

## **OPEN SPACES AND CITY GARDENS** **Monday, 18 July 2016**

Minutes of the meeting of the Open Spaces and City Gardens held at Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 18 July 2016 at 2.15 pm

### **Present**

#### **Members:**

Graeme Smith (Chairman)  
Wendy Mead  
Barbara Newman  
John Beyer  
Deputy John Barker  
Jeremy Simons  
Karina Dostalova

#### **Officers:**

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|---------------|--|
| Sue Ireland   | - Director of Open Spaces                    |
| Esther Sumner | - Open Spaces Business Manager               |
| Louisa Allen  | - City Gardens Manager                       |
| Alison Elam   | - Group Accountant, Chamberlain's Department |
| Natasha Dogra | - Town Clerk's Department                    |
| Martin Rodman | - Superintendent, Parks and Gardens          |
| Alison Hurley | - City Surveyor's Department                 |

#### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Alderman Luder, Alderman Howard, Mr Welbank, Mr Woodhouse, Ms Rounding and Ms Bickmore.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **3. MINUTES**

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

#### **4. OPEN SPACES DEPARTMENT, CITY GARDENS AND WEST HAM PARK RISK MANAGEMENT**

Members were provided with an update on the management of risks faced by the Open Spaces Department. The Open Spaces Department has one corporate risk and upon review, has five departmental risks. There are eight risks for City Gardens and West Ham Park.

Resolved – that Members approved the Departmental risk register and approved the Parks and Gardens risk register.

**5. CYCLICAL WORKS PROGRAMME BID 2017/18**

The Committee noted a provisional list of cyclical projects being considered for Open Spaces & City Gardens in 2017/18 under the umbrella of the “cyclical works programme”. The draft cyclical project list for 2017/18 totals approximately £34,000 and would continue the ongoing maintenance of the property and infrastructure assets.

Resolved – that the report be received.

**6. UPDATE REPORT: DOG CONTROL ORDERS AT BURNHAM BEECHES**

The Committee received an update regarding the introduction of Dog Control Orders at Burnham Beeches. The Committee noted the successful work implemented at Burnham Beeches and agreed that this was due to the ongoing efforts of the Superintendent and his team at Burnham Beeches. Members noted that this was still a work in progress and the project would be closely monitored over the following years.

The Committee were in agreement that the public using the Beeches with their dogs had played a large part in the successful implementation of the Dog Control Orders.

Resolved – that the report be received.

**7. REVENUE OUTTURN 2015/16**

The Committee received the report outlining Revenue Outturn in 2015/16. The Director of Open Spaces better than budget position of £162,000 (Local Risk) is mainly due to a £114,000 underspend at the Directorate. This underspend has been aggregated with budget variations on services overseen by other committees, which produces an overall better than budget position of £885,000 (Local Risk) across all Open Spaces.

Members noted that a request to carry forward £500,000 of which £91,000 relates to City Gardens and £20,000 to the Directorate will be considered by the Chamberlain in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Resource Allocation Sub Committee.

Resolved – that the report be received.

**8. IMPLEMENTATION OF GRANT THEME - ENJOYING OPEN SPACES AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

Following discussion with this Committee on 6 June 2016, Members were presented with the proposals for the granting of awards under the ‘Enjoying Open Spaces and the Natural Environment’ Central Grant Programme Theme.

Members noted that five sub-themes were proposed covering biodiversity, conservation, improving mental ill-health, behaviour change in relation to

littering and connecting communities with their green spaces. Members noted that the five funding sub-themes:

- a) connecting communities with their green spaces
- b) improving the conservation value of the open spaces
- c) improving our knowledge of the biodiversity of the open spaces
- d) delivering behaviour change initiatives which reduce the amount of litter and flytipping within open spaces
- e) improving mental ill-health through the use of open spaces

Discussions ensued regarding the minimum grant allowed, which Officers had suggested should be £8,000. Members agreed that if an application for a lower amount was made it should be considered based on its potential and merit. Therefore, the Committee agreed to amend the wording to read “Usually a minimum of £8,000 and a maximum of £15,000”.

**Resolved – that Members:**

- ☐ Approved the Enjoying Open Spaces and the Natural Environment Grant Eligibility Criteria detailed.
- ☐ Agreed to delegate authority to the Policy and Resources Committee to approve levels of staffing and associated management fee.

**9. UPDATE OF SUPERINTENDENT OF PARKS AND GARDENS**

Members of the Open Spaces & City Gardens Committee received an update on management and operational activities across the City Gardens section since June 2016. Members noted that six hundred and forty people attended 32 organised walks which were fully booked and 80 people attended the Nigel Dunnett talk held in the City Centre.

Members noted that the City Centre received over 800 visitors to view the Rebecca Louise Laws exhibition and a recently commissioned film about City Gardens. Nomura International PLC and Eversheds roof gardens received 2,000 visitors each. The Open Squares organisers reported 18,500 visits across the whole of London, estimating the City received approximately 6,000 of these visits. Four poets from the Poetry School were in residence in some of the gardens and the Friends of Watts Memorial provided a talk in Postman’s Park.

The Committee noted that the Friends of City Gardens raised an impressive £900 from selling teas and coffees and plant donations, an increase on last year’s amount. The volume and range of events and activities attracted high profile media attention; two BBC news items, a feature on BBC Gardeners World and a self-walk article in the Sunday Telegraph online gardening section.

Resolved – that the update be received.

**10. DEVELOPMENT OF A CHURCHYARDS ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME**

The Committee noted a proposal to develop a programme to enhance the churchyards in the City.

Members noted that the churchyards are historic open spaces and have collective significance as a cultural asset. They form the setting for the numerous listed churches and ancient monuments, providing a refuge from the City's intensity and are essential places for workers, visitors and residents to rest and enjoy. Many are popular green spaces, however, others are underutilised, uninspiring and in need of improvement. In the future, the public realm will need to support an increasing City population as a result of new development and the churchyards are a vital public amenity in this context. The establishment of the Churchyards Enhancement Programme will address the need for improvements to the churchyards in order to support the Future City.

The Superintendent informed the Committee that given the City's churchyards are a community resource and public amenity, it is proposed to utilise funds from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to develop the programme which will include identifying particular issues with specific churchyards. Individual projects will then be initiated and progressed through the City's project gateway process as usual. It is envisioned that projects will be funded from a variety of sources including CIL, the Diocese and grants.

Resolved – that Members approved the initiation and development of the programme.

**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**

The Director informed Members that the communities and Local Government Committee launched an inquiry into public parks to examine the impact of reduced local authority budgets on these open spaces and consider concerns that their existence is under threat.

The Committee invited submission of written evidence to its website on the following issues:

- Who uses parks and open spaces, how often and for what
- The contribution of parks to the health and well-being of communities
- The impact of reductions in local authority budgets on parks
- What the administrative status of parks should be in light of declining local authority resources for non-statutory services.
- How new and existing parks can best be supported
- What additional or alternative funding is available and what scope is there for local authorities to generate revenue from park users
- What the advantages and disadvantages are of other management models, such as privatisation, outsourcing or mutualisation

The Director informed Members that written submissions would need to be submitted by 30 September 2016. The Director was liaising with the

Remembrancer regarding the process of submission and would seek to ensure that Chairmen of all open spaces' committees were kept informed

13. **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.

14. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

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

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 2:40pm**

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Chairman

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