

<b>Committee(s):</b> Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee	<b>Date(s):</b> 23 May 2022
<b>Subject:</b> Assistant Directors Update	<b>Public</b>
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	<b>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 11 &amp; 12</b>
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	<b>N</b>
If so, how much?	
What is the source of Funding?	<b>Local Risk</b>
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	
<b>Report of:</b> Executive Director, Environment	<b>For Discussion</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Stefania Horne, Assistant Director	

### Summary

On 9 June 2014 Committee approval was given for marriage and civil partnership ceremonies to take place at the Hill Garden and Pergola. A licence was obtained from London Borough of Camden to establish them as licenced venues. Weddings have been supported by existing keeper's teams with a substantial amount of manager's time.

It is proving challenging to ascertain the financial performance of the current arrangements as substantial staff time is required, and staff are taken away from day to day duties, with casual staff engaged to attend to regular duties. There is also a limitation in developing the business within our teams due to the specialist nature of the activities and the skillsets required. The report sets out the proposal to enter into a contract with a specialist wedding supplier to manage weddings at the Hill Garden and Pergola.

### Recommendation

It is recommended that: -

- Members provide feedback in relation to the proposal set out in para 12.

### Main Report

#### Background

1. The use of the Hill Garden and Pergola as a venue for weddings was proposed as a means of generating income for the Hampstead Heath charity.
2. Following Committee approval in June 2014, we began hosting weddings at the Hill Garden the pergola and the Belvedere

3. During the 8 years ranging from 7 to 22 weddings per year, with a decrease in bookings during the pandemic.

### **Current Position**

4. Since 2014 staff have proved invaluable in managing the ceremonies, which are vastly different from the events usually taking place within Open Spaces. Each is obviously a very personal occasion and needs to be managed as such, With the parting of the business manager who managed weddings, there has been an opportunity to review the business and measure its long term sustainability.
5. From the events that have already taken place it has become clear that the service provided is resource intensive and is taking away key Golders Hill staff from their main duties to host weddings. A substantial resource at managerial level is also required.
6. This year from March to October, 17 weddings have been booked on Thursday Friday and Saturdays.
7. The viewing meeting conducted before a booking is taken and the follow up meeting to complete arrangements has proved to be a particularly important part of the process, as it provides clarity from the start and manages expectations. This relies heavily on the Leisure and Events managers time.
8. The Registrars who have visited the site to perform ceremonies have been very happy with the way the facility is managed. An Officer from the Hampsted Heath teams, often at managerial level, must attend all the ceremonies.
9. Although receptions cannot be held at the venue, couples have requested the opportunity to drink a toast following their ceremony and have brought their own drinks flutes and canapes for this purpose. This has proven very successful and we are currently seeking a licence to develop this part of the offer as part of the packages.
10. The 2-hour hire period for the venue has worked effectively in most cases.
11. Storage facilities for the items required for the events, such as chairs, tables, barriers and signs are currently located within Golders Hill Park.

### **Proposal**

12. Due to the very labour intense nature of the activities and the specialist nature of the provision of these activities, the proposal is to engage with a specialist wedding contractor with a concession to take over the provision of the service through an income share formula.
13. It is proposed that there will be no change to current venue guest capacities. During the two year contract period the contractor will be setting fees and charges according to the market. The frequency of the ceremonies will remain unchanged but a review with the contractor might be necessary in the future, with the principle that the venues are to remain accessible to members of the public. The proposal includes Queen's park ceremonies.
14. It is envisaged that these arrangements will be trialled for two years.

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

15. This proposal contributes towards the achievement of the three aims set out in the City of London Corporate Plan 2018-23: Contribute to a flourishing society, Support a thriving economy and Shape outstanding environments.
16. The proposed changes outlined in this report would contribute towards the achievement of the Hampstead Heath Management Strategy 2018-2028 Strategic Outcomes A: The Heath is maintained as a flourishing green space and historic landscape, B: Improved quality of life for Heath visitors, C: The Heath is inclusive and welcoming to a diverse range of visitors and D: Greater number of and diversity of People taking care of the Heath.

## **Conclusion**

17. This proposal will be able to give us a more transparent picture of the financial performance of these activities and will reduce the impact on the day to day duties of our keepers.

### **Stefania Horne**

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