

Committee: Open Spaces & City Gardens	Dated: 7 December 2021
Subject: 2022/23 Events Fees and Charges – City Gardens	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	11 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
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: Juliemma McLoughlin, Executive Director Environment	For Decision
Report author: Jake Tibbetts – City Gardens Manager	

Summary

Within the Open Spaces Division of the Environment Department, fees and charges for events are reviewed annually. This report proposes that following a benchmarking exercise most of the fees and charges for events that are held in City Gardens sites throughout the 2021//22 financial year are increased by 4.9% in line with the October Retail Price index figure. The charge for non-profit and charity events is recommended to be reduced following a benchmarking exercise. The new fees and charges are to be implemented 1 April 2022.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Approve the proposed 2022/23 fees and charges as set out in Appendix 1 of this report.

Main Report

Background

1. The City Gardens Team processes requests from members of the public, charitable groups and corporate organisations to hold events within its gardens.

2. Members approved the updated City Gardens Events Policy in July 2018. The policy does not need reviewing, however the Fees and Charges that are laid out in appendix 1 of that report are intended to be reviewed on an annual basis.

Current Position

3. The hire of City Gardens sites generates income that is used to contribute towards the maintenance cost of our sites and staff resources. In 20/21 generated income was greatly affected by the pandemic with £1,984 being generated. In 19/20 £5476 was generated for the entire year. At the time of writing £14,387 has been generated by 30 events so far this financial year.
4. The most popular type of event with 17 bookings continues to be photography; of which 14 were wedding shoots.
5. Facilitating events has an impact not only on the gardens but also staff resources within the City Gardens team. Whilst the total amount of income delivered is relatively low, this is a service that is important to our communities and needs to be financially sustainable and contribute towards the maintenance and upkeep of our gardens.
6. The City Gardens team carried out a benchmarking exercise with other local authorities and the Royal Parks. Finding direct comparisons with other public bodies has proved to be difficult due to fees and charges being structured differently between organisations. There are also key differences in the offer that City Gardens provides compared to that of other organisations:
 - The requirement under the Open Spaces Act for the substantive part of any garden needing to be kept open to the public.
 - City Gardens sites are smaller than those offered by other London Councils and the Royal Parks.
 - Due to the size they have a lower maximum attendee capacity.
 - The lack of public conveniences on any of our sites.
 - The lack of structures or adjoining buildings.
 - The unique central London location which adds value to our offer.
7. The Benchmarking focused on Hackney, Southwark, Westminster and the Royal Parks. These were chosen as inner London boroughs for which fees and charges were available and some comparisons were discernible. Details of their pricing can be found in Appendix 2. Where prices that are comparable in size or price, these have been highlighted on the spreadsheet.
8. Benchmarking with private organisation including livery gardens was attempted but useful comparisons were not achievable due to the difference in pricing structures, which are based on price per head and are combined with catering packages.
9. The benchmarking demonstrated that the City's prices for non-profit and charity events are higher than all of the other organisations. The City's charge per day being £1,215 compared with The Royal Parks at £1,192 and Westminster's highest fee of £500. It should also be noted that:

- in the last two years there has only been one of these events held in a City Gardens site.
 - these events provide benefits other than that of generating income.
10. The benchmarking demonstrated that the City's fees for commercial events are more expensive than Hackney's but on par with Southwark's, the Royal Park's and the lowest category of parks for Westminster. Considering the City's offer does not include buildings in which parts of the events can be held or used as shelter and the lack of public conveniences, it is considered that the benchmarking indicates the market is unlikely to accept significant increases in prices.
11. No useful comparisons were found for commercial photography as these are negotiated on a case-by-case basis, whereas the City have a fixed fee which works well considering the high volume of enquiries and ensures an efficient process keeping processing costs low.
12. Similarly, no comparisons could be found for private wedding hire of public spaces outside of the square mile.
13. The benchmarking was made using the current years fees and charges, it is assumed that the comparable organisations will be also increasing these for 2022/23.
14. As a minimum City Gardens acts on the basis that it at the least recovers its full cost of facilitating any event.

Options

- A. Apply no increase and retain current fees and charges. This option is not proposed as anything less than a rise in line with inflation would reduce our ability to cover costs and meet income targets.
- B. Increase all fees and charges in line with the Retail Price Index. This option is not proposed as it disregards lessons learned from benchmarking.
- C. Increase fees and charges in line with the Retail Price Index apart from where benchmarking has demonstrated a significant disparity. Prices to be rounded up to the nearest £5. This option keeps fees and charges abreast of inflation whilst also considering lessons learned from benchmarking. This is the proposed option.
- D. Increase fee and charges by a greater amount than the Retail Price Index to offset savings. This is not favoured as it is considered that a larger increase could result in a reduced number of events. The benchmarking does not demonstrate that the market would bear a higher increase.

Proposals

15. The proposed option is C. Increase fees and charges in line with the Retail Price Index apart from the fees for the day and half day charge for charity and non-profit events where benchmarking has demonstrated that we are not competitive.

16. **Strategic implications** – The provision of a well-designed events programme supports a number of key City of London Corporate Plan outcomes as follows:

- 4. Communities are cohesive and have the facilities they need.
- 12. Our spaces are secure, resilient and well-maintained.

It also supports a number of outcomes in the Open Spaces Departmental Business Plan:

- Our open spaces, heritage and cultural assets are protected conserved and enhanced.
- Our practices are financially, socially and environmentally sustainable.

17. **Financial implications** -The financial implications are contained within the body of the report

18. **Resource implications** – Resourcing the processing of event applications is covered by the income generated from events.

19. **Legal implications** - Section 7 of the City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Act 2018 authorises the City to impose charges for temporary use of part of an open space for an event or for admission to an open space area where access is restricted for an event, and requires that the power be exercised in accordance with the relevant policy. Paragraph 15.8 of the Open Spaces Event Policy 2018 makes provision for the charges and also provides that the schedule of charges will be reviewed annually. The exercise of the charging power and the review of charges is in accordance with the 2018 Act and the Policy.

20. **Risk implications** – None

21. **Equalities implications** – None

22. **Climate implications** - None

23. **Security implications** – Whilst there are some security implications of events being held, there are none when considering only the associated fees and charges.

Conclusion

24. Events held in City Gardens are important to our communities. The proposed increase in Fees and Charges reflects increased costs, enables us to continue to facilitate events in a sustainable manner and provides a small amount of income that contributes towards maintaining our gardens and our

staff resources.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Proposed Fees and Charges for 2022/23
- Appendix 2 – Fees and Charges Benchmarking

Background Papers

City Gardens Event Policy– Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee, 16 July 2018

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