

OPEN SPACES AND CITY GARDENS Monday, 22 July 2013

Minutes of the meeting of the Open Spaces and City Gardens held at Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 22 July 2013 at 2.30 pm

Present

Members:

Alderman Robert Hall (Chairman)
Alderman Ian Luder (Deputy Chairman)
Wendy Mead
Deputy Michael Welbank
Deputy Alex Deane
Deputy Robert Howard
Barbara Newman
Jeremy Simons
Deputy Stanley Ginsburg (Ex-Officio Member)
Virginia Rounding (Ex-Officio Member)

Observers:

Verderer Peter Adams
Tony Ghilchik
Catherine Bickmore

Officers:

Esther Sumner	- Policy Officer, Town Clerk's Department
Sue Ireland	- Director of Open Spaces
Louisa Allen	- City Gardens Manager
Martin Rodman	- Superintendent, West Ham Park and City Gardens
Alison Elam	- Group Accountant, Chamberlain's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Alderman Gordon Haines.

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

There were no declarations.

3. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Following the resignation of Alderman Robert Hall, the Committee proceeded to elect a Chairman in accordance with Standing Order 29. Deputy Stanley Ginsburg moved that Mrs Barbara Newman take the Chair whilst the election was conducted, which was agreed. 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 duly elected Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing year.

In taking the Chair, Alderman Luder thanked the committee for their support and thanked the outgoing Chairman Alderman Hall for his work. A formal vote of thanks will be moved at the next meeting.

The Committee was then advised that Alderman Robert Hall was exercising his right as immediate past Chairman to assume the role of Deputy Chairman for the ensuing year in accordance with Standing Order 30 (3) (a).

Following the resignation of Alderman Robert Hall as the Committee's nominee to the Streets and Walkways Sub (Planning) Committee, an election was held as per the wishes of the Chairman. The Town Clerk read out a list of Members eligible to serve and Mrs Barbara Newman CBE, being the only Member expressing her wish to serve, was declared the Committee's nominee to the Streets and Walkways Sub (Planning) Committee for the ensuing year.

4. **MINUTES**

The public minutes of the meeting held on Monday 10 June 2013 were approved as an accurate record.

APPROVED

Matters Arising

The Value of Green Spaces to London and Londoners

In response to a set of questions from a Member the Director of Open Spaces informed the Committee that the recent report on the value of Green Spaces to London and Londoners had not yet been submitted to the Health and Wellbeing Board, but that she had discussed the report with the Director of Community and Children's Services recently and confirmed her intention that the report will be submitted to the Board shortly.

Volunteer Supervisor Training

The Director reported that the training of Open Spaces volunteers to allow them to assume supervisory roles was progressing, but that nonetheless it was a long-term project.

Committee Agenda Content

The Director confirmed that it was intended to submit more reports for decision-making to the Committee, once senior staff time was no longer absorbed by current one-off operational pressures due to an HR issue.

Grass

In response to a question from a Member on the new type of grass in St Paul's Walk, the Superintendent confirmed that it was performing well, was proving more resilient in the recent hot weather, and also had the ability to regenerate more effectively, compared to other types of grasses.

Cleary Gardens Repair Works

In response to a question from a Member on the repair works in Cleary Gardens the City Gardens Manager confirmed that remedial repair works had been completed, and that she would revert to him regarding any recompense from the contractor over the original flawed repair works.

5. REVENUE OUTTURN 2012-13 - OPEN SPACES AND CITY GARDENS

The Chamberlain introduced the Revenue Outturn 2012/13 for Open Spaces and City Gardens to the Committee, noting that there was an underspend in the local risk budget that had been amalgamated with other areas in the overall Open Spaces budget to produce a £39,000 negative figure. Furthermore it was noted that officers had agreed to provide an improved format for the report in future to provide more detail on areas of the Additional Works Programme (AWP).

The Director of Open Spaces concluded by noting that she had asked the Superintendent of Epping Forest to identify £39,000 of savings from the current year to address the shortfall.

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6. CONSOLIDATED REVENUE OUTTURN 2012-13

The Chairman introduced the Outturn report to the Committee, noting that Members of the Committee had been sent a copy of Alderman Hall's e-mail of 14 July 2013 (raising concerns with respect to an apparent significant underspend in the Additional Works Programme in 2012/13) and of the reply of the City Surveyor dated 17 July 2013 (which explained, inter alia, that over half the apparent underspend was at the reporting date committed spend which will feature in the 2013/14 report to the Committee).

