

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): West Ham Park – For Information	Dated: 11 December 2025
Subject: Assistant Director's Report	Public report: For Information
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes	-Diverse Engaged 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:	Katie Stewart, Executive Director Environment
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 23 October 2025.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. The Assistant Director's Report aligns with the four strategic themes of the West Ham Park Management Plan (2025-2035). Additional matters of interest and importance will be addressed under the "Additional Relevant Matters" section as needed.

Caring: We continue to care for the Park to ensure it fulfils its many functions for the benefit of the community, heritage and the environment, now and for future generations.

2. The long grass areas will have their final cut by mid-November, after the later-flowering species have gone to seed, to continue with our management of long grass areas and to increase biodiversity within the Park.
3. Hedge cutting began in October after the end of bird-nesting season. The internal hedges around the lodges, bandstand, tennis courts, outdoor gym, nursery and leaf yard are being reduced to maintain sightlines. The perimeter hedges will be cut in the new year.
4. The team is continuing with cutting back the herbaceous/perennial plants within the borders. Suitable plants are being lifted and divided to fill gaps within the borders.
5. Lawn renovations around the rose gardens and the ribbon beds were completed in October; this included hand-spiking, de-thatching re-seeding and top-dressing.
6. Members expressed concern during last Committee meeting over the recent planting on the Mound Project. By way of update, the species we used in the project was *Buddleia davidii* - Black Knight. The reason for using this was due to its ability to attract and provide a nectar source for a wide variety of butterflies, moths and other pollinators. It is also great for its late summer flowers, which was the purpose of the project – to attract pollinators and provide a food source year-round. The shrubs around the mounds will be included in the Park's shrub maintenance plan to ensure they are pruned and kept under control.

7. The wear on the mounds is not a significant cause for concern. Nursery children are encouraged to use some of the mounds to support and improve their movement, confidence, balance, and motor skills. There is heavy wear under the monkey bars on the large mound, which the team did backfill with a mix of shingle and soil to reinstate the ground levels. This was successful and has bedded in well. There are desire paths on the sides of some of the mounds, mostly caused by bicycles. These will be backfilled over the winter months when footfall is lower.
8. A full internal refurbishment of the toilet facilities near the playground is being planned by the City Surveyor's Department. A Refurbishment and Demolition (R&D) asbestos survey has been commissioned as part of the Cyclical Works Programme. Once the survey has been completed a pre-commencement meeting will be arranged with the appointed contractors.

Excellence: We maintain the highest environmental, conservation, heritage and horticultural standards.

9. Approximately 2000 bulbs are added to the ornamental gardens each year. Additional bulbs will be planted in various locations within the formal gardens in November, which will provide year-round colour and enjoyment for everyone.
10. London in Bloom judging took place on 30 June 2025. The results were announced on 20 October at the award ceremony at RHS Wisley. West Ham Park achieved a Gold Award for the category of Large Park over 25 acres. This award highlights the horticultural excellence of the Park and reflects the hard work and skills of the Gardening Team.

Inclusion: We ensure that the Park and its facilities are accessible to all and inclusive, so that all can enjoy the benefits of enhanced physical and mental well-being.

11. The football season is underway with East London Ballers using the pitches as their home grounds. Renovation work to pitch two has commenced now that the ground conditions are suitable. This includes spiking, scarifying, reseeding and renovations to the goal mouth.
12. A specialist contractor was appointed to carry out full resurfacing works and shock pad repairs to three of the non-turf cricket pitches in September. They were last resurfaced in 2005-6. Given the age of the surface, the extent of the damage and the popularity of the pitches, Officers decided a full resurface and replacement was needed. The new non-turf pitches are being enjoyed by many, which can now be accessed and used throughout the winter months.

13. A new gate has been installed where there was a large gap in the hedge to prevent dogs entering the outdoor gym. This will ensure that all users can access and enjoy the facilities for enhanced physical and mental wellbeing without the disruption of dogs entering this space.

Community: We work in partnership with our local community and engage visitors and the local community in understanding and caring for the Park.

