

OPEN SPACES AND CITY GARDENS
Monday, 10 June 2013

Minutes of the meeting of the Open Spaces and City Gardens held at Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 10 June 2013 at 11.30 am

Present

Members:

Alderman Robert Hall
Deputy Michael Welbank
Deputy Alex Deane
Barbara Newman
Jeremy Simons
Alderman Gordon Haines (Ex-Officio Member)

Observers:

Verderer Peter Adams – Epping Forest and Commons Committee
Tony Ghilchik – Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee
Vacancy – West Ham Park Committee

Officers:

Sue Ireland	- Director of Open Spaces
Martin Rodman	- Superintendent of West Ham Park and City Gardens
Bob Warnock	- Superintendent of City Commons
Jennifer Allott	- Departmental Business Manager, Open Spaces
Louisa Allen	- City Gardens Manager
Roger Adams	- City Surveyor's Department
Edward Wood	- Comptroller and City Solicitor's Department
Esther Sumner	- Town Clerk's Department
Jacky Compton	- Town Clerk's Department
Alistair MacLellan	- Town Clerk's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Alderman Ian Luder, Wendy Mead, Deputy Stanley Ginsburg, Deputy Robert Howard and Virginia Rounding.

2. DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF ANY PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA

There were no declarations.

3. ORDERS OF THE COURT OF COMMON COUNCIL 25 APRIL 2013

The Order of the Court of Common Council dated 25 April 2013 appointing the Committee and approving its Terms of Reference was received.

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4. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

The Committee proceeded to elect a Chairman in accordance with Standing Order 29. The Town Clerk read out a list of Members who were eligible to stand and Alderman Robert Hall, being the only Member expressing his willingness to serve, was declared to be duly elected Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing year.

Alderman Robert Hall was nominated as the Committee Representative to the Streets and Walkways Sub (Planning) Committee.

5. **ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN**

The Committee proceeded to elect a Deputy Chairman in accordance with Standing Order 30. The Town Clerk read out a list of Members who were eligible to stand and Alderman Ian Luder, being the only Member expressing his willingness to serve, was declared to be duly elected Deputy Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing year.

6. **MINUTES**

The public minutes of the meeting held on 15 April 2013 were approved as a correct record.

Matters Arising

National Planning Policy Framework – In response to questions from the Chairman, the Director of Open Spaces reported that the Mayor's London Plan Team were likely to provide more clarity on both basement development and development affecting the skyline. A question remained over to what distance from Open Spaces these new guidelines would apply, with the Corporation arguing in favour of at least 1km. But fundamentally the London Plan Team has accepted that peripheral protection of Open Spaces from development is required. A member of the Committee noted that all London boroughs, including the Corporation, had to be in conformity with the London Plan within six months of its publication.

7. **CURRENT TOPICAL ISSUES IN OPEN SPACES - THE VALUE OF GREEN SPACES TO LONDON AND LONDONERS**

The Director of Open Spaces gave a presentation on a forthcoming research report authored by the Economic Development Office and the Public Relations Office on the value of Green Spaces to London and Londoners. The report is currently in draft form and will be finalised and circulated within the next few weeks.

The report examines the benefits of Green Spaces to London and across four themes: environmental, well-being, social and economic. Green Spaces help reduce heat retention in cities by c. 1-1.5 degrees Celsius, reduce the risk of flooding and also promote better air quality. Access to Green Spaces can also improve physical and mental well-being, with access to Green Spaces helping to combat obesity and improve cardiovascular health. Evidence from East

London suggests that they can help reduce health inequalities. Social benefits include better cognitive skills among children with easy access to Green Space.

The economic benefits of Green Spaces include savings around dealing with the impact of flooding and the reduction of pollution. Areas in close proximity to Green Space tend to have better land and property values, and there is evidence that 70% of tourists take into account Green Space when choosing their holiday destination.

The Director noted that it was difficult to assess the particular environmental benefits arising from the range of diversity in Green Spaces, and that there was limited research on economic comparisons between cities. She concluded by saying that the report confirmed the preconceptions of the Directorate of Open Spaces, particularly those around environmental benefits. The Director finished by drawing attention to two pieces of research of particular interest in the report bibliography, a report of the European Centre of Environment and Human Health entitled *Would you be happier living in a greener urban area?* and the International Federation of Park and Recreation Administration Report, *The Benefits of Urban Parks: a systematic review*.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Director of Open Spaces said that the report would help to inform decision making when allocating resources to Open Spaces in London. She noted that the Greater London Authority had recently published a Green Infrastructure Report that identified northwest and southeast London as areas in strategic need of more Open Spaces.

In response to a Committee Observer, the Chairman confirmed that the Committee would have a further opportunity to discuss the report.

In response to comments from a Member, the Chairman noted that the report was originally envisaged as being under the aegis of the Policy and Resources Committee only, but that had now changed and he, the Chairman of Open Spaces and City Gardens, was now a co-signatory, a welcome sign of the importance of the work of this Committee.

In response to comments from a Member the Director of Open Spaces said that the reason the Committee had not seen the report at an earlier draft stage was due in part to the Policy and Resources Committee's approach to preparing reports. She will ensure that the report goes to the Health and Wellbeing Board for consideration.

8. **OPEN SPACES ANNUAL REPORT**

The Director of Open Spaces noted that the Open Spaces Annual Report had been published in the revised format first adopted the previous year, and that copies were available for Members to collect at the end of the meeting.

