

OPEN SPACES AND CITY GARDENS
Monday, 13 February 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the Open Spaces and City Gardens held at Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 13 February 2023 at 10.00 am

Present

Members:

Caroline Haines (Chair)
Andrew McMurtrie (Deputy Chairman)
James Bromiley-Davis
Alderman Ian David Luder
Wendy Mead
William Upton KC

Observer:

Catherine Bickmore

In attendance:

Benjamin Murphy
Oliver Sells KC

Officers:

Sally Agass	- Environment Department
Chloe Ainsworth	- Town Clerk's Department
Joe Kingston	- Environment Department
Juliemma McLoughlin	- Environment Department
Simon Owen	- Chamberlain's Department
Helen Read	- Environment Department
Edward Wood	- Comptroller and City Solicitor's Department

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Deputy Graeme Doshi-Smith.

2. **MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

There were no declarations.

3. **WELCOME TO NEW MEMBER**

The Chair introduced Mr James Bromiley-Davis who had been elected to the Committee by the Court of Common Council.

4. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED – The public minutes and non-public summary of the meeting held on 5 December 2022 were approved as a correct record.

4.1 Matters Arising

In response to a query from a Member, the Committee was informed that there was a budget update scheduled for later in the meeting.

The Committee received a verbal update from the Executive Director of Environment on Finsbury Circus.

Members were informed that Officers from the Environment Department had given a presentation to the Resource Allocation Sub-Committee (RASC) on the Finsbury Circus project outlining its history and the options going forward.

It was noted that the current funding envelope is £5.9 million, including an in-principle allocation of £2.5 million from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) agreed by RASC in 2020, £3.2 million compensation agreed by Crossrail and funding of £200,000 from the Climate Action Fund.

It was also noted that Officers had received five responses to a tender exercise and had not yet had the opportunity to evaluate these in detail.

Members were informed that delivery of the Finsbury Circus scheme, including the provision for a pavilion, as consented to by Planning and Transportation Committee, would range from £7.9 million to £8.9 million and that a value engineering option would deliver savings of approximately £300,000.

Officers explained that the landscaping scheme without the pavilion would cost between £5.7 million to £6.1 million. Members were informed that this option fits within the budget and that there was a strong steer from RASC Members that this was the preferred option.

It was noted that the current tenders were only valid for three-month period.

Members agreed that open grass space had proved popular following the Covid-19 pandemic. A Member stated that open space was better for biodiversity.

Members discussed the various possibilities for amenities, including utilising the toilet facilities of local pubs and cafes. Members noted the proximity of Liverpool Street.

RESOLVED, that Members –

- Endorse the landscape only option.
- Delegate authority to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair, to consider a gateway 5 report on plans for Finsbury Circus.

5. FINANCE PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received a report of the Chamberlain providing an update on the operational finance position as @ period 9 (April - December) 2022/23 for the Natural Environment Divisions local risk revenue budget to date and

projected year-end outturn position, current live capital projects and outstanding debt position.

In response to a query from a Member, the Committee was informed that there were plans to develop a tourist centre for the Monument on Pudding Lane and that this would generate income for the City Corporation. A Member suggested adding the Monument's inaccessibility to the risk register as a financial risk.

Members agreed that the City Corporation should recover debts owed to it from utilities and leaseholders. An Officer confirmed that there was no movement of funds between charities.

Members agreed that the City Corporation should continue to explore implementing gift aid at its charities. Officers agreed to progress this and reassured the Committee that the April deadline would be met.

The Executive Director Environment agreed to explore the cost of the directorate's agency staffing and to share the findings with the Committee.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

6. **RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE**

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director Environment providing assurance that risk management procedures in place within the Environment Department are satisfactory and that they meet the requirements of the Corporate Risk Management Framework and the Charities Act 2011.

The Chair stated that if the issues related to the Monument are not resolved then these should be reflected on the risk register.

A Member stated that the health and safety risk should include that more staff are required centrally to support the management of health and safety concerns. A Member was of the view that where the City Corporation does not fully understand the problem then risk ratings should be marked at the highest value.

Members were informed that there had been further developments in relation to Wanstead Reservoir and that the work required would be delivered by Spring 2024. Members noted that Officers had been unable to include this information in the report due to the timing of the various committees involved.

