

**OPEN SPACES AND CITY GARDENS**  
**Monday, 21 July 2014**

Minutes of the meeting of the Open Spaces and City Gardens held at Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 21 July 2014 at 11.30 am

**Present**

**Members:**

Alderman Ian Luder (Chairman)  
Deputy Alex Deane (Deputy Chairman)  
Deputy Robert Howard  
Wendy Mead  
Barbara Newman  
Jeremy Simons  
Deputy Michael Welbank  
Graeme Smith  
Verderer Peter Adams

**Officers:**

Natasha Dogra	Town Clerk's Office
Sue Ireland	Director of Open Spaces
Jennifer Allott	Departmental Business Manager, Open Spaces Department
Louisa Allen	City Gardens Manager
Martin Rodman	Superintendent, West Ham Park and City Gardens
Alison Elam	Group Accountant, Chamberlain's Department
Andrew Thwaites	Head Ranger, City Commons
Rosie Thornton	West Ham Park Manager

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies had been received from Alderman Haines and Virginia Rounding.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **MINUTES**

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

**Matters Arising:**

Members noted that the visit to City Gardens has been postponed and would take place after the Committee meeting on 13 October 2014.

Members were also informed that a report would be submitted to the October Committee meeting regarding Senator House Garden EC4.

The Superintendent informed Members that a Member had raised a query regarding the number of trees included in the City's Open Spaces Strategy. For clarification, the Superintendent explained that the previous strategy included 400 trees that were not in the Square Mile, but were maintained by the Corporation and situated in neighbouring local authorities Trinity Square Garden, Fortune Street Park and Bunhill Fields. The new strategy was more accurate reflection of the position and overall, the number of trees within the City had increased by 11% over the last 5 years.

**4. REVENUE OUTTURN 2013/14- OPEN SPACES AND CITY GARDENS**

The Committee noted the comparison between the revenue outturn for the services overseen by the Committee in 2013/14 and the final agreed budget for the year. In total, there was a better than budget position of £88,000 for the services overseen by the Committee compared with the final agreed budget for the year. The Director's better than budget position of £41,000 had been aggregated with budget variations on services overseen by other committees, which produced an overall better than budget position of £232,000 (Local Risk) across all Open Spaces.

Members noted that it was proposed to carry forward £217,000 of this underspend. These requests had been considered by the Chamberlain in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Resource Allocation Sub Committee and approved. Underspend in the City Surveyor's Additional Works Programme would be available to spend in subsequent years of the scheme. The 2013/14 Latest Approved Budgets for the services overseen by the Committee were £1.764m and were received by your Committee in November 2013, endorsed by the Court of Common Council in March 2014 and subsequently updated for approved adjustments.

**5. CONSOLIDATED REVENUE OUTTURN 2013/14**

The Committee noted the comparison between the revenue outturn for the services overseen by the Director of Open Spaces in 2013/14 and the final agreed budget for the year. In total, there was a better than budget position of £188,000 for the services overseen by the Committee compared with the final agreed budget for the year as set out below.

Members noted the proposal to carry forward £217,000 from the Director's better than budget position of £232,000 (Local Risk) across all Open Spaces. These requests would be considered by the Chamberlain in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Resource Allocation Sub Committee. The shortfall of £56,000 at the Nursery would be transferred to reserves.

The 2013/14 consolidated latest approved budgets for Open Spaces was £15.750m and were received by your Committee in February 2014 and endorsed by the Court of Common Council in March 2014 and subsequently updated for approved adjustments. For information, the Cemetery and

Crematorium had also been included in this report, to show the overall position for the Department, although it was reported to Port Health & Environmental Services Committee.

## **6. BUSINESS PLAN: QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE UPDATE**

The Committee noted the revised Open Spaces Department Business Plan which detailed the aims and objectives of the department. Members noted the progress made in the first quarter of the new financial year as well as summarising performance in 13/14, with a particular focus on the final quarter of the year.

