

Committee:	Date:
Natural Environment Board	19 February 2024
Subject: City Gardens Update	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N/A
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, Interim Executive Director Environment	For Information
Report author: Jake Tibbetts, City Gardens Manager	

Summary

This report provides an update to Members of the Open Spaces & City Gardens Committee on current management and operational activities across the City Gardens section.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report

Main Report

Current position

Personnel

1. Apprentices. Four new Gardening Apprentices started with the City Gardens Team on the 5th February. A new business apprentice started on the 7th February, they sit within the Gardens and Cleansing team and will focus on improving City Gardens offer for Corporate organisations who wish to volunteer.
2. There are currently three vacancies which we are in the process of recruiting for, two Gardeners and one Assistant Gardener.

3. Through an increase of revenue funding from the On Street Parking Reserve , we are looking to recruit three new members of front-line staff, allowing us to create a small team that focuses on borough wide tasks such as tree pit maintenance, street planter watering etc. An additional shift worker will be created to increase staff cover at weekends in response to the increase in weekend visitors to the city and support ambitions under Destination City.

Procurement

4. The following contracts are coming to an end and new contracts need to be procured this calendar year
 - Tree Works Contract – Specification being finalised
 - Bedding Contract – Recently Procured
 - New electric vehicles - procured and will be delivered in February
 - A new Handheld Vibration monitoring system that will ensure that staff are protected against nerve damage caused by long term or excessive use of vibrating equipment – currently being procured

Operational Activities

5. **Biodiversity Action Plan:** The Biodiversity Action Plan is now being progressed, with actions and target dates reviewed. The Biodiversity Partnership Group is being resurrected and is due to meet in February. The aim of this group is to foster a network of external organisations who can collaborate and support each other to deliver the actions as detailed in the Biodiversity action Plan.
6. **Tower Hill Gardens:** Currently a tender is out to commission a company who will lead on the design and build process required to replace the existing playground. This process will commence with a public consultation exercise which we anticipate will take place in April. Removal of the existing playground will take place at the end of February, as the equipment is in a poor state of repair.
7. **Barbers Surgeons Gardens:** A Landscape architect company has been commissioned to deliver a master plan for this site, designs are being developed based on the results of the public consultation, these designs were presented to a stakeholder meeting on the 8th of February. The final masterplan design will be presented to committee in April.
8. **Destination City/ City Gardens:** The City Gardens team and Destination City are discussing a potential collaboration to review and refresh the self-guided walks and tours available in the City. Exploring how City Garden assets can be incorporated into the offer and promoted. Options will be explored in the coming months to align with recommendations from the Destination City Review. Officers will update Members at a future committee.

9. **Friends of City Gardens:** The Friends of City Gardens are going through a transitional period as a key member is leaving. City Gardens are working closely with the Friends to work out how both organisations need to adapt to ensure that they both are able to continue to provide support to each other. This work includes a review of roles and responsibilities and establishment of a terms of reference document.
10. **Corporate volunteering:** With the new staff that have been identified within this report, Gardens and Cleansing are looking to work with Friends of City Gardens and existing corporate volunteers to deliver an enhanced programme of corporate volunteer days that organisations can sign up to. These events will where possible include other services such as cleansing and heritage to widen the offer. Work is also being done within the wider Natural Environment team to look at volunteering synergies and potential collaborations across the department.

Project Updates

11. So far this winter City Gardens have delivered projects to replace planting and increase biodiversity at:
 - St Mary Aldermanbury
 - All Hallows London Wall
 - Whittington Gardens
 - St Dunstan's Hill Planter
 - Queen Street Raised Planters
 - Angel Lane scheme
 - Rood Lane Planters
 - Planted 13 new street trees as part of the City Greening and Biodiversity Programme
12. City Gardens are working to support Policy and Projects on delivering the following projects which are currently onsite:
 - 1 Cheapside/ Sunken Gardens; a sustainable urban drainage scheme that is will be retrofitted around the existing trees and deliver new sustainable planting beds.
 - Jubilee Gardens – A climate resilient scheme that will feature a relative high volume of new trees for the size of the site.
 - Moor Lane Eastern Side – will include street trees and planters containing multi-stemmed trees
 - Giltspur Street - x3 new street Trees
 - Middlesex Street - x6 new street trees
 - Bank Junction phase 1 – x3 new street trees and new Suds planters
13. City Gardens projects to be delivered before the end of march
 - Aldermanbury Square – rejuvenating the planting beds and planting x3 trees
 - St Olave Street Garden improvement
 - Replacement of box hedge at Carter Lane and Coleman Street Garden

- Planting and lawn improvements at Postmans Park

14. **Finsbury Circus:** Maylim, the main contractor, took occupation of the site 20th November 2023. A soft start was made due to last minute requests for additional surveys from Environmental Health and TfL. These were undertaken over the Christmas period and the results have been issued to the relevant parties.

In terms of physical works the following has been achieved and is underway - Northern Area

- Vehicle/Logistics Bay established.
- Dwarf walls demolished to existing soil level
- Existing paving uplifted
- Lawn area excavated down to formation layer for new paving.

Southern Area

- Paving uplifted
- Vehicle/Logistics bay established.
- Cross rail entrance demolished.
- Dwarf walls demolished to existing soil level.
- Lawn area excavated down to formation layer for new paving.

Look Ahead - Works for February

- Tree pruning and felling works
- Drainage runs (manholes and attenuation tanks)
- Sub-base installation (north and south)
- Works to demolish parks office

15. The programme is still on track for the garden to open late 2024.
16. City Gardens are about to start on developing the Finsbury Circus Events Policy, this will be completed by the time the gardens open and will be presented to committee at a future meeting.

Events

17. A ceremonial Tree Planting with the Worshipful Company of Engineers will be taking place in Whittington Gardens on the 22nd February.

Jake Tibbetts
City Gardens Manager

E: jake.tibbetts@cityoflondon.gov.uk