

Committee:	Date:
Natural Environment Board	11 July 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 Natural Environment Boards on current management and operational activities across the City Gardens section.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report

Main Report

Personnel

1. City Gardens are currently recruiting for a new Team Leader, the Keeper Role and three gardeners.

Procurement

2. At the time of writing tenders had been received for both the tree works contract and the design and consultation for the playground at Tower Hill Gardens.

Operational Activities

3. **Tower Hill Gardens:** A public consultation exercise on the new playground will which will feed into the design will take place over the summer. Members will have the opportunity to comment on the proposed designs at a later committee.
4. **Friends of City Gardens:** The FoCG are progressing with delivering the 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 of new trees
 - increased biodiversity of planting across the site
 - delivering outdoor learning sessions for young adults, local children, residents and workers via ecology, integration boards and guided walks
 - A number of corporate volunteer events have also been delivered
5. **Bunhill Fields:** Works has started on making safe a leaning wall in the north western part of the site. Parkguard are attending site more regularly to focus on encouraging responsible dog ownership, this will continue until the new keeper is in post.
6. **Business Improvement Districts:** A programme of sporting and cultural events are being planned in conjunction with the BIDS in a number of City Gardens Sites. These include:
 - Yoga and Yogalates in Christchurch Greyfriars
 - Bollywood dance in Postmans Park
 - Bootcamp in Barbers Sugeons
 - Table cricket in conjunction with The Lords Taverners in Christchurch Greyfriars
 - Outdoor screening of sporting events and films at Seething Lane
7. The open mic sessions that were being planned in Aldgate Square will not be proceeding in their original format, however, the Aldgate BID will be hosting four Aldgate Sounds live music sessions on evenings throughout August.

8. A meeting between City Gardens and representatives from all of the BIDs was held to consider how to deliver a full programme of events in City Garden sites over the course of next year.
9. City Gardens are in advanced contractual discussions with the EC bid to fund an additional Gardener for the EC area, this gardener will focus on raising the quality of key sites.

Project Updates

10. Current projects
 - 1 Cheapside/ Sunken Gardens; the planting is complete, the final hard landscaping works are due to be finished within the next few weeks.
 - 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
 - Moorgate London Wall – a redesign of the area around the oldest Oak tree in the Square Mile, will be delivered this winter
11. **Finsbury Circus:** Maylim, the main contractor, took occupation of the site 20th November 2023.
 - I) Physical works Completed since last update:
 - Paving installed to SE & NE
 - Soakage trenches dug in North & South of Lawn (outside LUL Zone)
 - Lawn Planters dug and filled with sub-soil to East & West Lawn
 - LuL Zone de-compacted
 - Park Office & Yard relocation design agreed
 - II) Works planned for coming month:
 - Updated Method Statement to be issued (Tree works Arboriculturist)
 - Updated Levels design & drawings to be issued
 - Install foundation for Park Office & Yard
 - Installation of paving in Outer Perimeter Pathway
 - III) Works have been delayed slightly during the current period. The tree roots in the area of the planned office and in some locations of the path network have proven to be higher in depth and more extensive than anticipated. This has meant there has had to be a redesign to parts of the paths and the office location to ensure that the impact of the development on the trees' health is as small as possible. The programme is therefore delayed slightly with completion date likely in early 2025. A site visit for NEB members around Finsbury Circus is being planned for September, this will be circulated shortly. Official opening, attended by the Lord Mayor being planned for early Summer 2025 .

- IV) 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 October NEB.

Events

12. London in Bloom judging is taking place in the City on the 3rd July.
13. The members tour took place on the 12th June. Members were taken to a range of City Gardens to see meet a range of staff from the team, to hear about projects, challenges and innovation within the Team.

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