

Committee	Dated:
West Ham Park Committee	16 October 2023
Subject: Assistant Directors Update	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
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: Bob Roberts, Executive Director Environment Department	For Information
Report author: 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 July 2023. The funding for the work stated is met through the West Ham Park local risk budget (City's Cash).

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the content of the report.

Main Report

New management positions for the North London Open Spaces.

1. We are delighted to announce the arrival of the new Assistant Director for the North London Open Spaces Team, Bill LoSasso. He is joined by the new Head of Operations and Parks, Charlotte Williams, and also Ciaran O'Keeffe, the new Formal Parks Manager. The Head of Conservation, Jonathan Meares, will be supporting both the Assistant Director and the Head of Operations and Parks until November.

Nature recovery and Park management

2. The park team are currently working closely with the NLOS tree team to improve the tree maintenance in West Ham Park. Training will be given over the next few weeks to several park staff on the Tree Plotter application that helps track tree health and maintenance of the parks tree stock.

3. Tree work update – Due to a handover period of the overseeing responsibility of the Tree Management at WHP from City Gardens to the NLOS Tree Team, there has been a period of catching up with overdue tree management tasks undertaken by the term tree contractor (KPS). Since May this year, 12 dead trees have been felled and 23 trees have been pollarded or reduced. The decline in tree health due to soil conditions has affected sycamore, London plane and horse chestnut mostly. This decline in large parkscape trees leaves us with the question of future proofing tree planting selection in terms of replacing species that are struggling in these growing conditions. Six low oak processionary moth (OPM) nests were removed by the NLOS Tree Team after inspection, however the risk of OPM health issues to members of the public and staff is classed as low.
4. Eight trees were planted in the spring, one of these was part of the Queen's Green Canopy scheme. All the trees are in good health and have had a much easier first growing season with the cooler wetter summer we have had. Replacement planting for the trees lost this year due to poor soil health will be carried out in 2024.
5. Although the summer was not as hot as last year, the keepers and gardeners were kept busy ensuring the beds in the ornamental gardens were watered using sprinklers and watering by hand. The occasional rain during the summer meant the grass was constantly growing meaning mowing of the parkland was non-stop this year and is still continuing now.
6. Visitor numbers have been relatively high during the summer. Many families were enjoying picnics and parties in the Park and taking the opportunity to cool down in the waterplay area in the playground. The fatal incident in the Park in early July did cause visitor numbers to drop for several weeks but the reassurance patrols by keepers, Park Guard and police did put the public at ease.
7. The football season has now started and there are two teams using West Ham Park as their home ground. Due to the funfair being sited on the football pitches, they were not quite up to standard. Keepers had to renovate and revitalise the pitches. Pitches were scarified, aerated, seeded, and watered to ensure the pitches are up to a good standard. Work will continue during the season to maintain the condition of the pitches.
8. During the summer we have had in person judging for Green Flag and London in Bloom. We have had great results from the judging, and West Ham Park achieved the Green Flag and gold award in the large park (above 25 acres) London in Bloom category. This is an amazing achievement for us here at the Park and all the staff are delighted with the result. This shows the commitment and hard work that all the staff, volunteers and Friends group put in to making West Ham Park the success that it is.

Events

9. The Park hosted a second funfair this year from the 14th to 16th July that was organised by George Irvin Funfairs. This was not as well attended as the funfair in May, but a great time was had by all those that did attend. Moving forward, we may look at changing the date of the second funfair and hold it later in the year, possibly September.
10. The Arts Workshop held eight art events in the ornamental gardens. The project was run in partnership with West Ham Park, Forest Gate Library and Forest Gate Community Garden was aimed at raising awareness of the benefits of art and open spaces. This project gets more people involved in art, and the organisers thought that West Ham Park was the ideal place to hold these art events.
11. On the 29th August West Ham Park was the launch site for a project called 'From The Ground Up'. This is a QR trail exhibition that celebrates nature in West Ham Park. There are a series of QR codes attached to benches in the Ornamental Gardens showing art and animations inspired by visits to the Park by residents from Hamara Ghar supported housing scheme in Newham. The launch day was well attended by Park users, and many were impressed by the exhibition.

Friends of West Ham Park (FoWHP)

12. The vegetable garden volunteers have been working extremely hard during the season. They have had a great harvest of potatoes, carrots, lettuce, tomatoes and much more. The group have been working with children who are home schooled, and this has proven very successful. The children are very engaged and enthusiastic to learn about gardening and they enjoy planting.
13. During August the Friends ran a series of Sunday afternoon litter picks with the public to raise awareness of the consequences of littering to the scenery and wildlife. They run a series of four litter picking sessions which were very well attended. The idea was to carry out a ten-minute litter pick, but most families stayed out for much longer. The keepers were glad of the help as litter picking can be a time-consuming task.
14. Friday 22nd September saw another very successful bat walk in the Park. The bats put on a brilliant flying display which was enjoyed by about 120 people, most of whom were children. Many commented that they did not realise that there were bats in the Park. The participants were given a short talk on bat habits, what they eat, where they roost and echo location. The bat walk planned for August was rained off.
15. The Friends will bid for funding from the 'People Powered Places' group for the planting around the mounds to create wildlife areas which are visible to everyone.
16. Friends Roger and Lyndsay Jones will be funding the planting of a native hedgerow around the playground to leave a lasting memorial to their time living in

Stratford. Although they have moved from Newham, they will continue to support the Park.

Corporate and Strategic Implications

Strategic Implications

17. The works and activities outlined in this report contribute towards the achievement of the three aims set out in the City of London Corporate Plan 2018-23. Contribute to a flourishing society (1-4), Support a thriving economy (5) and Shape outstanding environments (9-12).

18. Financial Implications

N/A.

19. Legal Implications

N/A.

20. Risk Implications

Risks are recorded and monitored via the Departmental Risk Register.

21. Equality Implications

N/A

22. Climate Implications

The City of London Corporation has a Climate Action Strategy which seeks to achieve Net Zero by 2037. There will be a range of measures implemented to realise this including increasing carbon sequestration and storage across the Open Spaces alongside biodiversity enhancement and resilience measures including relaxing grass cutting regimes and hedge planting.

Conclusion

23. The summer period has been much less stressful for staff with the cooler weather. The Park continues to be a great asset for community participation with successful engagements of businesses and schools. The Friends of West Ham Park continue to be a key partner to keep the Park well managed and to involve the local communities. Staff are remaining engaged in the implementation of the wider Natural Environment strategic framework which includes nature recovery and community engagement.

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