A Member stated that the extreme weather and climate change risk should include two additional mitigating actions:

- 1) The flexibility of the staff support model to assist in critical periods (i.e. with fires or floods).
- 2) The City Corporation's working relationship with fire and rescue partners.

A Member requested further information to assist in their understanding of cross-divisional risks. Officers agreed to provide this information outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED, that Members –

- agreed to confirm, on behalf of the City Corporation as Trustee, the Natural Environment Cross-Divisional Risk Register (Appendix 1) satisfactorily sets out the key top-level risks to the charities and that appropriate systems are in place to identify and mitigate risks across the charities.
- note the content of this report, the City Gardens Risk Register (Appendix 2), and the action being taken to effectively manage these risks.

7. **DRAFT HIGH-LEVEL BUSINESS PLAN (2023/24)**

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director Environment setting out the draft high-level business plan for the Environment Department for 2023/24.

In response to a query from a Member, the Committee was informed that the Environment Department was completing its own equality, diversity and inclusion work which feeds into the corporate work in this space.

RESOLVED, that Members –

- Note the factors taken into consideration in compiling the Environment Department Business Plan; and
- Approve, subject to the incorporation of any changes sought by this Committee, the departmental high-level Business Plan 2023/24.

8. **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director Environment providing an update on matters relating to the work of the Natural Environment Division of the Environment Department since the last Committee in December 2022.

The Executive Director Environment made a small correction to page 80 of the report stating that the list of 142 property assets also included land assets.

Members were informed that the byelaws work had been paused as the Environment Department did not have the resources to progress this.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

9. **REVISED TERMS OF REFERENCE (TO FOLLOW)**

The Committee was informed that this report would not be available for this meeting as the terms of reference was still in development.

10. **NATURE RESILIENCE**

Members received a presentation of the Executive Director Environment on the City of London Corporation staff visit to Spain.

Members requested that the paper relating to the restoration of the lapsed beech pollards be circulated to the Committee.

In response to a query, Members were informed that younger pollards could generate income from charcoal or fuel. However, it was challenging to produce in quantities that would be valuable to the City Corporation.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

11. **CITY GARDENS MANAGER'S UPDATE / FINSBURY CIRCUS**

Members received a verbal update from the Executive Director of Environment on the following points:

- a) The City Gardens team would have a fully electric fleet by the beginning of the next calendar year.
- b) The team was in the midst of its tree planting programme and aimed to plant 68 trees across the Square Mile.
- c) The following projects were underway: Dukes Place, Moor Lane, Jubilee Gardens, Guildhall Pond, Cheapside Sunken Garden and the Crescent, a new green space.
- d) At the Clean Streets Awards there was an award for garden of the year for City Gardeners.

RESOLVED – that the update be noted.

12. **CITY CLUSTER VISION - WELL-BEING & CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE PROGRAMME: JUBILEE GARDENS IMPROVEMENTS (GW5)**

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director Environment on the Jubilee Gardens project.

In response to a query from a Member, the Committee was informed that it was not necessary to implement anti-skateboarding measures as the plans for the space included arms and backrests on the chairs, metal edges and curving paths, which are all unsuitable surfaces for skateboarding.

RESOLVED - That Members agree authorisation to implement the Jubilee Gardens relandscaping works as set out in Appendix 3.

13. **2023/24 EVENTS FEES AND CHARGES**

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director Environment setting out proposed events fees and charges for the City Gardens sites for the period of 2023 and 24.

Members were informed of an error in Appendix 1. It was noted that the report should reflect that the City Corporation would freeze fees for charity and non-profit events.

RESOLVED – That Members approve the proposed 2023/24 fees and charges as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, subject to the amendment highlighted above.

14. **SPORTS STRATEGY UPDATE**

The Committee was informed that this update would not be available for this meeting and would instead be provided at a future meeting.

15. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

There were no questions.

16. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED**

There was no urgent business.

17. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED – That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act as follows:-

Item	Paragraph
18,19	3

18. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

RESOLVED – The non-public minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2022 were approved as a correct record.

19. **TARGET OPERATING MODEL (TOM) UPDATE**

The Committee received a verbal update of the Executive Director Environment on the target operating model (TOM).

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

20. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

There were no questions.

21. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED**

There was no urgent business.

22. **CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES**

RESOLVED – The confidential minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2022 were approved as a correct record.

The meeting ended at 11.45 am

Chairman

Contact Officer: Chloe Ainsworth
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