

Committee(s): West Ham Park Committee	Date(s): 16 May 2024
Subject: Assistant Director's update	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan (2024-2029) does this proposal aim to impact directly?	Diverse engage communities Leading sustainable environment Vibrant thriving destination Providing excellent services Flourishing public spaces
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: Executive Director, Environment	For Information
Report author: Bill LoSasso, Assistant Director (Superintendent) North London Open Spaces	

Summary

This report provides Members with an update on matters relating to West Ham Park since the last Committee meeting on 19 February 2024.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the content of the report.

Main Report

Grounds Maintenance

1. Work has been carried out in the grounds, which has included turf management, grass cutting, strimming, pruning, and marking and preparing the cricket square. Spring bulbs were planted in the autumn in the gardens

and park have come into full glory this spring, providing an amazing display. In the gardens, a “Double Pleasure” mix was planted, which consists of a combination of early yellow and late white flowering dwarf narcissi giving an extended flowering period. In the park, a mix called “Bee Surprise” was planted. As the name suggests, this mix has been specially developed for pollinators. The flowering started in February with a show of crocus, leading to a display of narcissi, chionodoxa, scilla and muscari, and ending with a flash of red and yellow from the naturalising tulips. These areas have proven very popular with park visitors, as they are an excellent food source for the insects and provide an amazing visual floral display.

2. The works for the playground hedge commenced with the decompaction and digging of the area. The perimeter of the playground has been dug over, using a 360-digger borrowed from Epping Forest. The ground lacked nutrients and was very compacted, so the soil was turned, and compost was added from the leaf yard. The area will be regularly weeded and rotovated.
3. The ornate stone urn in the gardens has been hidden from view by the surrounding shrubbery, so planting has been undertaken to make the urn more of a feature. The area was dug over and many of the old “leggy” shrubs were removed to reveal the urn. It has now been planted up with a backdrop of a dark yew hedge, to make the urn stand out. The area in front and around the urn has been planted up with various pennisetum grasses, phormium, erigeron and verbenas.

Fees and charges (FY'2024-25)

4. Officers completed their annual review of the sports fees in the park, and fees were increased in line with RPI inflation (5%), as noted elsewhere in the agenda pack.

Sports and Recreation

5. Work was undertaken to ensure the cricket pitch retains its excellent standard. The cricket season has begun with the first game being played on Sunday 14 April. There are two adult teams and one “teen” team using the main cricket square this season. Several corporate games have also been booked for the season.
6. The 400m grass running track has been marked out for the summer. 10 bookings have been received from the local primary and secondary schools to hold their school sports days. More booking requests are expected from the local schools.
7. Meetings have been held with the Lawn Tennis Association and the tennis coaches to review the tennis provision, with the aim of improving use and increasing income.

8. Officers have met with the Lawn Tennis Association to discuss the introduction of Padel at West Ham Park. LTA are supportive, with the caveat that it does not come at the expense of or detriment to the existing provision of tennis. The LTA co-funded the City Corporation's renovation of nine of the park's 12 tennis courses in the park in 2015, providing £85,000 towards the project and requiring the City Corporation to keep and maintain the tennis courts for a period of 21 years. The other three courts were renovated under a separate effort shorting before the renovation of the other 9 courts. LTA requests that the City Corporation make all reasonable efforts to increase the use of tennis at courts before a conversation to Padel is considered. Officers were continuing their research into this matter at the time of submission of this report. As further investigation is needed to inform our exploration of the introduction of Padel at West Ham Park, we will provide a more detailed report at the next meeting of this committee.

In a parallel effort, other areas are also being considered for conversion to Padel at West Ham Park, including the disused basketball court. Additional information will be reported at the next meeting of the Committee once officers have had time to complete further research.

Partnerships

9. Friends of West Ham Park have conducted several volunteer sessions in the wildlife garden. The works included the removal of the pond netting and corn flower meadow ground covering. Wildlife such as frogs, newts, dragonfly lava and many smaller insects were removed from the netting and leaves, and returned to the pond.
10. On Friday 22 March, volunteers from "Ambition, Aspire, Achieve"- a children's and young people's organisation focused on supporting the most disadvantaged and at-risk young people in Newham – had a session in the park. They assisted the gardeners with wood chipping the path in the woodland walk, which helped with their confidence, health, and wellbeing.
11. Friends of West Ham Park also held a food bank donation on 6 April. Many supplies were donated, which were then given to local Newham food banks, which were very grateful as they had nearly run out of food when they were open earlier that day.