14. The Friends organised and led a bat walk on Friday 26 September, which was very successful, with 133 people attending. The attendees were given a short talk on bat ecology and a walk around the Park. There were many sightings of bats in flight, and many attendees were not previously aware of the Park's importance for bats.
15. The Learning Team and Park Team are working together to create a Spooky Autumn Trail for families to follow and enjoy on Friday 31 October. Families are invited to explore the enchanted ornamental gardens, solve magical clues and enjoy the season. Last year was very successful and proved very popular with the local community and attracted over 500 people. Families attended with children of all ages.
16. Newham's Biggest Leaf Pile occurred on Sunday 16 November. It was another great day and is an annual event that is enjoyed by many families and children.
17. Park in the Dark took place on Friday 5 December. The Friends led an after-dark lantern walk from South Gate through to the bandstand, where attendees met with festive tunes from Park Primary School, and refreshments. Attendees could swap a food item for a glow stick at the start of this walk, and all food collections were donated to local Newham food banks.

Learning Team Update

18. The school learning programme has continued to thrive with 1,320 school students participating in sessions during September and October. Hands-on, nature-based sessions help to increase students' connection to the natural world, support their wellbeing, and build confidence to explore the outdoors. Demand for the programme exceeds delivery capacity, with 44 schools currently on the waiting list for the autumn term. To help meet this interest, the team delivered a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) day in September for local primary school teachers, equipping them with the skills and confidence to lead more outdoor learning sessions in the Park.

19. The SEND project (for children with special educational needs and disabilities) continues to flourish, providing tailored, long-term, nature-based learning experiences. A total of 55 children took part over September and October. This marks the third and final year of support from the City's Cultural and Creative Learning Fund, which has funded staffing and resources for the project.
20. On 31 October, the Learning Team collaborated with the Friends of West Ham Park, Park Primary School, City Corporation employee volunteers, and NLOS colleagues to transform the Formal Gardens into a magical Spooky Trail. Local schoolchildren and their parents worked with the Learning Team to create items for the trail, contributing clay toadstools and conker wreaths. The trail showcased the reuse of old materials to create the installations, such as using old tennis balls from the Park to make model fungi, and shredded paper from the Park office to fill fabric pumpkins. The event focused on engaging local Newham families, a community where 45% of children live in poverty. Impressively, 97% of attendees were local Newham residents, and a total of 368 people took part. The team also gathered evaluation data on participants' wellbeing which will be analysed and shared in future.

Additional relevant matters

Anti-social behaviour and criminal activity

21. Following an increase in anti-social behaviour and criminal activity in the Park, principally with drug dealing and drug users as well as prostitution, solicitation, and public indecency during the summer and autumn months, four additional security guards from Parkguard were appointed from 29 September.
22. Additional guards were deployed in response to an increase in Class A drug dealing within the Park, which included dealers and users coming into the Park and openly buying, selling and using drugs there. As a result it was decided to temporarily close Margery Gate (where a concentration of activity was taking place) for a period of time, starting on Friday 3 October to discourage drug-related activity from establishing in the Park.
23. A Parkguard vehicle was also brought in on Friday 3 October, which was strategically parked by Margery Gate, Linden Gate and in sight of main access points.
24. Prior to the gate closure, there were 12 incidents witnessed by security officers from 1 September to 2 October. From 3 to 16 October, there were three incidents of drug using inside the Park and two sightings of known users outside the gates.

