

OPEN SPACES AND CITY GARDENS

Monday, 6 June 2016

Minutes of the meeting of the Open Spaces and City Gardens held at Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 6 June 2016 at 1.45 pm

Present

Members:

Graeme Smith (Deputy Chairman)
Alderman Ian Luder (Chairman)
Barbara Newman
Virginia Rounding (Ex-Officio Member)
Catherine Bickmore (Ex-Officio Member)
John Beyer
Michael Welbank (Chief Commoner)
Alderman Robert Howard
Philip Woodhouse
Deputy John Barker
Jeremy Simons

Officers:

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

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Wendy Mead, Jeremy Simons, John Beyer and Peter Adams.

2. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

There were no declarations of interest.

3. ORDER OF THE COURT OF COMMON COUNCIL

Resolved – the Order of the Court of Common Council was received by the Committee.

4. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

The Committee proceeded to elect a Chairman in accordance with Standing Order 29. The Town Clerk read out a list of Member's eligible to stand and Graeme Smith, being the only Member to express his willingness to serve, was declared the duly elected Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing year.

The Chairman conveyed his thanks to the outgoing Chairman, Alderman Ian Luder, for his constant support and Deputy Barker was invited to deliver a vote of thanks.

The Members of these Committees wish to extend to Alderman Ian Luder their sincere thanks and appreciation for the extremely able and courteous manner in which he has presided over their deliberations and the detailed care and interest he has shown in all aspects of the work of these Committees.

As Chairman, he has been intent on encouraging the increasingly strategic role of the Open Spaces & City Gardens and West Ham Park Committees, exemplified by his support for, and commitment to, the work of the Forestry Commission in tackling the spread of Oak Processionary Moth in the south-east of England, and through the development of a new partnership with the Lawn Tennis Association, which will help to create a hub for tennis at West Ham Park.

Members also wish to recognise his welcome emphasis on the work of Volunteers across the Department, and his support in drawing their efforts and contributions to the attention of the Court of Common Council.

Throughout his tenure he has actively contributed to an increase in the amount and quality of publicly accessible open space, through the redevelopment of numerous gardens across the Square Mile and the creation of a strategic new open space at Aldgate.

Drawing on his considerable experience in the financial sector, he has sought to embed financial sustainability across the open spaces, through recognising opportunities for additional income generation and through his passionate support for officers and the spaces for which they care.

DURING his time as Chairman of these two Committees, he has striven to retain high quality standards in green space management, resulting in the award of numerous Green Flag and Green Heritage standards, and Gold Awards in both London- and Britain in Bloom.

He has been unstinting in both his time and his efforts, and his colleagues wish to record their appreciation for the sound judgement, tact and strong leadership that he has demonstrated in the face of often complex issues.

FINALLY, the Committee wishes to place on record its recognition of Ian's distinguished contribution to these Committees and, in thanking him for his generous hospitality during his years of office, his colleagues convey to him their good wishes for the future, with many happy memories of a job well done.

5. ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

The Committee were advised that Alderman Ian Luder wished to exercise his right as outgoing Chairman to serve for one year as the Deputy Chairman of

the Committee. Alderman Luder thanked the Members for their continued support and expressed his delight over the successful programmes and projects completed during his tenure as Chairman of the Committee.

RESOLVED – that Alderman Luder be appointed to serve as Deputy Chairman for the ensuing year.

6. **TO APPOINT A REPRESENTATIVE TO THE STREETS AND WALKWAYS SUB COMMITTEE**

The Committee were invited to appoint a representative to the Streets and Walkways Sub Committee. Wendy Mead and Jeremy Simons had expressed an interest and serving; following a ballot Mr Simons were elected to serve for the ensuing year.

Resolved - Jeremy Simons was appointed as the representative to the Streets and Walkways Sub Committee for the ensuing year.

7. **MINUTES**

Resolved – that the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as an accurate record.

Matters arising:

Park Run

The Director informed the Committee that currently the approach taken by the City of London Corporation was to not charge Park Run participants. Members noted that the development of national issues could assist the City Corporation when considering the matter in the future.

Oak Processionary Moth

The Director informed Members that the spraying of trees on Hampstead Heath had now been completed.

8. **BUSINESS PLAN 2015/16**

The Committee noted that the progress made by the Open Spaces Department on its 2015-18 business plan. The report listed the performance indicators set for the department and achievements against these targets. The performance indicators had been achieved including: 15 Green Flag Awards, 12 Green Heritage Awards, 11 London in Bloom Awards, 95% of survey respondents scoring the 'overall rating' of open space's as 'good or better than good' and cemetery income exceeding its income target.

Members noted that the identified SBR saving of £699k was made in 2015/16. In response to a query Members were informed that many of the roadmap programmes were three year projects and some have slipped to amber RAG status from green, although actions were being implemented to bring the programmes back within agreed limits.