Events

12. Friends of West Ham Park organised a star gazing event called 'Eyes in the Sky' on 16 February. The evening went well and 12 people attended in

addition to the Friends members. The moon and its craters were seen by everyone.

13. A successful bird watching event was held on 18 February, and 21 different species of bird were recorded.
14. We are working in partnership with Sustainable Newham, as the Park is hosting the Newham Green Fair on Bank Holiday Monday on 6 May, where “over 50 community activists and groups, voluntary organisations, musicians, artists, small traders and local businesses came together to showcase initiatives, projects, organisations and businesses that help protect and enhance the environment, create a sustainable community and contribute to social, economic and environmental justice locally and globally.” We are delighted to host this year’s event, which will form a part of the programming for the park’s 150th anniversary celebration.
15. Eid celebrations took place on 10 April in the Park. It was extremely busy with families gathering to celebrate the end of Ramadan.
16. Friends of West Ham Park will be leading two bat walks on 23 August and 20 September 2024.

Tree Management

17. On 15 April we had very high winds in the park, with gusting recorded at 46mph+. Although this was not a named storm, it posed significant risk and officers proactively closed the park for part of the day, with the protocol on wind speed threshold having been reached. No significant tree failures were reported.
18. In March and April, contractors performed reduction and dead wooding to 15 trees in the park following surveys in late 2023 to ensure that the tree inventory and park remain safe.
19. There was also an inspection of a decaying weeping willow in the garden area, which it was decided may require stabilisation pruning. The tree has an active nesting in dead wood cavity, so it has been taped off to exclude public access and will be reinspected in May. A dead wood cavity will be preserved for future habitat.
20. Trees across the park continue to support biodiversity. Officers have noted a bee nest – which presents no public hazard - within a London plane and have additionally noted birds and mammals in tree cavities, including great tit, ring necked parakeets, pigeon, collared dove, and squirrels.

Learning Team

21. 3,827 students have participated in the school programme this year (April 2023– March 2024). The programme enables participants to apply and consolidate their classroom learning, and to build a connection with nature which is an essential foundation for pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours.

22. The Learning Team's new programme for children with additional needs, funded by the City Corporation's 'Cultural and Creative Learning Fund', is flourishing, with five schools per week participating and three additional schools on the waiting list. The wildlife garden at West Ham Park is a huge draw for our schools, including groups with additional needs. The team are keen to make a case for an additional teaching garden to increase opportunities, access and participation.

23. To celebrate the park's 150th anniversary, the Learning Team are working with the adjacent Park Primary School to develop a West Ham Park tree trail. Students have been making close observations of West Ham Park trees and using creativity and design skills to develop ideas and visuals for an interactive trail. The team are also preparing to offer Eco Art Workshops for families celebrating the park's 150th anniversary and is continuing to run a monthly Community Campfire event.

150th anniversary

24. A separate report entitled "Planning for the 150th anniversary for West Ham Park" has been submitted with the papers for this Committee.

FY2024-25 Management activities

25. A separate report entitled "Management Priorities for FY'2024-25 (Business Plan)" has been submitted with the papers for this Committee.

Financial Implications

26. No implications.

Resource Implications

27. No implications.

Climate Implications

28. Included within the annual plan for 2023/24 are a series of projects which contribute towards achieving the City of London's Climate Action Strategy, which was launched in October 2020. A key part of the strategy is conserving

and enhancing biodiversity alongside reducing carbon emissions. The Climate Action Strategy will be embedded into future strategies which are currently being drafted within the Natural Environment Division.

Legal Implications

29. No implications.

Risk Implications

30. Risks are monitored and recorded through the Departmental Risk Register.

Equality Implications

31. No impact.

Security Implications

32. Security implications are monitored and recorded through the Departmental Risk register.

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