

Committee	Dated:
Open Spaces & City Gardens	7 December 2021
Subject: Postman's Park Memorials Proposal	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	N/A
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	Yes
If so, how much?	To be determined in future reports
What is the source of Funding?	Open Spaces Local Risk Budget
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	To be agreed in future reports
Report of: Juliemma McLoughlin, Executive Director Environment	For Decision
Report author: Martin Rodman, Superintendent of Parks & Gardens	

Summary

Earlier this year, the City received several approaches requesting the addition of plaques to the Memorial to Heroic Self Sacrifice in Postman's Park. Whilst this is not possible for reasons outlined in the body of the report, alternative suggestions for commemorating those lost, such as the engraving of individual paving stones and the refurbishment of an existing sundial plinth within Postman's Park, are proposed.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Approve the principle of adding memorials to Postman's Park, as outlined in the proposals; and
- Agree that officers liaise with relevant internal and external stakeholders to progress this proposal.

Main Report

Background

1. Postman's Park houses the G.F. Watts' Memorial to Heroic Self Sacrifice, or Watts Memorial Cloister ("The Watts Memorial"), in recognition of those that have given their lives whilst saving the lives of others. As a result of the pandemic, and other tragic events that have taken place in London over the past 18 months, this year saw approaches made to the City requesting the addition of plaques to the Watts Memorial, including an approach from the

Barts Health NHS Trust wishing to recognise those members of staff that have lost their lives during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Current Position

2. The City maintains Postman's Park under a maintenance agreement dated 2nd November 1961 ("the Deed") made pursuant to the Open Spaces Act 1906 (Appendix 1). The City's care and maintenance responsibilities do not extend to the Watts Memorial which is owned by the Diocese of London and maintained by the Vicar and Churchwardens of St Botolph's Without Aldersgate. The Watts Memorial is listed Grade II* and, separate from the maintenance of the churchyard, alterations to it would be subject to Ecclesiastical jurisdiction and Listed Building Consent. In 2009 the then Chancellor took the view that no further plaques should be added to the Memorial on the grounds that it would detract from its historic, cultural and aesthetic significance. That view was supported at the time by the City and English Heritage (now Historic England). For these reasons, the addition of plaques to the Watts Memorial is not considered appropriate.
3. However, because of the Watts Memorial, many consider Postman's Park as a fitting place to house alternative kinds of memorials. Your Chairman has met with representatives of the Diocese, Watts Gallery, and relevant other interested parties to explore future opportunities for the addition of memorials. These meetings have been both positive and supportive. The Diocese particularly have expressed a wish to continue discussions with officers in order to progress proposals.

Proposals

4. To recognise those who died in service from Covid, it has been proposed that the existing sundial plinth in the middle of the planted garden be refurbished, and that a newly designed sundial has the potential to be an attractive and fitting memorial, subject to a suitable design, installation and maintenance arrangement. The design could be run as a competition for young artists and sculptors in recognition of emerging talent.
5. Whilst the addition of new plaques to the existing Watts Memorial is not recommended for progression, the engraving of existing paving stones, in the style and lettering of the existing wall plaques, is an attractive alternative. A suitable craftsman will need to be identified, which again could be run as a competition with the identified candidate's services then being called upon on an as-needs basis.
6. In order to identify precisely which individuals would be suitable for recognition in the Park, it is proposed to draw up a simple set of criteria against which applications could be evaluated by a panel of Members and officers before being brought back to your Committee and other stakeholders for approval.

7. To progress the proposal, to ascertain what permissions, if any, are required, and to discuss design solutions, it is proposed that officers liaise with the following stakeholders:
 - Diocese of London
 - Diocese's Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches.
 - St Botolph's Without Aldersgate Church
 - Historic England
 - Barts NHS Trust
 - Watts Gallery
 - Friends of the Watts Memorial
8. Members should note that this is not intended as an exhaustive list but will help inform further stakeholders that should be consulted.
9. Furthermore, the condition and maintenance of the current Memorial was discussed with the Diocese and others. Whilst the maintenance of the Watts Memorial rests clearly with the Vicar and Churchwardens (as the Deed sets out), officers will explore the opportunity to work with the Friends of the Watts Memorial and the Diocese, using volunteers and others, to work towards removing the daily dust and grime from the Memorial, whilst complying with Listed Building Consent and any other permissions that may be required.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

10. Financial implications – whilst the cost of engraving individual memorial paving stones may be met either by the applicant or by donations, the cost of running a design competition for the sundial, the cost of materials, installation and maintenance will be covered in future reports, once details have been finalised.
11. Resource implications – Member and Officer time is limited at present as the City seeks to finalise the Target Operating Model and prepare for the 2022 elections. However, the initial approaches to relevant stakeholders listed above should be accommodated to help progress this proposal ready for implementation in 2022, subject to Member approval.
12. Legal implications – Postman's Park has a mixed ownership, with part of the freehold held by the Vicar and Churchwardens of St Botolph's Without Aldersgate and part effectively under the control of the Diocese of London.
13. Whilst the City has the care and management of the Park under the Deed, its specific responsibilities relate to maintenance and upkeep and it is not clear whether those powers would extend to the installation of new memorials. Given that the Deed can be determined by the Vicar and Churchwardens giving notice, any proposals would have to proceed with the consent of all parties.
14. Whilst Postman's Park is characterised in the Deed as a disused burial ground, it is understood that parts of the Park may be consecrated ground for the purposes of section 11 of the Open Spaces Act 1906, and previous works have proceeded on

that basis. In that case the City may not exercise any of the powers of management under that Act unless and until they are authorised to do so by the licence or faculty of the bishop.

15. In addition to the Grade II* listing for the Watts Memorial, the Church of St Botolph's Without Aldersgate is Grade I listed and the gates and railings at the entrance to the Park, next to the Church, are Grade II listed. A large section of the Park is also a Scheduled Monument, relating to the section of Roman wall and medieval bastion. This will need to be taken into account when locating any new memorials and seeking any Listed Building Consent and/or planning permission that may be required.
16. If the City's responsibilities in relation to Postman's Park are to be expanded, in terms of the installation of new memorials, etc. then the Deed ought to be updated to reflect that. This has been done with other churchyards, using the new template that has been agreed between the City and the Diocese.
17. Risk implications – none.
18. Equalities implications – none.
19. Climate implications – none.
20. Security implications – none.

Conclusion

21. Whilst it may not be possible to add further plaques to the Watts Memorial, there are alternative solutions for recognising those that have given their lives in a respectful and fitting way that encompasses the reflective nature of Postman's Park whilst complementing the existing Memorial.
22. The addition of further memorials to create a central City memorial space would enhance the existing garden, adding interest, increasing footfall and dwell time, and highlighting it as a destination space for visitors. The proposals will require detailed consultation and the acquisition of all necessary consents.

Appendix 1 – Deed for the care and management of Postman's Park dated 2nd November 1961

Report author

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