The Deputy Chairman thanked the City Surveyor for his additional note on the AWP and welcomed the fact that the format of subsequent reports on the AWP will include more detail. The Committee proceeded to discuss the £39,000 overspend, and the following questions, comments and remarks were made:

- In response to concerns raised by a Member over the finances of the Chingford Golf Course the Director assured the Committee that their colleagues on the Epping Forest Committee were aware of these issues and that the matter had been referred to the Audit and Risk Management Committee.
- The Chairman noted that the issue in question was not of the subsidising of the Chingford Golf Course by the City of London Corporation, but the budget overspend itself.
- The Director of Open Spaces noted that the overspend represented 0.2% of the overall budget of the Open Spaces Directorate, but that nevertheless due to financial pressures it would be increasingly difficult to meet budgets over the next couple of years.

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7. **GREEN SPACES - THE BENEFITS FOR LONDONERS**

The Open Spaces Business Manager introduced the report on the *Green Spaces: The Benefits for London* publication of the City of London Economic Development Office (EDO) and Public Relations Office (PRO) on 8 July. It was noted that the PRO would be monitoring the impact of the report over the coming weeks and that the publication had already been referenced by the Education Strategy Working Group.

In response to a question from an Observer the Director confirmed that Members would have the opportunity to comment on the report at the next Committee in September.

In response to a query from an Observer the Chairman agreed that the publication would not be included on the agenda of the West Ham Park Committee as it would be considered as a strategic matter.

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8. **BUSINESS PLAN - QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE UPDATE**

The Open Spaces Business Manager introduced a Quarterly Performance Update on the Open Spaces Business Plan, noting that KPI13 *Efficient receipting of invoices* was currently classed as 'red' due to the fact that a dedicated member of the Chamberlain's staff was no longer focusing exclusively on this role. She reported that mitigating action was already underway to ensure that this Key Performance Indicator (KPI) improved as soon as possible.

The Committee proceeded to discuss the update, during which the following questions and remarks were made:

- In response to a question from a Member the Business Manager confirmed that the KPI on the number of accidents includes those reported by both staff and members of the public.
- During a general discussion on the benchmarks used when measuring KPIs, the Director noted that it was difficult to assign meaningful benchmarks across the whole spectrum of KPIs, and a Member noted that nonetheless it was important to ensure a consistent pattern of continuous improvement.
- In response to a positive comment from a Member on the increased use of the Open Spaces website the Director reported that the webpages on Open Spaces, were the second most visited part of the City of London website.
- A Member commented that he was pleased that overall there was only one 'red' KPI.
- In response to a question from a Member over what efforts were being made across the Open Spaces Directorate to match the commitment to sustainability

demonstrated by the installation of photovoltaic cells on the Highgate Wood Machine Shed, the Director replied that a number of projects were in train, including the use of electric quad bikes to cut down on fuel consumption.

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9. IDENTITY PROJECT - ESTABLISHMENT OF A WORKING PARTY

The Business Manager introduced a report for decision on the establishment of an Identity Working Party whose remit would be to consider proposals for the creation of a portfolio of identities for the various City of London Open Spaces before these were submitted to the Committee in November.

The Committee welcomed the proposal for the establishment and noted that it would be useful to include where relevant external members to ensure relevant expertise was utilised to best effect.

RESOLVED, that:

- A Working Party be convened to consider the development of a new visual identity for Open Spaces, to report back to the Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee
- That the Working Party membership consist of:
 - The Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee
 - The Chairman of each of the other Open Spaces Committees
 - A nominee (at the discretion of the relevant Committee Chairman) from each of the other Open Spaces Committees
 - Deputy Alex Deane
- That the Working Party sit on Tuesday 17 September at 1600hrs and Friday 8 November at 1000hrs.

10. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

The City Gardens Manager provided an update to the Committee on a variety of operational issues:

Finance

The City Gardens budget is in line with agreed profiles.

Staff

The City Gardens currently has a full complement of staff.

