

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Natural Environment Board	Dated: 10 December 2024
Subject: City Gardens Event Policy and Fees and Charges for 25/26	Public report: For Decision
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes • provides business enabling functions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vibrant Thriving Destination • 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:	Katie Stewart Executive Director Environment
Report author:	Jake Tibbetts City Gardens Manager

Summary

1. This report outlines updates to the City Gardens Events Policy and related fees and charges in preparation for the reopening of Finsbury Circus Gardens in 2025.
2. The updated policy introduces major and minor event categories, a new cultural event category with variable discounts, and an appendix specific to Finsbury Circus. These changes aim to support diverse event types while ensuring the gardens remain accessible to the public.
3. The proposed updates provide a structured and flexible approach to event management that balances public access, financial sustainability, and activation of City Gardens.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Approve the new City Gardens Events Policy
- Approve the new Fees and Charges as set out in Appendix 2 in this report.

Main Report

Background

4. The City Gardens Events Policy was first presented to Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee in 2015 and an updated document presented in July 2018. Both of these policies were written whilst Finsbury Circus Gardens was closed during the construction of Cross Rail.
5. An annual events fees and charges report is required to be submitted to the Natural Environment Board which considers the charges applied to events for the following financial year.

Current Position

6. Finsbury Circus Gardens will reopen to the public early in 2025, due to its size and the way it has been designed and constructed Finsbury Circus Gardens will be able to accommodate much larger events than any other site managed by City Gardens and is the City's only outdoor event space that can hold over 500 participants. Events of this size require full premises licencing. It is therefore necessary to review and update the events policy to reflect these larger events.
7. This report also outlines a proposed new set of fees and charges for the 2025/2026 financial year. There is a need to set fees for Finsbury Circus which have previously not been considered. Both the fees and charges and the Events Policy have been reviewed to ensure they are in line with fees and policies from neighbouring local authorities, whilst also supporting the City's ambitions to be a "Vibrant Thriving Destination" and provide "Flourishing Public Spaces".
8. Over the past few years the City Gardens teams have received applications for a number of events which are free and may occur over multiple days and weeks to increase the cultural offering in the City and support the ambitions of Destination City. These include events such as "Aldgate Live" and the "Summer of Sport". For the purposes of this report, these will be referred to as Cultural Events. City Gardens would like to continue to support these events and recognise that existing fees and charges are not appropriate as the total cost of the events could become prohibitive. Whilst there may still need to be a charge levied to cover maintenance costs (lawn repair etc.), this varies from event to event and some degree of flexibility is required in the calculation of fees.

Options

9. Options for the Events Policy

- Retain the current events policy for existing City Gardens sites and introduce a separate events policy for Finsbury Circus Gardens. This would lead to an inconsistent approach across sites and more administration involved in the updating of two documents moving forward. **This option is not recommended.**
- Update the events policy to covers all events on all sites. Include a specific appendix for Finsbury Circus Gardens that will aid planning and delivery of an event at this site. This appendix can be updated and developed independently of the events policy over time as lessons are learned from events that are delivered in Finsbury Circus Gardens. **This option is recommended.**

10. Options for the fees and charges

- Apply no increase and retain current fees and charges at existing City Gardens sites. Apply similar rates to Finsbury Circus Gardens. This would reduce the ability to cover costs and meet income targets. **This option is not recommended**
- Increase fees and charges in line with the Retail Price Index (RPI) and apply similar fees and charges to Finsbury Circus Gardens as other City Gardens. This option does not recognise that Finsbury Circus Gardens is a unique event space within the City and the price for hiring it should reflect this. **This option is not recommended**
- Increase fees and charges by a greater amount than RPI. A larger than RPI increase could result in a reduced number of bookings. Bookings at City Gardens sites are still recovering, these still need to increase before price increases are considered. **This option is not recommended.**
- Increase fees and charges in line with the Retail Price Index. Create a separate fee structure for Finsbury Circus Gardens that is in line with the benchmarking work undertaken and reflects the capacity of the space. This option keeps fees and charges competitive whilst also considering lessons learned from benchmarking. **This option is recommended..**

11. Options for discounts applicable to Cultural Events

- Apply no discount and charge at full rate event rate. This could mean that events which bring benefit to the City and activate public spaces in different ways could

not be able to take place as the costs would be prohibitively expensive. **This option is not recommended.**

- Apply a discount at set amounts for different events. Due to the amount of variables such as size, impact, public benefit, length and synergies with corporate objectives, it is considered too complex to apply set percentage discounts. **This option is not recommended.**
- Apply a variable pricing model which is discussed at the City Gardens Advisory Group with a recommendation provided to the Assistant Director, City Gardens and Cleansing who has the authority to approve the final fees and charges. This gives the ability to consider a range of variables for different events and apply appropriate discounts. **This option is recommended.**

