

Committee:	Dated:
Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee	06/06/2016
Subject: City Gardens Draft Events Policy	Public
Report of: Director of Open Spaces	For Decision
Report author: Louisa Allen	

Summary

This report is a follow-up report to that dated 20th April 2015, and explains the progress regarding the pilot and implementation of the City Gardens Draft Event Policy to date.

During the pilot period, which took place between June 2015 and April 2016, a few minor amendments have been made to the draft policy as a result of feedback from users and to assist with the administration of events.

Members are asked to agree the final version of the draft event policy circulated by the Town Clerk.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Approve the minor amendments outlined in the City Gardens Draft Event Policy, circulated by the Town Clerk.
- Formally adopt the policy as the City Gardens Event Policy.

Main Report

Background

1. City Gardens regularly organises and facilitates small scale events and activities, the majority are walks and talks, seasonal lunchtime well-being activities and environmental volunteering activities. These events are either funded through external grants or arranged by the City Gardens team in partnership with community groups such as the Friends of City Gardens and the City of London Guides at minimal cost to the City.
2. In addition, the gardens attract regular filming and photography requests; these are managed by the CoL Film Team and facilitated by City Gardens, accruing modest amounts of income. In recent years the City Gardens team has experienced an increasing number of requests from members of the public to use the gardens to hold special events such as wedding celebrations.

3. The City's open spaces are protected by various legislation and regulations which help protect and govern the use of the gardens and restrict certain activities.
4. All of the City of London's open spaces are less than two hectares in size and fall within the definition of the London Plan's (2011) hierarchy of open spaces as Small Open Spaces and Pocket Parks. Due to size these are therefore considered suitable only for small scale events. According to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) a small event is classified as 'the attendance of 500 people or less'.
5. Until June 2015, the City Gardens section had not actively publicised the gardens to be used for event purposes. Any fees that had been charged were minimal and had been used to cover costs incurred by the gardening team for facilitating an event. However, officer time responding to and assessing requests had not been charged for.
6. The current Service Base Review is tasked with finding ways to identify savings as well as increasing income to support revenue budgets. The introduction of a draft policy is an opportunity to increase income for the City Gardens revenue budget. In addition, the inclusion of organised events has and will provide more diverse opportunities for communities to enjoy and make use of the City Gardens.

Current Position

7. Following committee approval in April 2015 the City Gardens Draft Event Policy was published on the City Gardens pages of the website and is provided to anyone enquiring about holding events or hiring a garden.
8. Since May 2015 a total of 25 event applications have been received for small events planned for both 2015/2016 and 2016/2017. Events have generated an income of £2,000 between May 2015 and April 2016. Applications have been and continue to be assessed monthly by the City Gardens Event Group. The most popular events continue to be group wedding photography and associated celebrations with up to 100 participants. A few events did not go ahead due to either the lateness of the event application, inadequate Public Liability insurance or applicants finding more suitable locations.
9. The events held so far have provided new opportunities for members of the public; they have been well managed with no negative impact on any of the gardens or complaints from nearby residences or businesses
10. Events that have taken place and that are planned for 2016-2017 include: a successful ticketed evening event in Postman's Park organised by the Friends of City Gardens; a birthday party celebration for 40 people; two wedding celebrations and two group wedding photography events. The Worshipful Company of Brewers will be holding an evening drinks reception in St Mary Aldermanbury garden. An opera charity have applied to use Postman's Park for a reception and a recital and an application to hold weekly lunchtime fitness sessions is in process, as is an sponsored open air film screening in Festival Gardens for 380 people in August.

11. The City Gardens team in partnership with the Open Spaces Marketing & Development Manager have designed and converted online event documents to make the application process as easy as possible for the user and for administration purposes. Minor amendments have been made to the original draft event policy appendices. The downloadable forms have reduced the number of telephone enquiries and are proving successful with applicants using the website as first port of call to find the information that they need.

Proposals

12. It is proposed that the fees will remain the same for this second year as the policy is still a relatively new initiative and an hourly rate as opposed to just a fixed day rate has been included. The inclusion of an hourly rate has suited the type of events that most applicants have been interested in, such as wedding photography and small celebrations.
13. Wider policy work in relation to events will be required as a result of the additional powers sought in the City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Bill. A more positive approach to publicising the opportunities offered by the City Gardens could complement this work.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

14. The provision of a well-designed events programme supports a number of key City of London policies and objectives as follows:
 - **The Corporate Plan 2013-17** through a key policy priority of maximising the opportunities and benefits afforded by our role in supporting London's communities
 - **Visit the City** -a visitor destination strategy for the City of London 2013/17 which seeks to provide a framework for the delivery of the City of London Corporation's visitor services, providing a clear statement of our vision for the assets we control and the areas over which we may have influence within the City area.

Conclusion

15. The completion and adoption of a comprehensive revised City Gardens Event Policy will enable City Gardens to continue to manage events and garden hire requests effectively whilst at the same time generating income to support the City Gardens revenue budget.
16. To date, interest shown for undertaking events in City Gardens has been gradually growing, it is envisaged that once the City Gardens Event Policy has become more established and with future marketing opportunities this interest will engender increased event activities and revenue.

Appendix

- City Gardens Draft Event Policy circulated by the Town Clerk.

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