Projects

A specialist conservation company have recently completed restoration works to grave stones and memorials in Bunhill Fields and are due shortly to inspect

the remainder of headstones and memorials to prioritise future works based on safety and conservation need.

Blue Trees and Launch of new Tree Trail

Following the installation of the Trees for Cities Blue Trees project, the first City Gardens Tree Walk and leaflet have been designed by Trees for Cities and is due to be launched during the City Festival period.

Friends of City Gardens and Volunteer Activities

The Aldgate Experiments project has been implemented which saw school children from Sir John Cass primary school plant a series of red flower pots, in conjunction with the installation of a viewing platform with red seats. In response to a question from a Member the City Gardens Manager confirmed that this was a temporary project.

Visits

Recent visits to City Gardens included the British Association of Landscape Industries (BALI) (9 July), the Worshipful Company of Gardeners (17 July) Royal Horticultural Students (28 June) and the Open Spaces Committee Tour (12 July). It was noted that a parchment had been presented by the Worshipful Company of Gardeners that would be displayed in the entrance to the Irish Chambers.

Growing Localities Apprenticeship Scheme

It was noted that interviews for apprenticeship places were due to take place on 7 August. Three places were available for the six candidates that had been working across City Gardens, West Ham Park and The Royal Parks sites since May. The successful candidates will be employed for three years part funded by the City Bridge Trust. The remaining three candidates will receive advice and signposting to other opportunities within the industry.

10.1 Blue Trees Project Extension

The Business Manager introduced a report for decision on the extension of the current Blue Trees art installation at three gardens within the City of London. It was proposed that the project be extended from 26 July until 27 September.

In response to a question from a Member, the Superintendent confirmed that the colourant would last until September provided the weather remained fine, and that in the event of bad weather impacting negatively on the appearance of the trees it would be possible to remove the colourant overnight.

RESOLVED, that:

- The extension of the Trees for Cities' Blue Trees project is extended from 26 July 2013 to 27 September 2013.

11. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

Contingency Planning

In response to a question from a Member the Director confirmed that emergency contingency plans and risk assessments existed for each of the Open Spaces and City Gardens sites, and that these were subject to regular review.

12. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

City Arts Initiative - Endless Stair

The Superintendent informed the Committee that an opportunity existed for the installation of a City Arts Initiative called *Endless Stair* but that it required both planning permission and the approval of both the Culture, Heritage and Libraries and the Open Spaces and City Gardens Committees. Given the timescales involved it was requested that the Committee grant delegated authority to officers to progress the project in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman.

The installation would consist of a series of interlocking stairs and would be around 10m in height. It was proposed to install it in Castle Lane Gardens in September 2013. Construction and dismantling would take around three weeks in total, and the artwork would be in situ for one week. There were issues over the effect the installation would have on views on St Paul's and the Firefighters Memorial, at which an annual ceremony is held each September.

Members noted that approval has already been granted for the project by the Culture Heritage and Libraries Committee, and that they were happy to grant delegated authority to officers for the approval of the project provided it did not impede the annual ceremony at the Firefighters Memorial.

RESOLVED, that:

- Delegated authority be granted to officers to progress the *Endless Stairs* arts project in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, provided that the project did not impact negatively on the annual ceremony at the Firefighters Memorial.

Barking-Gospel Oak Rail User Group

The Director noted a proposal from the Barking-Gospel Oak Rail User Group for an officer and Member to attend a Local Authority liaison group, and for the Corporation to contribute an annual sum of £100 to the group's running costs. After discussing the proposal the Committee agreed that any issues regarding the line be dealt with via the usual channels, including the Department of Built Environment and Transport for London.

RESOLVED, that:

- The Open Spaces Directorate decline the offer from the Barking-Gospel Oak Rail User Group to nominate an officer to their proposed local

authority liaison group, and their request for an annual £100 contribution to the group's running costs

13. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act as follows:-

<u>Item No.</u>	<u>Paragraphs in Schedule 12A</u>
14	3

14. **DEBT ARREARS - INVOICED INCOME FOR PERIOD ENDING 31 MARCH 2013**

The Committee received a report of the Chamberlain and Director of Open Spaces.

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15. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

There were no questions.

16. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED**

There was no other business.

The meeting ended at 3.34 pm

Chairman

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