

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
West Ham Park Committee	29 April 2022
<b>Subject:</b> West Ham Park Update	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	<b>1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12</b>
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>If so, how much?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Juliemma McLoughlin, Executive Director Environment Department	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Ricky O'Garro, West Ham Park Acting Supervisor	

### Summary

This report provides an update to Members of the West Ham Park Committee on management and operational activities at West Ham Park since 15 February 2022. The funding for the work stated is met through the Park's Local Risk Budget (City's Cash), apart from the Playground Project, which is a capital bid.

### Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the content of this report.

### Main Report

#### Current Position

#### Community, Volunteering, Outreach, and events

1. The Friends of West Ham Park assisted the keepers with maintaining the wildlife garden over the weekend of 2 and 3 April 2022. A cornflower meadow has been planted on the mound within the wildlife garden to encourage more insects and birds into the area. This will also be great for the school groups to conduct insect sweeps and investigate which insects are commonly found around the flowers.
2. The Vegetable Garden team have been digging over beds and digging in manure to support the growth of vegetables over the coming months. There are a healthy number of volunteers, with different levels of experience, working in this area. The team are looking forward to their planned children's open day, this event will be used to encourage young people to grow vegetables or flowers in any space or suitable containers.

3. The Friends of West Ham Park continue to manage the Park's Health Walks that take place every Wednesday. There is a core group of mixed abilities that walk the 5k route around the Park. They have had several referrals from the local GP practices of patients who would benefit from a little more exercise in the beautiful surroundings of West Ham Park.

### **Learning at West Ham Park**

4. The Nature Learning Programme with Sir John Heron Primary School is underway with 15 children due to visit the Park weekly. The first 2 sessions we have had prior to the Easter holidays went well, with the children engaging with the Learning Officer and the plants and features within the Wildlife Extension Garden.
5. The Learning Officer has held a number of sessions in recent months: February – 10 sessions reaching 260 children, March – 20 sessions reaching 498 children, April – only 2 sessions so far as we have had the Easter holidays. 12 sessions have been booked for April.
6. Summer term is very nearly fully booked with school groups visiting for sessions with the Learning Officer.
7. A new Key Stage 1 Plant Explorers resources has also been uploaded to the website: <https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/west-ham-park/learning-in-west-ham-park/key-stage-1-sessions-west-ham-park>
8. A new Key Stage 2 Plant session will also be on offer soon.

### **Operational Activities**

9. On 23 March, 8 corporate volunteers from L&Q Housing Association, based locally in Stratford, gave up their day to work in West Ham Park. Their job for the day was to weed and mulch the shrub beds in the South Meadow area. The feedback from the volunteers was positive and they thoroughly enjoyed their time in the Park and are very keen to come back with a larger contingent.
10. The Park has played host the Newham Vaccine and Well Being Bus on two occasions over the last month. The bus has been situated on the old basketball court and has acted as a drop-in health advice centre or to administer the Covid 19 vaccine booster. They also have given away free items to passers-by including PCR testing kits and vitamin C tablets. From the two visits to West Ham Park, the Well Being Team have given 9 Covid boosters and 34 health checks.
11. The Outdoor Gym has been refurbished within the last month. Increased footfall over the years has caused erosion and compaction to the grass in the outdoor gym area making the equipment difficult to use. This also impacted upon some of the equipment's performance. Bald patches had started to appear in a few places and there were issues with surface water remaining in situ following rainfall. This area has been renovated by laying bonded Tiger Mulch surface onto a stone base foundation ensuring good drainage to the area and in keeping with the Park's natural surroundings. The feedback received has been

positive with regular users telling staff that they have been impressed with the improvements.

### **Budget and Personnel**

12. **Budgets:** A carry forward request has been put forward following an underspend of the Park's 2021/22 Local Risk Budget. The carry forward is requested for the purchase of an electric utility vehicle, as a like for like replacement for use within the Park. The current vehicle is coming to the end of its serviceable life with increased maintenance costs.
13. **Staffing:** With the weather becoming brighter and warmer and with Park closing times getting later in the day, the number of visitors is increasing. The keepers and gardeners have been busy with spring jobs including turf management/grass cutting, strimming, pruning, and marking out the grass running track and preparation of the cricket square. Park Guard, an external security company have been used to assist keepers cover the Easter break. They have supported with reassurance patrols, reducing instances of anti-social behaviour and creating a safe place to visit.
14. A member of staff that worked at West Ham Park for 17 years, recently retired on Monday 11 April. He was a dedicated and valued member of staff who lived on site. He will be greatly missed by the staff and visitors.

### **Infrastructure Development**

15. **Playground Refurbishment Project:** The main contractor started on site on 24 January 2022.
16. As part of the development of the playground, an unknown presence of asbestos sheeting was discovered during the demolition of the old paddling pool. It had apparently been used as below ground shuttering for concrete, during the pool construction in the 1960's. The immediate area was promptly fenced off from the rest of the site, plastic covering laid, tests carried out, and following a notification period to the Health & Safety Executive, a specialist contractor removed all the asbestos material. This has not significantly altered the progression of the project which is progressing otherwise well and new equipment installation are underway. Air monitoring was carried out by an independent contractor during the asbestos removal. Costed risk contingency is being drawn down to cover the additional costs. The time delay was mitigated by the main contractor continuing to do some work elsewhere on the playground site, however the issue has caused a delay of about a month to the programme finish date, now expected to be the end of July 2022.

### **Target Operating Model (TOM)**

17. As of 4 April West Ham Park became part of the North London Open Spaces team, and will be under the remit of the Superintendent of Hampstead Heath whilst phase 2 of the TOM is undertaken. Discussions are underway on how the integration with the North London Open Spaces Team can create synergies

and development opportunities, for example looking at horticultural skills and how teams can support one another.

### **Corporate and Strategic Implications**

18. 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**

19. None.

### **Conclusion**

20. Officers and frontline staff continue to work hard to support the ongoing management and maintenance of the park. The West Ham Park staff are looking forward to working with colleagues across the wider North London Open Spaces Team. This change will hopefully see a new way of working which encourages a collaborative approach, supporting shared development and opportunities. Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

### **Ricky O'Garro**

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