

<b>Committee:</b> Open Spaces and City Gardens	<b>Date(s):</b> 25 November 2013
<b>Subject:</b> Open Spaces and City Gardens: Public Relations Update	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Public Relations	<b>For Information</b>

### Summary

This report updates Members on Public Relations activities in support of the services for which the Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee is responsible during the period October 2012 to September 2013.

Highlights of the support for the services of the Committee include:

- Media
- Polling
- Website
- E-communications and social media
- Literature and related activities
- Public Affairs
- Events
- Member and internal Communications
- Filming

The activities in this report are also in support of the ‘*Communications Strategy 2013- 2016*’, the three strands of which are:

- to support and promote “The City” as the world leader in international financial and business services;
- to promote the success of the City of London Corporation as the provider of modern, efficient and high quality local and policing services within the Square Mile for workers, residents and visitors; and
- to promote the role of the City of London Corporation as a provider of valued services to London and the nation as a whole.

### Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- Receive this report on Public Relations activities during the period October 2012 to September 2013 in support of the services for which the Committee is responsible.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This report highlights the activities of the Public Relations (PR) Office, in the period October 2012 to September 2013, in support of the services for which this Committee is responsible.
- 1.2 As part of the current communications strategy there are two specific communications priorities at present, in addition to the promotion of financial and business services:
- Supporting London's communities – that is, the work the City Corporation does to support educational and cultural opportunities and economic development, thereby helping to provide jobs and growth and improve the quality of life throughout London.
  - Helping to look after London's heritage and green spaces – that is, the work the City Corporation does to look after London and the nation's heritage and to provide green spaces across the capital and beyond. The PR Office is working with Departments across the organisation to deliver these two new priorities across the full range of PR activities.
- 1.3 In addition to these priorities, the PR Office has over the past 12 months implemented a comprehensive survey of the City Corporation's key audiences. Conducted by the leading international market research agency TNS (part of the WPP Group) between April and June 2013, the polling is used to ascertain attitudes and perceptions amongst a cross-section of the City Corporation's key audiences and stakeholders as identified in the *Communications Strategy*. As in previous surveys, four separate extensive polls were undertaken of senior City executives; City businesses; City workers; and, City residents. The results, once analysed, inform the City Corporation's strategic planning, communications strategy, and service delivery.

## **2. Media**

- 2.1 Throughout the year, September 2012 – October 2013, there were 423 stories about Open Spaces that appeared in the UK print media, online, radio and television. According to Durrants (the independent media monitoring agency), the total advertising value of print coverage achieved amounted to £400,077 (the equivalent amount for the previous 12 months reported by the PR Office was £485,154).
- 2.2 Highlights of stories initiated by the Media Team in the PR Office throughout the year, September 2012 – October 2013, include:

- *BBC Radio Essex* (05 December 2012, 22 August 2013) – Superintendent Paul Thomson was interviewed on fly-tipping in Epping Forest
- *BBC Radio Essex* (29 January 2013) – Chairman Haines was interviewed on the planting of the first trees at Gifford Wood
- *BBC Radio 4 Farming Today* (01 July 2013) – Head Ranger Allan Cameron was interviewed on cattle grazing on Farthing Downs
- *BBC Radio 5 Live, BBC London News* (21 July 2013) – Director Sue Ireland was interviewed on ‘staying safe in the sun on London’s green spaces’
- *BBC London News* (TV and Online), *Horticulture Week*, (08 June 2013) ran stories on City of London Corporation’s report – Tree Diseases in London: The Economic, Social and Environmental Impact. Policy Chairman Mark Boleat was quoted and Hampstead Heath and Highgate Wood’s Conservation and Trees Manager Jonathan Meares were interviewed.
- *Horticulture Week* (09 July 2013) carried an article on the City Corporation’s report – ‘Green Spaces: The Benefits for London’
- *BBC1 Countryfile* (21 October 2013) – Superintendent Paul Thomson was interviewed on the impact of foraging in Epping Forest and London’s wider green spaces.

2.3 In addition to the work outlined above by the Media Team, both initiating stories and responding to ad-hoc media requests, the Head of Media has also been the public relations lead on hydrology issues at Hampstead Heath ponds.

### **3. Polling**

3.1 The PR Office, on behalf of the City of London Corporation, undertakes a triennial survey of its key audiences – City residents, City businesses, City workers, and senior executives. The latest survey series was due to take place in 2012, but it was decided to delay the fieldwork for a year to avoid a clash with the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee and the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

3.2 This survey includes questions pertaining to the satisfaction with services that are overseen by this Committee. In general, the results are positive; there is net satisfaction for the provision of all such services. Key results include:

- Parks, Gardens and Open Spaces enjoyed net satisfaction ratings of +68% for residents, +59% for businesses, +42% for workers and +65% for senior executives. Although there have been small falls in the satisfaction levels since 2009, the figures remain high especially when compared to other local authorities and are likely to be a consequence primarily of the Crossrail works in Finsbury Circus.