Members were informed that the year saw the delivery of a number of high profile projects including the completion of the final year of the City Bridge Trust funded project 'Inspiring Londoners through Landscapes and Biodiversity', Heritage Lottery Fund approval for stage one of the Kenley Revival Project and public consultation on the Hampstead Heath Project. However, the timetables for a number of projects scheduled for delivery within the reporting year slipped. These projects included Introduction of Dog Control Orders at Burnham Beeches, the Epping Forest Management Plan, Golf Course Review at Epping Forest, the Grazing Strategy implementation, the Jubilee Pond relining project and the Land Registration Project.

In response to a query, Members were informed that the number of accidents in Open Spaces would no longer be reported as part of the Open Spaces Performance Dashboard, but complete performance data on Health and Safety would be considered in the form of the annual Committee report.

Members were informed that the City Churchyards management arrangements were being adopted by individual Churches when they came into contact with the City Corporation, for example when undergoing works to the area in or around the Church. The Superintendent informed the Committee that the arrangements were currently being implemented at St Olave's and St Andrew's Church.

## **7. THE STATE OF UK PUBLIC PARKS 2014**

The Committee were provided with an important insight into the current state of Parks in the UK. Members noted the key findings and considered the issues that were particular relevant to the City of London; both in managing green spaces across London and in supporting the wider green space agenda across London.

The Committee considered the five HLF challenges from two perspectives; firstly, as the authority responsible for the green spaces in the Square Mile and secondly, as the provider of strategic green space across London. The five challenges were:

1. Local authority commitment
2. New partnerships
3. Getting communities more involved
4. Collecting and sharing data
5. New finance models and rethinking delivery

Members noted that the number of Friends and user groups had increased by 30% in the last three years and membership by 47%. There were some 5,000 groups across the UK raising a significant £30million each year. Members agreed that partnership working was very important to the Directorate, as a number of the City owned parks, gardens, forests and heaths were located outside of the Square Mile and within other local authorities.

Discussions ensued regarding the review of the Open Spaces strategy in line with the Service Based Reviews. The Director informed Members that further information regarding the outcome of the Service Based Review would be available in the autumn of this year.

The Director informed Members that a paper regarding infrastructure in London was due to be published by the Mayor's Office by the end of July, and the Director would respond to this paper.

In response to a query, Officers agreed to circulate the State of UK Parks report to Members of all Open Space related Committees for their consideration.

Resolved:

- That Members nominated the Chairman of the Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee to act as the Park Champion.
- The Officers recommend that the Hampstead Heath Committee and West Ham Park Committee appoint their respective Park Champions
- That Officers circulate the report to all Open Space Committees.

#### **8. ANNUAL REVIEW OF VOLUNTEERING FOR 2013-14**

The Committee noted that 49,816 hours of volunteering were achieved across the Open Spaces during 2013-14, an increase of 4,397 hours on the 2012-13 figure and the highest ever amount.

Members noted that volunteers continued to be involved in a variety of roles and undertake a diverse range of activities that offer them the opportunity to engage with the management of their Open Space. The Volunteer Improvement Group aimed to maintain consistency and improve quality and opportunity through the development of volunteer improvement plans that set 12 aims for continued development.

Members noted that overall a 9.7% increase on the 2012-13 total of volunteer hours was reported for 2013-14. The 2012-13 figure was 1% down on the 2011-12 total of 46,055 hours. Nearly all divisions reported an increase in volunteer hours. Of particular note was the City Gardens division which enjoyed an increase of over 2000 hours and Burnham Beeches where the figure was increased by over 1000 hours on the year before.

Members were informed that 5,595 hours were accrued by the Epping Forest Centenary Trust and 4,707 hours by the Epping Forest Conservation Volunteers. This represented a 2.56% decrease in total volunteer hours on 2012/13, however this overall figure masked a 20% increase in City of London

volunteers, whilst other partners had planned reductions. Members noted that at the end of March 2014, 227 people were volunteering for Epping Forest.

In response to a query from Members, Officers informed the Committee that there were a number of award schemes through which volunteer groups and individuals could be recognised for their hard work.

