Athletics Track
- Queens Park Toilets (Chairman's request)

Expenditure budget by 'type' 2020/21



Our Reach and Impact



COL Staff Survey			
TOP 3 Highest Scoring	%	BOTTOM 3 Lowest Scoring Questions	% Positive
I have the skills I need to do my job effectively	94%	The City of London Corporation manages change effectively	32%
I am interested in my work	93%	I believe that action will be taken on	33%
I am clear about what I am expected to achieve in my job	87%	Poor performance is dealt with effectively where I work	34%

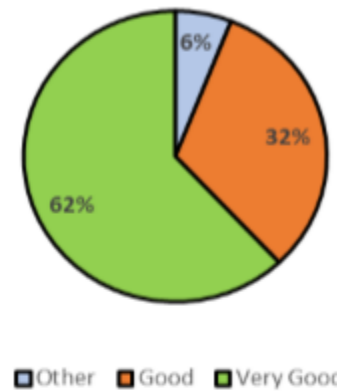
Action Being taken includes:

Improving Communication: All staff updates from SLT and Committees, staff briefings on 'change' including fundamental review.

Leadership: Open door sessions, visibility of managers, one to one's, appraisals,

Key Customer Feedback

Visitors satisfaction rating of open spaces site from snapshot survey



Performance Measures

We will contribute to a number of Corporate Performance Measures including: FOI responses, health and safety investigations, sickness absence, budgets, employee volunteering

We will also set Departmental performance measures including:

Performance Measure	Performance target 2019/20	Department Outcomes	Department Activity
Retaining Green Heritage Site Accreditation and Green Flag Awards	13 Green Heritage Awards 15 Green Flag Awards	Our open spaces, heritage and cultural assets are protected, conserved and enhanced	Protect our heritage: developing partnership funding bids where possible
Number of tennis courts booked	31,500	People enjoy good health and wellbeing	Provide a sustainable range of sports and recreational opportunities
Number of visits to our heritage visitor attractions	1,124,400 visits	People feel welcome and included	Improve the visitor and cultural offer
Active management of our ancient trees	Baseline	Our habitats are flourishing, biodiverse and resilient to change	Protect and enhance our sites biodiversity

What's changed since last year...

- Completed the Programme of events celebrating 125 years of Tower Bridge and 30 years custodianship of Hampstead Heath.
- Natural England declare a new National Nature reserve; South London Downs NNR, covering Coulsdon Commons and Happy Valley, in partnership with the London Borough of Croydon
- Retendered OPM Control Methods contract and a partner with the Forestry Commission in their OPM pilot study.
- City Gardens fleet is ULEZ compliant
- Events policy agreed and implemented for the Department and all divisions
- Delivered improvement projects in City Gardens including Senator House and St Alphege's Gardens
- Introduce longer lease durations allowing greater capital investment / external funding capacity under powers created by the Open Spaces Act 2018

Equalities and Inclusion Priorities:

- Improve accessibility within our sites, subject to funding.
- Improve inclusivity at our sites.
- Increase our collection and analysis of 'protected characteristics' data
- Develop our Learning programme offer to Special Needs Schools.
- Implement the agreed transgender policy.

Other activities that we will be undertaking this year under the headings of our three objectives.

Open Spaces and Historic Sites Are Thriving and Accessible

- Protect our heritage: developing partnership funding bids where possible (10d)
- Progress reviews, drafting, approval and implementation of management / conservation / heritage plans (11b)
- Reduce the negative environmental impacts of our activities (11a)
- Review security and access control provision (1c)

Spaces Enrich People's Lives

- Provide a sustainable range of sports and recreational opportunities (2d)
- Improve the visitor and cultural offer, including the development of facilities, new technologies, customer service and a programme of events celebrating our anniversaries, historic sites and nature (4a)
- Develop our 'learning offer' (3b)

Business practices are responsible and sustainable

- Deliver opportunities arising from improved management capability from the City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Act 2018 (1c)
- Make more effective use of IT and technology and adopt 'smarter' ways of working (9b)
- Support the development of asset management plans and master plans for each site and influence the City Surveyors implementation of their operational property review (12a)
- Maintain our regional and national influence with regard to environmental, open space, burial, heritage and tourism matters (11d)
- Implement the recommendations arising out of the workforce plan, staff and customer surveys (8a)
- Develop our apprenticeship programme and volunteering opportunities across the Department (8d)
- Progress the prioritisation of services to mitigate inefficiencies and establish long term sustainable service provision (5c)

Appendix 1 provides the detail that sits behind these action statements.

◆ Numbers in brackets show links to the outcomes and actions within the Corporate Plan









Our delivery partners and key stakeholders include:









- Local community groups, forums and local residents
- Host and neighbouring local authorities and the GLA
- Forestry Commission, Natural England and National Trust
- Parks for London, GiGL, Action Oak
- Historic England & English Heritage
- National Governing Bodies of Sport and local sports groups
- Consultation Committees and Forums
- City of London Departments

Departments three red risks:

	OSD 013 Wanstead Park Reservoirs (Score = 24)
	OSD 004 Repair and Maintenance of Buildings & structural assets (Score = 16)
	OSD 005 Pests and Diseases (Score = 16)

Appendix 2 - Performance measures – position at 6 months, where available

	Performance Measure Description	2020 / 21 Target (annual)		6 month performance (where available)
1	Green Heritage Site Accreditation	Retain 13 Awards		Achieved 13 Awards
2	Green Flag Awards	Retain 15 Awards		Achieved 15 Awards
3	Improving the condition of our Sites of Special Scientific Interest	All SSSI's that are re-assessed by Natural England are rated as being in 'favourable' or 'unfavourable recovering' condition.		Annual Measure
4	Reducing our environmental footprint	Reduction in utilities, increase in generated electricity		Annual Measure
5	Influencing planning authorities development approvals and planning policy documents	Influence planning applications and local plans		Annual Measure
6	Active management of our ancient trees as part of the Stewardship Schemes at Epping Forest and Burnham Beeches.	Epping Forest = 354. Burnham Beeches = 61.		Annual Measure
7	The number of 'visitors' to the Open spaces webpages.	930,000		647,457 Ahead of anticipated 6 month position
8	Learning & volunteer programme measures	Increase in positive and very positive responses to the 'learning impacts'		Annual Measure

	Performance Measure Description	2020 / 21 Target (annual)		6 month performance (where available)
9	Increase the number of visits to our heritage visitor attractions (This includes Tower Bridge, Monument, Keats House, The Queens Hunting Lodge hub and The Temple)	No target set due to Covid19 requiring facility closure		33,278 Below anticipated 6 month position
10	Improve customer satisfaction at our heritage visitor attractions (This includes Tower Bridge, Monument, Keats House, Epping Forest experience)	Improvement at Tower Bridge, Keats House and Epping Forest experience		Annual Measure
11	Increase the number of hours of tennis court usage	No target set due to Covid19 requiring facility closure		26,953 Ahead of anticipated 6 month position
12	Apprentice performance	81% pass their training qualification 20% get jobs, 25% progress from level 2 to level 3		Annual Measure
13	Average number of days per FTE short term sickness	3.37		1.21 Ahead of anticipated 6 month position
14	Health and safety accident investigations	85%.		88% Ahead of anticipated 6 month position
15	Open Spaces Department (all) Net expenditure (OS Director local risk only)	£11,531,000		£6,724,383
16	Open Spaces Department (all) Income generated (OS Director local risk)	£17,762,000		£6,309,925