

Committee:	Date:
Open Spaces & City Gardens Committee	7 th October 2013
Subject: Results of a face-to-face survey of users and non-users of the City's open spaces	Public
Report of: Director of Open Spaces	For Information
<p>Summary</p> <p>To ensure that satisfaction levels remain consistently high and to gather information to inform the review of the City of London Open Space Strategy planned for autumn of this year; City Gardens commissioned over 1000 face to face user questionnaires, at a variety of locations around the City, during November and early December 2012.</p> <p>The findings from the user survey were very positive, with 79.4% of users rating the City Gardens service as good or very good.</p> <p>This report follows on from the initial findings reported to this Committee earlier this year and further analyses the results of the survey.</p> <p>Recommendation</p> <p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the report. 	

Main Report

Background

1. With responsibility for over 200 widely differing gardens, churchyards and areas of open space within the Square Mile, it is important for the City Gardens service to ensure that each of these best serves the City's community according to its individual location and potential.
2. City Gardens last undertook a user survey in 2009, as a direct response to the Government's "*Place Survey*" and as a follow up to a user survey in 2004; the former had identified some areas for improvement. Findings evidenced that the main dissatisfaction from respondents was due to lack of green space rather than to City Gardens' services.

Current Position

3. To ensure that the City Gardens service continues to maintain high levels of satisfaction from current users and to ascertain any current dissatisfaction that needs to be addressed; research consultant "*Ask for Research*" was commissioned

to undertake a consultation exercise throughout November and /early December of last year. In the main, the questions asked were the same as in 2009. However, two additional questions were posed; to ascertain whether there was interest in people taking part in volunteering and green gym activities within the open spaces in City Gardens.

4. The exercise captured data from over 1000 members of the City's core community groups including residents, workers and visitors from outside the City, both from Britain and overseas. "Ask for Research" were also tasked with evaluating any differences that were found between the 2009 survey and the current 2012 findings. A report on the immediate findings was brought to this Committee at its meeting on 15 April 2013.

Methodology

5. Based on the success of the survey conducted in 2009, it was vital to ensure that the results produced were thorough, representative and robust. In order to do this, it was agreed in consultation with "Ask for Research" at the start of the project that:
 - i. The most comprehensive survey method was face-to-face field-based interview;
 - ii. Both users and non-users of the City's gardens would be targeted;
 - iii. Minimum quotas would be set for respondent type of 300 visitors, 500 workers and 200 residents, being broadly representative of the City daytime population;
 - iv. The catchment area would be the boundaries of the Square Mile, and interviews for each sample group spread geographically across this area;
 - v. Interviews would take place during weekdays, weekends, morning and evening shifts;
 - vi. "Ask for Research" would use interviewers who spoke a variety of languages, so that it was possible to capture non-English speakers comments.
6. Between November and early December, 1015 interviews were conducted. Interviewers used a simplified map of the City Gardens for reference, and the questionnaire included a self-completion equal opportunities monitoring section. The first section of the interviews aimed to establish workers' residents' and visitors' behaviour patterns in relation to the gardens in the City.
7. Further analysis and response to the key findings from the survey can be found at **Appendix 1**.

Future improvements and initiatives

8. The final section of the survey sought customers' views on future improvements and to gauge interest in volunteering and green gym activities.
9. Customers were asked to respond to the statement 'There should be more open spaces in the gardens'; 88% agree to some extent with the statement, with 59%

agreeing strongly and 30% agreeing. People over 45 and irregular visitors were more likely to strongly disagree, compared to customers who visit regularly and residents, who were more likely to strongly agree.

10. Similar findings were gathered from the statement 'There should be more nature attracting plants in the City'; with 91% to some extent agreeing, 54% strongly agreeing and 37% agreeing. However, unlike other findings, under 25 year olds were more likely to agree, residents strongly agreeing but interestingly the age group 45+ were more likely to strongly disagree, suggesting more traditional planting schemes are favoured by older age groups.
11. Again similar findings for customers' response to 'There should be more trees in the City' with 88% to some extent agreeing, 52% agreeing strongly and 36% agreeing. Again the 45+ age group and workers, were those most likely to disagree.
12. 67% of customers agree with some extent to the statement 'there should be more hard standing landscaping'; with 33% agreeing strongly and 35% agreeing. Females and residents were more likely to strongly agree.
13. 73% agree to some extent to the statement 'there should be more staff presence in the gardens' with 39% strongly agreeing and 35% agreeing. Residents were more likely to disagree. This latter finding may be because the main resident population lives on the Barbican Estate and have established strong relationships with the on-site City Gardens' team over the years.
14. 85% of customers agree to some extent with the statement that 'there should be more focus on encouraging wildlife' with 46% strongly agreeing and 39% agreeing. Females were more likely to agree than males, customers from other ethnicity other than White British ethnicity were more likely to disagree.
15. 91% agreed with the statement 'there should be more lawn areas for sitting in the City Garden'. Interestingly, the 45+ age group were more likely to disagree than residents.
16. 84% agreed to the statement 'there should be more opportunities to learn about 'natural play' with 44% agreeing strongly and 40% agreeing.
17. And finally, customers were asked if they would be interested in taking part in volunteering and or green gym activities. 11% and 14% respectively acknowledged an interest. Those that responded positively to these questions were handed a leaflet and contact details were taken so that this could be followed up by the team.

Conclusion

18. The results of the project have provided a useful indication of satisfaction levels with the services provided by the City Gardens team and will help to inform the City of London Open Space Strategy review. The level of detail provided by the survey can help decide the ranking of competing service priorities in a climate of budgetary restrictions and to concentrate on issues that the community and tax-payers feel are important

19. In terms of overall user satisfaction ratings, 99.1% of users rate their satisfaction with the spaces as either fair (19.7%), good (45%) or very good (34.4%). In comparison to results in 2009, the overall satisfaction is slightly lower. The 2009 survey overall user satisfaction rating was 99.5%, with users rating their satisfaction with the spaces as either fair (3%), good (51%) or very good (45.5%). On comparing the detail of these findings there does not appear to be any one area of dissatisfaction that leads to the overall lower score. The 2012 survey was undertaken between the end of November and the beginning of December, compared to the 2009 survey which was conducted in mid-summer. It is therefore possible that the time of year, the gardens experiencing seasonal changes and colder weather could have been contributing factors to the slight decrease in the higher ratings and scoring.

20. Specific results within the survey provide high levels of satisfaction with accessibility, cleanliness, litter clearance and staff attitudes. Three consecutive London in Bloom Gold awards between the years 2010-13 supports this evidence and also indicates continuous improvements in service standards.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

21. This report clearly supports key strategic aims within the Community Strategy, notably supporting our communities, and protecting, promoting and enhancing our environment.

22. It also supports key objectives within the City of London Open Space Strategy, notably:

- Strategic Objective 1: To maintain and increase public access to existing open spaces and enhance the quality of these spaces, in terms of both design and management.
- Strategic Objective 3: Ensure that all open spaces are designed and managed to be safe and accessible to all and, where appropriate, to provide opportunities for different activities at different times of the day and year.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Analysis and response to the findings of the City Gardens Survey Results 2012.

Background Papers

- Committee Report 15th April 2013. Results of a face- to- face survey of users and non - users of the City's Open Space.

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