

Committee	Dated:
Open Spaces & City Gardens	06/06/2016
Subject: Superintendent's update June 2016	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Parks & Gardens	For Information
Report author: Louisa Allen	

Summary

This report provides an update to Members of the Open Spaces & City Gardens Committee on management and operational activities across the City Gardens section since April 2016.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Budget

1. The City Gardens budget is in line with agreed budget profiles for this time of year.

Personnel

2. An apprentice undertaking a 20 month fixed term contract has been recently recruited and is settling in well, he will undertake a NVQ Level 2 in horticulture training and qualification at Capel Manor College from June. The recruitment of an assistant gardener who can undertake work at weekends and evenings to further reduce overtime costs has also been completed and is due to start in June. A further two fixed term assistant gardeners have been recruited to assist the City Gardens team for the summer months.

Operational Activities

3. The City Gardens team are about to rejuvenate the planting to both Carter Lane and the Queens Diamond Jubilee Gardens to ensure that the gardens

are providing a good display throughout the summer months. Further improvements are scheduled for September when the team will tackle the more mature planting which is due for replacement.

4. The first and second phase of tree planting within the Aldgate Gyratory project was completed in April with a total of 29 trees planted, 28 of which were street trees. The next phase of planting is scheduled for the late summer/early autumn.
5. The City Gardens team is currently working on planting improvements for the frontage at St Andrews by the Wardrobe Church – Queen Victoria Street. The project was brought about through partnership working with the church and the Diocese and will provide improved planting to the main frontage of the church.
6. Over the last year, City Gardens have trialed a new resin bonded recycled rubber crumb (Flexi-Pave) which is used to fill the gaps around the bottom of tree bases. The new product will help prevent trips and falls, make it easy for the cleansing team to clean around these areas and reduce the work for the City Gardens team who have had to regularly top up these areas due to compaction/compression. From June, the City Gardens team will be installing Flexi –Pave to sixty tree bases in areas of high footfall.
7. The City Gardens team have been working with the Department of the Built Environment to record all our gardens on to GIS (Geographical Information System). This will provide much more accurate and useful information in the future and enable the team to run a variety of different reports more efficiently. The GIS system will be constantly updated by members of the City Gardens office team to ensure the records are up to date at all times.

Community, Volunteering, Outreach and Events

8. From the 1st April, the City Gardens Twitter account is up and running and the team will be using it to promote our green spaces, events and activities.
9. A bat walk took place on 4th May on the Barbican Estate organised by the City Gardens team and a resident and was attended by 10 residents. Common and Soprano *pipistrelle* were spotted in abundance. The City Gardens team intend to support further walks for the general public across the City in the autumn.
10. The Friends of the Watts Memorial in partnership with the Friends of City Gardens organised a ticketed evening lecture event in St Botolph Aldersgate church on 13th May. The talk was titled Heroes of Postman's Park: The Secret History of the Watts Memorial delivered by Dr John Price. The event was attended by 75 people and included an evening walk and refreshments in Postman's Park.

11. During the months of May and June, the Friends of City Gardens have led and are leading three outdoor learning sessions with Prior Western Primary School pupils taking place in Bunhill Fields Burial Ground. The sessions are linked to the pupils' science curriculum and will include an introduction to biodiversity topics.
12. Working with The City Centre, artist Rebecca Louise Law has created 'The City Garden', a site-specific installation of natural materials inspired by gardens within the City displayed in the City Centre and sponsored by The London Wall Place Partnership, a joint venture between Brookfield and Oxford Properties, The exhibition opened on 23rd April and runs until September 2016. To complement this exhibition the City Guides have organised garden walks and a 'Professor Nigel Dunnett in conversation with Tom Stuart Smith' event is taking place 1st June.
13. The City Centre has commissioned two films of City Gardens that accompany the exhibition and a map of the gardens that inspired Rebecca's installation. The map will also be available as an app that leads visitors through the City's open spaces detailing the history, horticulture and design of some iconic gardens.
14. Open Squares Weekend is taking place on Saturday 18th and Sunday 19th June. A diverse range and increase of activities have been planned for the weekend, in partnership with the friends. Four poets will be in residence in; Postman's Park, St Dunstan in the East, Christchurch Greyfriars and Cleary Gardens. A number of walks and talks have been organised and will be delivered by City Garden Guides, the Friends of City Gardens and the City Gardens team. Talks will be delivered by John Price, the author of the recently published book about the Watts Memorial; these will take place in Postman's Park on both days as well as a talk and walk by Professor Nigel Dunnett in the City Centre about his landscape design at Beech gardens on the Sunday. A plant stall and teas and coffees will be served in Postman's Park on both Saturday and Sunday. Twenty additional volunteers have been recruited to provide a presence and information for visitors in St Dunstan's in the East, Postman's Park, Fann Street Wildlife Garden and Beech Gardens.

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