Proposals

Events Policy

12. The main content of the event policy is largely the same as that agreed by committee in 2018. The proposed changes are detailed below.
13. A new categorisation of events into minor and major events. Previously all events will have been considered to be minor. Major events will be any event exceeding 500 participants and events that have a significant impact on a site and happen over a period of days. Major events will have a longer and more detailed application process to ensure additional security and licensing requirements can be met. This is in line with City of London existing thresholds for full premises licences and Temporary Event Notices (TENs).
14. It is also likely that upcoming legislation “Martyn's Law”, also known as the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill, which aims to improve public safety by making venues and events better prepared for terrorist attacks will impact events over 200 attendees. When this new legislation becomes law, its requirements will be incorporated into the policy and event application form.
15. A new event category of cultural events has been introduced for events that support corporate objectives. These may be part of a larger programme of activities and span a number of days and different locations. Typically these events will enhance or activate the space in different ways and will usually be either be free to the public or in exceptional circumstances be able to charge if it can be demonstrated that the event is organised on a non-profit basis and that it could not otherwise be held. These events will receive discounted fees and charges.
16. A new appendix has been added specifically for Finsbury Circus Gardens, it provides details on the infrastructure within the garden such as where vehicles can access, the location of the London underground tunnel, water and electrical points. It also covers specific byelaws and provides suggested event layouts.

Fees and Charges

17. For all existing fees and charges we propose an increase which is in line with the Retail Price Index of 2.7%.

18. A new event category of Exercise Classes has been introduced, which will be dealt with on a case by case basis but will have a defined fee structure.

19. Based on benchmarking which can be found in Appendix 4 the following fee structure for Finsbury Circus Gardens is proposed:

Private Hire/ Commercial & Corporate Events	-	£7,500 per day
Non Profit/ Charity Events	-	£3,750 per day

20. For Cultural Events that will typically be free and look to enhance or activate the space in different ways a degree of flexibility is required on fees and charges. This is because they will often vary in size, duration and nature. It is proposed that these applications are considered by the City Gardens Advisory Group with a recommendation provided to the Assistant Director, City Gardens and Cleansing who has the authority to approve the final fees and charges. This gives the ability to consider a range of variables for different events and apply appropriate discounts. Information on these discounts given will be recorded and will be reported back to committee during the annual Fees and Charges Report.

21. **Financial implications** – The appropriate pricing of events will ensure that support provided by City Gardens team for events is sustainable and local income targets are met.

22. **Resource implications** – Resourcing the processing of event applications is covered by the income generated from events.

23. **Legal implications** - Section 7 of the City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Act 2018 authorises the City to impose charges for temporary use of part of an open space for an event or for admission to an open space area where access is restricted for an event, and requires that the power be exercised in accordance with the relevant policy. Paragraph 15.8 of the Open Spaces Event Policy 2018 makes provision for the charges and also provides that the schedule of charges will be reviewed annually. The exercise of the charging power and the review of charges is in accordance with the 2018 Act and the Policy.

24. **Risk implications** - Reputational: Cultural and community events bring value to the City but may face scrutiny if discounts are perceived as inconsistent. The introduction of a variable discount system ensures transparency and alignment with "Destination City" objectives, with all decisions recorded and reported annually.

25. **Equalities implications** – The updated City Gardens Events Policy prioritises inclusivity and equitable access. Public access remains a key focus, with efforts to minimize disruptions during events. Discounts for non-profit and cultural events support affordability and encourage diverse participation, while event planning requirements ensure accessibility for individuals with disabilities. The policy fosters community engagement and inclusivity by promoting events that celebrate cultural diversity and benefit underrepresented groups. Feedback will be monitored to address any barriers, ensuring the policy continues to support equitable access for all.

26. **Climate implications** N/A

27. **Security implications** – Larger events obviously deliver higher risks in regards to security. All applicants for major events will need to produce an Event Management Plan in line with the Purple Guide which is produced by the Health and Safety Executive which covers all aspects of security.

Conclusion

28. The proposed updates to the City Gardens Events Policy reflect the evolving needs of the City Gardens, particularly with the reopening of Finsbury Circus Gardens in 2025. These changes aim to balance the increased opportunities for hosting major events with the ongoing commitment to preserving these spaces as public assets. The revised policy includes provisions for categorising events, introducing cultural event discounts, and accommodating site-specific considerations for Finsbury Circus Gardens through a flexible appendix.

29. The proposed fee and charge updates ensure financial sustainability while aligning with market benchmarks, ensuring that event fees are competitive yet reflective of the unique offerings of the City Gardens. Similarly, the introduction of a variable discount structure for cultural events enables tailored support for initiatives that align with the "Destination City" objectives, fostering cultural vibrancy while maintaining operational and financial prudence.

30. These proposals collectively ensure that the City Gardens can continue to facilitate a diverse range of events in a sustainable and well-managed manner, enhancing public engagement while safeguarding the spaces for future generations

Appendices

Appendix 1 - City Gardens Events Policy

Appendix 2 - Finsbury Circus Gardens Events Pack

Appendix 3 - Fees and Charges 25/26

Appendix 4 - Benchmarking

Jake Tibbetts

City Gardens Manager

T: 020 7332 4127

E: jake.tibbetts@cityoflondon.gov.uk