### **3. Website**

3.1 The PR Office is responsible for the City of London Corporation's external website. During the past year the majority of this work has been focussed on the quality of its content – across the four main clusters - to make it as easy as possible to find via search engines and for it to be relevant, current and user-friendly. The Office has organised a number of workshops and facilitates regular weekly meetings with content providers across the organisation to share best practice and discuss any issues. It regularly reviews pages relating to Open Spaces and alerts editors when content is out of date, needs rewriting for clarity or is missing information. It also hosted a conference in October to thank content providers, share knowledge and discuss how the site might develop in future.

3.2 Work has included promoting key Open Space events on the home page – both in the New this Week rolling news feed and the featured Don't Miss section – and including imagery from Open Spaces as part of the home page carousel.

### **4. E-communications and social media**

4.1 The PR Office is responsible for the creation and development of e-communications. It also gives advice to departments on how to communicate across social platforms. The City Corporation now has 22 Facebook pages and almost 50 Twitter feeds (including five open space sites), a YouTube channel and Flickr account which cover the wide range of services we provide (full list at [www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/social](http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/social)). The PR Office took over the Epping Forest Twitter feed during the fire outbreak during the summer, allowing local staff to focus on the fire itself. This allowed the PR Office, on behalf of the City Corporation, to manage the media response in a coordinated fashion and in a rapid space of time; this reflected well on the organisation and resulted in the feeds being quoted on air whilst interviews with staff were being set up.

## **5. Publishing and related activities**

- 5.1 The PR Office is also responsible for the corporate publications strategy and its implementation. In addition, the PR Office is also responsible for the City Corporation's brand identity and assists Departments with branding guidelines. The PR Office has been working with Open Spaces on developing a new brand identity that can be rolled out across sites and help develop their profile.
- 5.2 Cityview magazine devoted a spread to open spaces in issue 74 that looked back at their successes over the Olympic period and other community events run during 2012. Two research reports were commissioned in 2013 as part of the PR Office's communications priorities initiative – *Tree diseases in London* and *Green Spaces: the benefits for London*. 6.2
- 5.3 The PR Office, on behalf of the City Corporation, sponsored the Urban category in the annual British Wildlife Photography Awards. In addition, along with the Economic Development Office, the PR Office commissioned BOP Consulting to carry out a research paper looking into the benefits for London of green spaces.

## **6. Public Affairs**

- 6.1 The PR Office provides Public Affairs advice to Departments across the organisation on specific issues that may affect their work as and when required. This includes initial planning relating to public affairs activities under the second communications priority.

## **7. Events**

- 7.1 The PR Office facilitates events which engage staff from across the organisation, including:
- The contribution of all relevant departments to the London Councils Summit, which took place on 17 November 2012 – each department submitted publicity material to promote the services and activities of the City Corporation to an audience of over 250 pan-London councillors and chief officers.
  - The annual City Wide Residents' Meeting, which took place on 25 June, provided City residents with an opportunity to meet City Corporation officers from across the organisation and learn more through stalls at the event about the wide range of services offered by the City Corporation.

- The PR Office also facilitates arrangements for the Open House London, allowing buildings owned by the City of London to be opened to the public during the weekend of 21-22 September. Over 6,000 visitors visited both the Guildhall and Mansion House over the course of the weekend.

In addition to the above the Team runs all staff only events which includes Staff Annual Lunches, Masterclasses and Strategic Briefings.

## **8. Member and internal communications**

- 8.1 The PR Office, working closely with the Member Services Team, has responsibility for communications with Members. This includes the Members' Briefing which has recently been reviewed, as well as providing updates and briefings to Members on topical issues.
- 8.2 The PR Office provides internal communications for the City Corporation as a whole and gives support to individual Departments as and when required. Open Spaces are regularly supported and assisted in improving communications through a number of channels and in a variety of ways from communication advice and practical assistance where required (for example, design and editing issues) for news and feature publicity via the corporate channels and in some cases local communications activity.
- 8.3 The PR Office ensures that story coverage in the e-magazine the Leader, the intranet, the Town Clerk's Bulletin and the eLeader bulletin is regular, timely and in particular celebrates the successes of the Open Spaces and showcases latest initiatives and service developments.

## **9. Filming**

The PR Office has a dedicated Film Team responsible for liaising with film crews and City Corporation departments to facilitate shoots within the Square Mile and on our property. The Film Team have liaised with several film crews in the past year with regard to use of City Gardens. St-Dunstons-in-the-East's churchyard in particular remains popular with filmmakers.

### **Background Papers:**

Members will find it useful to refer to the '*Communications Strategy 2013-2016*'

**Contact:**

*Tony Halmos*

*Director of Public Relations*

*020 7332 1450*

*[tony.halmos@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:tony.halmos@cityoflondon.gov.uk)*