The Chairman called on Members to make any comments to the Director by email.

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9. ANNUAL REVIEW OF VOLUNTEER WORKING IN THE OPEN SPACES 2012/13

The Open Spaces Departmental Business Manager introduced the Annual Review of Volunteer Working in the Open Spaces for 2012/13. She drew attention to the scale of volunteering and the emphasis in the past year of improving quality of experience for individual volunteers.

A member noted that the figures listed on page 12 with respect to volunteering at Hampstead Heath were inaccurate and that there was a 2% increase in volunteering in 2012/13 rather than a 1% fall.

An Observer to the Committee commented that the report seemed to understate the scope for volunteering. The Chairman of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee endorsed this and noted that in some areas of the Open Spaces Directorate, the volunteers were managing themselves.

In response to a question from a Member, the Chairman of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee said that he was unsure why there were no volunteer leaders on the Heath, but commented that this may be possible if RSPB provided some more training, and that there was perhaps more scope for this on the City Commons.

The Chairman noted that it was important that volunteering was not perceived as securing free labour. Instead it must be emphasised that this was an activity that sought to improve the wellbeing of those who chose to volunteer and that it provided volunteers with the opportunity to support their community.

The Director of Open Spaces said that the ideas expressed so far would be developed and that this would take time and that the Directorate was learning from its experience with volunteers thus far across all of its sites.

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10. TREE DISEASES IN LONDON: THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The Open Spaces Departmental Business Manager introduced a report on tree diseases and informed the Committee that a copy would be circulated via email shortly.

In response to a request from a Member, the Director of Open Spaces agreed to draw up a concise briefing note on actions currently being taken by the Corporation to combat tree diseases, and that this would be circulated via email.

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11. **SUPERINTENDENT OF CITY GARDENS UPDATE**

The Committee received a verbal update from the City Gardens Manager. The following points were made.

Finance - City Garden's budget is in line with agreed budget profiles.

Staff - full complement of staff with a newly appointed Support Service Officer recently recruited.

Bedding

There is a two week delay for the summer bedding to be delivered to City Gardens. This is due to the late growing season due a cold winter and spring. The team have started to remove the winter schemes to ensure the summer bedding is planted as quickly as possible.

Projects

St Paul's Walk, a new landscaping scheme, funded by Network Rail is now complete. This has replaced a previously overgrown shrub bed. The landscaping consists of multi stemmed silver birches and lawn areas, making good use of the restricted area for seating and views of the river.

London and Britain in Bloom – July and August

Judging is to take place in July and early August and as mentioned in previous updates this year's theme is 'Edibles'. To celebrate this theme, one of the volunteer City Gardens guides designed an 'Edible Walk' which took place on the weekend of 8/9 June as part of the Open Squares weekend. She has reported that the walk was a great success; people were encouraged to eat Pansies Marigolds, Comfrey and Cornflowers as part of the experience.

Open Squares Weekend, 8 and 9 June

The City Gardens took part in the Open Squares this weekend, to draw attention to our gardens. The edible walk mentioned above was a new activity, as well as a treasure hunt designed and implemented by a group of corporate volunteers from the Discovery Channel. The hunt was felt to be imaginative, informative and fun, and can be a template event for future occasions.

Green Garden Lunchtimes, 17 – 21 June

A forthcoming range of free events taking place in Bunhill Fields advertised on the Corporation of London website and notice boards. Activities include Yoga, Pilates, a heritage tour, and an edible workshop, and a talk from the RSPB. All are delivered by either volunteers or businesses.

City Festival – Tree Theme

In partnership with the City festival organisers and Trees for Cities and sponsored by Bloomberg, the artist Konstantin Dimopoulos has been commissioned to colour seven trees in front of St Paul's Cathedral entrance and ten trees in Smithfield Rotunda Garden. The project has been approved by the City Arts Initiative Panel and the Culture Heritage and Libraries Committee. Corporate volunteers and the Friends of City Gardens will be invited to assist

the artist. The colouring will have no detrimental effect to the trees; the colouring is washable and will be removed at the end of the festival.

In addition, a first ever City tree walk and leaflet have been designed by Trees for Cities which will be launched during the festival period.

Friends of City Gardens and volunteer activities

During May, the friends have undertaken three clear up sessions of the roof garden of John Cass School, to enable the school and teachers to grow vegetables during the summer term.

The friends have just won their first grant of £494 from The Conservation Volunteers (TCV), to pay for tools and equipment and public liability insurance to enable them to run gardening and volunteer activities.

Growing Localities Apprenticeship Scheme

In partnership with the Royal Parks, West Ham Park and the regeneration charity, Roots for Shoots, the City Gardens team have been hosting two young people to gain skills, confidence and experience in preparation for them to apply for three apprenticeship positions to start in September.

A member of the Committee welcomed the Konstantin Dimopoulos initiative but expressed concern that it would encourage people to paint trees with inappropriate paints.

12. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

Cleary Gardens

In response to a query from a Member, the City Gardens Manager confirmed that works had been carried out by MITIE on the bannister in Cleary Gardens but that the works were felt to be unsatisfactory. This was being addressed by officers and the Committee would be updated in due course.

Agenda Content

In response to concerns raised by a Member, the Director of Open Spaces apologised that the majority of Committee business consisted of reports for information. This was largely due to recent staffing issues and that future business of the Committee would be geared towards decision-making.

13. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

The meeting ended at 12.18 pm

Chairman

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