Members noted that future business plans would include performance indicators regarding training undertaken by staff, and indicators on the quality and value of the specific training sessions.

The Committee placed on record their thanks to the Open Spaces Business Manager for all her hard work during her time with the Open Spaces directorate.

Resolved – that the business plan be received.

9. ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS IN THE OPEN SPACES DEPARTMENT IN 2015

The Committee noted that there had been a slight fall in employee accidents resulting in injuries in 2015 compared with previous years. Overall accident rates were at the lowest they have been in four years. Whilst the severity and causes of accidents vary greatly, the majority were minor injuries resulting in little or no time off work and few accidents to members of the public necessitated going directly to hospital, the exception being a fatality at Hampstead Heath Ponds which had been reported elsewhere.

Members noted that there had been an increase in incidents involving damage to property which was believed to be due to improved reporting and a reduction in reported incidents of verbal abuse which was believed to be due to additional staff training in managing enforcement duties.

The Committee were informed that following the incident at West Ham Park, Officers could confirm that every lodge had been fitted with a carbon monoxide detector. Members also noted that annual gas supply checks were undertaken and an electricity inspection was completed every five years.

Members noted that the inquest at the Highgate Men's Bathing Pool on Hampstead Heath had found that neither City Corporation staff nor the organisation itself had been at fault – the incident took place outside of swimming hours and the inquest found signage in the area to be adequately displayed. Members agreed that staff had been fully cooperative during the enquiry, in spite of the difficult situation.

The Committee discussed the statistics regarding mental health and were informed that the information related to all City Corporation staff. Members agreed that the report should be circulated to Members of the Health & Wellbeing Board for their information.

Resolved – that the report be received.

10. ENJOYING OPEN SPACES AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT GRANT FUNDING THEME

The Committee noted that the Policy and Resources Committee had approved a new grant scheme following a recent 'grants review'. As part of this a new two year (2016 – 2018) grant funding theme had been created entitled 'Enjoying

Open Spaces and the Natural Environment' and an allocation of approx. £110k funding was assigned to this over a two year period.

Members were informed that ordinarily grants were invited from constituted organisations as this provides a more robust and auditable funding approach which reduces the reputational risk to the COL. This would include registered charity's; registered community interest companies; registered charitable incorporated organisations; charitable companies; exempt or excepted charity; registered charitable industrial and provident societies or charitable cooperatives or constituted voluntary organisation. Generally grants to individuals were very specific and are usually only made to an individual when they are the primary beneficiary e.g. support for training/expedition.

Members discussed the various themes and agreed that officers should further investigate the following options before presenting a report to the Committee in July:

- Only groups/organisations should be funded
- Projects where the majority of impact would be on the City of London's Open Spaces should be funded.
- Sub themes to be investigated should include:
 - o Focus on biodiversity
 - o Connecting communities with their green space
 - o Focus on the use of open spaces to improve quality of life for people with mental health issues
 - o Focus on education to reduce the amount of litter and fly tipping within open spaces
- One funding round to be implemented to encourage applications for amounts between £12k - £18k for two year projects.

Members received a comment sent by Alderman Howard suggesting that there was more to the Green City than just the Corporation's publicly-owned or managed spaces in the City. Officers agreed to take this comment on board when submitting the report for the Committee's consideration in July.

Resolved – that Members

11. CITY GARDENS EVENT POLICY

The Committee noted 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 had been made to the draft policy as a result of feedback from users and to assist with the administration of events.

The Committee were informed that the current Service Base Review was tasked with finding ways to identify savings as well as increasing income to support revenue budgets. The introduction of a draft policy was 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.

Since May 2015 a total of 25 event applications had been received for small events planned for both 2015/2016 and 2016/2017. Events had generated an income of £2,000 between May 2015 and April 2016. Applications had 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.

In response to a specific query regarding an open area near Barbers-Surgeons Hall, the City Gardens Manager agreed to visit the site with the Member to address their issues.

Resolved – that Members:-

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

12. UPDATE REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT OF PARKS AND GARDENS

The Committee noted the update report of the Superintendent and specifically noted that the City Gardens team was 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.

Members noted that Open Squares Weekend was taking place on Saturday 18th and Sunday 19th June. A diverse range and increase of activities had been planned for the weekend, in partnership with the friends. Four poets would 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.

Resolved – that the update be received.

13. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

There were no questions.

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

There was no urgent business.

15. 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.

16. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

Resolved – that the minutes of the previous meeting be received as an accurate record.

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

There were no questions.

18. **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 3.00 pm

Chairman

Contact Officer: Natasha Dogra
natasha.dogra@cityoflondon.gov.uk