25. Officers met with Newham Council on 3 October and with CGL (Newham's Support Services) on 10 October to discuss the issues and ascertain if there was a reason for the recent spike in drug-related incidents. The Park is near known drug dealing/using areas, but it was confirmed that the Park's issues were reflected across Newham and West Ham ward. Officers were informed that trees/vegetation and sightlines were recently cleared from nearby Priory Park which Newham Council thinks may have pushed drug activity towards West Ham Park. Newham Council advised Officers that the number of drug-related issues will drop in the Park in winter, as drug activity will likely move to redundant buildings and stairwells.
26. Newham Council coordinated teams and had a 'Newham Day of Action' to visit known drug dealing/using areas within the Borough on 13 November. This included the Park and surrounding roads. Two Community Support Officers (CSOs) met the Senior Ranger and two Parkguard Officers, and a full patrol was carried out whilst Officers provided detailed information about the Park's layout, facilities, ongoing management practices and the preventative and response measures in place to address the drug misuse. This patrol included the Ornamental Gardens, South Meadow and from Margery Gate to Linden Gate. It was a quiet morning and there were no anti-social behaviour issues or incidents observed at that time.
27. Working in partnership with Newham Council was useful as the CSOs gained a comprehensive understanding of the Park's operations and safety protocols. Officers are following up for more foot patrols of the Park to be carried out by Newham's Support Officers. Whilst there has been significantly less drug-related incidents in the Park since the temporary gate closures in October, there is still the occasional drug-related incident taking place in the Park, which Officers will continue to respond to appropriately.
28. The Park is much quieter as a result of the colder, wetter weather and reduced daylight hours. Parkguard continues to provide 7-days-a-week security provision within the Park. The security guards provide excellent support to staff and visitors, liaise with users, have been extremely proactive in enforcing byelaws (with particular emphasis on the use of pedal bikes, electric bikes and scooters, and inconsiderate dog owners) and assist with locking up the Park. They have been invaluable in proactively moving on loitering individuals and providing information to the Met Police to keep the Park safe when needed. This additional resource has not been budgeted for, and creates new budget pressures, but is critical given the issues described herein and the lack of capacity of the Constabulary to patrol West Ham Park.
29. All antisocial and criminal issues and incidents in the Park are being logged, reported and reviewed weekly with Officers and Parkguard. The Senior Ranger

also attends quarterly meetings with the Met Safer Neighbourhood Team to gain advice and support. More joined-up working and coordination is taking place with Newham Council to combat anti-social behaviour in the Park.

30. The range of incidents and issues dealt with by Parkguard is broad. The table below provides some examples from 11 August to 19 October. This is not an exhaustive list.

Issue	Interactions
Dealing with gatherings or individual Class-A drug users	24 (Includes 3 instances of groups outside the Park gates)
Dog control issues, people advised to put dogs on leads etc.	35
Warnings given for inconsiderate riding of pedal cycles and electric bikes	33
Adults involved in Anti-Social Behaviour (e.g. excessive alcohol, noise, offensive words and behaviour) warned and advised and on occasion asked to leave the Park	36
Advice given to young people around climbing trees, playing football and cricket in the wrong areas	12
Persons believed to be engaged in sexual activity within the Park	4 (1 male subsequently arrested by the police)
Adults taking photographs in or near the children's play area (non-suspicious)	3
Assisted with reports of missing children	3 (all found)
Engagements with rough sleepers	4
Persons erecting gazebos (asked to remove)	3
First Aid administered	3
Drone Use	1 (male warned and advised, stopped immediately on being spoken to)

31. As a result of incidents involving the Met Police around the gates, work has been carried out to review the CCTV provision on all the gates and ensure the security and access to tied accommodation is suitable and safe. Tree and vegetation work near Linden Gate was carried out in September. The density of lower foliage was lifted and thinned to improve security and sightlines.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications

32. The activities in this report help to further the strategic outcomes of the Corporate Plan and West Ham Park Management Plan.

Financial implications

33. Additional costs will be incurred as a result of the additional external security provision in the Park.

Resource implications

34. Officers continue to spend time responding to and planning for the increase in criminal and anti-social behaviour in the Park.

Legal implications

35. Officers will continue to take advice on legal matters from the Comptroller & City Solicitor's Department as necessary.

Risk implications

36. Risks are monitored and recorded through the various risk registers, including the Division and Departmental Risk Registers.

Equalities implications

37. No implications.

Climate implications

38. No implications.

Security implications

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

Conclusion

40. This report provides Members with an update on matters relating to West Ham Park since the last committee meeting on 23 October 2025.

Appendices

- None

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