**Resolved:** It was proposed and seconded that the following resolution be displayed at the office of all City Corporation Open Spaces, which the Committee unanimously agreed:

*“Members thanked all of the Volunteers for their hard work over the last year. The Committee agreed that every Volunteer played a vital role in maintaining the City of London Corporation’s Open Spaces and through their hard work the City Corporation was able to deliver a wide range of services to the public. Members agreed that the role of volunteers was integral to the work of all of the City’s Open Spaces. The Committee Members appreciated the hard work and continuous support provided by the volunteers and congratulated them on a job well done.”*

9. **OPEN SPACES TREE SAFETY POLICY AND BIOSECURITY GUIDANCE**

The Committee noted that approximately 64% of the City Corporation’s Open Spaces are comprised of woodland or wood pasture. Although each Open Spaces division manages its tree stock in a safe way through local procedures, there was currently no overarching departmental policy to ensure consistency of approach.

Members noted that there were an increasing number of harmful pests and diseases affecting trees in the UK, and there was the potential for these to harm both our users and the composition and character of our tree stock if left unchecked. It was important that staff, contractors and visitors to our sites are made aware of these pathogens and that there was guidance in place to minimise the risk of their spreading.

Members agreed that this report should be shared as best practice with other Committees and local authorities. Officers agreed to circulate the report.

**Resolved: That Members:**

- Approved the Tree Safety Policy, Biosecurity Policy and Biosecurity Protocol for immediate adoption by the Open Spaces Department;
- Agreed that the Tree Safety Policy be shared with other relevant departments in order to ensure a consistent approach to tree safety management across the City Corporation.

10. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

The Committee received a verbal update from the Superintendent of City Gardens and noted the following:

**Finance**

The City Garden budget was in line with agreed budget profiles.

## **Staff**

A recently recruited assistant gardener had started today.

## **City, London and Britain in Bloom Campaign**

The City's in Bloom judging had been taking place over the last couple of weeks arranged by the Friends of City Gardens. We have received ninety applications, quadrupling the applications from previous years. Nominations and entries had been received from schools, community groups, businesses and housing estates.

The City-wide entry had been externally judged by the London in Bloom judges last week, and we are looking forward to receiving the Britain in Bloom judges on the 29<sup>th</sup> July, having been entered into the 'Champion of Champion' category of the RHS campaign. Results would be announced at award ceremonies in September and October respectively.

## **Gardens**

*Barbican Estate, Beech Gardens* - City Gardens, working in partnership with the Barbican Estate office would be organising two consultation events with Professor Nigel Dunnett, who had prepared concept designs for the podium area. The proposed plant designs reflected the differing bed locations, would provide seasonal interest, biodiversity and assist with improved air quality. The gardens would be planted before March 2015 by the City Gardens team and volunteers from the Barbican estate.

*Garden Audio Information* - as part of an audio project, volunteers and City Gardens staff have prepared audio information about nine of our gardens which could be accessed via an audio Boo link and QR codes displayed on notice boards and signs in the gardens.

*The Literacy Trust* had displayed a number of benches in gardens and open spaces across the City, each bench was illustrating a different book and some have been designed by authors. The benches would be displayed temporarily until September.

## **Volunteering**

*Open Squares Weekend 14/15 June* – Friends of City Gardens and volunteers ran a plant stall, serving teas and coffees in Postman's Park and a treasure hunt in Bunhill Fields. Feedback from visitors was very positive.

*Hahahopscoch* - the Friends were awarded a small grant to pay for Hahahopscoch, a play activity organisation to facilitate a Victorian family games day in Bunhill on the 30<sup>th</sup> July. The free event would include sack races, egg and spoon, tug of war, storytelling and a treasure hunt. Information regarding the event was on the website and posters displayed on notice boards in the gardens.

*London Local Area Agreement Performance Reward Grant.*

The Friends of City Gardens had won a £15,000 from the London Local Area Agreement Performance Reward Grant, the grant to be spent over the next two

years, would pay for an ecologist to assess our Biodiversity sites, training volunteers to undertake wildlife surveys and support the implementation of the City's next five year biodiversity plan.

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

There were no questions.

**12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED**

There was no urgent business.

**13. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

MOTION: 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.

**14. DEBT ARREARS - INVOICED INCOME FOR PERIOD ENDING 31 MARCH 2014**

The Committee considered the report of the Chamberlain and Director of Open Spaces.

**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 urgent business.

**The meeting ended at 12.25 pm**

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Chairman

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