

Committee:	Date:
Natural Environment Board	16 May 2024
Subject: City Gardens Update	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1)Diverse Engaged Communities 2)Leading Sustainable Environment 3)Providing Excellent services 5)Vibrant Thriving Destination 6)Flourishing Public Spaces
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. The recruitment process has started for two city Gardeners, and are awaiting job evaluations for two more positions, including the Keeper at Bunhill which will be considered by the evaluation panel on 16 May.
2. A new assistant Gardener will be starting 3rd June, who will be based at the Barbican Team.
3. The four apprentice Gardeners have settled in well and started their college courses at the end of April.

Procurement

4. The first of the electric vehicles has been delivered and is now in use, there has been a delay with the build of the remaining electric vehicles but are anticipated to be delivered in the next two months.

Operational Activities

5. **Biodiversity Action Plan:** The Biodiversity Partnership Group has formed three subgroups made up of internal officers and external organisations, to focus on three different BAP actions:
 - **Communications**
Identify opportunities to engage with City community to raise awareness of the BAP and support biodiversity in the Square Mile. (Education, Comms, community, businesses)
 - **Pollinators in the City**
Develop guidance on supporting pollinators in the built environment by enabling biodiversity partnership working group
 - **Biological Recording in City**
Increase understanding of biodiversity in the Square Mile through systematic surveys and species recording
6. City Gardens have purchased 25 agrisound monitors which will be placed in gardens across the city on a trial basis. These monitor use sound sensors to identify and count the numbers of nearby bees, this information is then sent back via the mobile phone to enable monitoring of bee activity bee across the city. If this proves successful the next stage will be to expand the network and will encourage private land owners to introduce them into their sites.
7. **Pollinating London Together** - City Gardens continue to work closely with Pollinating London Together who have recently published the annual report of pollinator and habitat surveys for 2023. The report details data gathered during field surveys on the diversity and abundance of pollinators and pollinator-friendly plants in the City of London.

8. The survey involved four rounds of surveys between early spring and late summer across 63 sites including 58 ground level gardens and five roof gardens. A total of 9,606 insect pollinators were recorded with pollinators recorded on 72% of flowering plants in the City of London. The report highlights the importance of increasing the diversity of pollinator-friendly planting and increase nesting resources for both cavity and ground nesting bees which can be delivered as part of climate-resilient planting schemes.
9. **Tower Hill Gardens:** A public consultation exercise on the new playground will take place over the summer, which will then feed into the design. Members will have a chance to comment on the design at a later committee. The existing playground will be removed shortly.
10. **Aldgate Live:** City Gardens are working with Aldgate Connect, Portsoaken Activities Group and Destination City are working together to deliver live music events in Aldgate square throughout. These will be open sessions to musicians who can book slots in advance to play.
11. **Friends of City Gardens:** The FoCG have secured funding from the GLA to carry out rewilding works at Bunhill Fields, this includes the establishment of new shade beds, enhanced woodland habitat through planting native plants and ferns, improving habitat for ground nesting bees, improved grass areas through introducing wildflower species, planting new trees, increased biodiversity of planting across the site and delivering outdoor learning sessions for young adults, local children, residents and workers in ecology, integration boards and guided walks.
12. **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

13. Current projects
 - 1 Cheapside/ Sunken Gardens; a sustainable urban drainage scheme that is will be retrofitted around the existing trees and deliver new sustainable planting beds, is on site and nearing completion.
 - Jubilee Gardens – A climate resilient scheme that will feature a relative high volume of new trees for the size of the site. This scheme is on site and it is intended that planting will take place in October.
14. The following projects have been completed since the last City Gardens Update report
 - Moor Lane Eastern Side –new planters and trees.

- Middlesex Street - six new street trees
 - Bank Junction phase 1 three new street trees and new Suds planter.
 - Aldermanbury Square – rejuvenating the planting beds and planting of three new trees
 - Replacement of box hedge at Carter Lane and Coleman Street Garden
15. **Finsbury Circus:** Maylim, the main contractor, took occupation of the site 20th November 2023.
16. Physical works Completed since last update:
- Tree pruning and felling works
 - Drainage runs (manholes and attenuation tanks)
 - Sub-base installation (north and south)
 - Works to demolish parks office and Bandstand plinth.
17. Works panned for coming month:
- Digging out planters
 - Soil for lawn area
 - Commencement of paving around perimeter path
 - Foundations for parks office
18. The programme is still on track for the garden to open late 2024. A site visit for NEB members around Finsbury Circus is being planned for September.
19. City Gardens are developing the Finsbury Circus Events Policy, this will be completed by the time the gardens open, the first draft will be presented to committee at a future meeting.

Events

20. The Chair for the Natural Environment Board is hosting a walk for members on the 12th June. This will be led by the City Gardens Manager, attendees will visit a number of sites to hear about the City Gardens innovative work and to meet members of the team.
21. The first “Meet the Gardeners” event took place on the 15th of April in the Guildhall. This was a joint event involving the Natural Environment Board, the Worshipful Company of Gardeners and the charitable veteran organisations who organise the Big Curry Lunch. It was a very well attended event despite the unexpected rain and hail, bringing together people across the City who have an interest in horticulture.

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