

Committee	Dated:
West Ham Park Committee	13 July 2021
Subject: West Ham Park Managers Update	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 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 of Open Spaces	For Information
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Summary

This report provides an update to Members of the West Ham Park Committee on management and operational activities at West Ham Park since April 2021. The funding for the work stated is met through the Park's local risk budget (City's Cash), apart from the History Exhibition for which the Friends' Group has secured other funding sources, and the Playground Project, which is a capital bid.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report

Main Report

Current Position

Budget and Personnel

1. **Budgets:** The majority of expenditure for the first quarter of this financial year is in line with expected profile. The one exception is the purchase of a replacement Scarab road sweeping vehicle. A carry forward was secured for this from the 2019/20 financial year, with the aim of procuring the vehicle before 31 March 2021. Unfortunately, due to lockdown restrictions meaning that suitable vehicles could not be trialled, coupled with production delays, this deadline could not be met. A further carry forward of that sum has been applied for citing the unique circumstances and a decision is expected mid-July. However, should this second carry forward be refused, West Ham Park's outturn will reflect the appropriate overspend, which will need to be offset from elsewhere in the departmental City's Cash budget.
2. **Staffing:** Visitor numbers remain high during warmer weather and additional staff were brought in over the May bank holiday to assist with patrolling.

Although the Park was busy, the mass gatherings that took place last year did not materialise and instances of antisocial behaviour were fewer. The playground continues to be exceptionally busy and, with the extension of lockdown restrictions, signage has been renewed to encourage people not to enter if social distancing cannot be safely observed.

Community, Volunteering, Outreach and events

3. **Wild Schools:** The Learning Officer has delivered 57 sessions since April, engaging over 1,500 students in activities spanning orienteering, pond dipping and minibeast hunting (habitats), fire lighting, Eco-art, Bear Hunt and Blitz Detectives. These sessions have all been extremely popular and fully booked, and feedback from both students and the accompanying teachers has been exemplary, with the latter recommending the sessions to their colleagues.
4. **Friends of West Ham Park:** The Friends have submitted an application to the London Borough of Newham, seeking funding for additional planting in and around the new playground, in support of the capital project. It is anticipated that the outcome of the bid can be made available to Members at the meeting. At the time of writing, the opening of the History Exhibition in the flower gardens is scheduled for Sunday 4 July 2021. As per the previous update, this is to be a small-scale event, in line with current covid restrictions, however the Friends have managed to secure the renowned actress, Alison Steadman OBE to open the exhibition. Ms Steadman is a regular visitor to West Ham Park and a great supporter of the environment. The Friends AGM is scheduled for Thursday 8 July, to be held outdoors on the bandstand.

Operational activities

5. The Park continues to be much busier than normally expected for this time of year. Since lockdown measures have eased, the Park's sports facilities have been extremely busy, including an uplift in schools using the facilities after school hours during the week. Bow Green Cricket Club, which uses the Park as its home ground, is currently top of its cricket league, and an influx in football applications has been received for when the season starts in the autumn. Following building renovations at their own home grounds, officers were able to provide temporary accommodation to some local youth teams. The teams were very complimentary of the Park's facilities and it is hoped that further business will result.
6. Another consequence of the prolonged lockdown has been the use of the bandstand. Bookings have increased dramatically, resulting in the bandstand being booked out for the whole of July to host both children's and adults' parties, meetings and other social gatherings.
7. In the ornamental gardens work has continued on restoring worn areas of grass resulting from increased footfall over the past fifteen months. The gardeners have also been renovating the planting beds ahead of London in Bloom judging, which is due to take place on Friday, 23 July 2021. The team

has also undertaken improvement works around the ornamental pond in the gardens.

8. Assessors from London Borough of Islington's specialist tree team have undertaken the first of three inspections for *Massaria* disease on the Park's plane trees. Weather conditions over the past 18 months have been favourable to the disease, which has unfortunately thrived, and the strategic removal of some plane trees may be required later in the year. This provides an opportunity to replant with other species, identified in the Conservation Management Plan, that are more resilient to climate change and disease.

Property Matters

9. **Nursery Project:** Market testing commenced 2 July, with details circulated to the relevant trade press and consequently the public domain. Ahead of marketing, the City's media team released a statement about the project and its progress so far to the Newham Recorder and Horticulture Week.
10. **Playground Refurbishment Project:** The tender pack for the main works was finalised with the City's procurement team on the 1 July and was put out to tender shortly after. The project is therefore on schedule for work to begin in the autumn once the busy summer season comes to an end.

Corporate and Strategic Implications

11. The work and activities outlined in this report contribute to numerous strands of the City of London Corporate Plan 2018-2023, but notably outcome 12. "our spaces are secure, resilient and well-maintained", under the Shape Outstanding Environments strand.

Financial/Resource/Legal/Risk/Equalities/Climate/Security/Public sector equality duty Implications

12. None.

Conclusion

13. Officers have been working hard to manage increased numbers of visitors and to encourage people back to using the Park's full range of services as lockdown restrictions have eased. Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

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