

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Open Spaces & City Gardens	10 October 2016
<b>Subject:</b> Finsbury Circus Reinstatement – Issue Report	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Open Spaces	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Martin Rodman	

### Summary

This report advises of provisional representations from the City of London Bowling Club (CoLBC) regarding a possible return to Finsbury Circus.

The Bowling Club wishes to present business proposals to the City Corporation setting out details for its more efficient use of a reinstated facility and a maintenance regime, and is seeking reconsideration of your Committee's previous decisions not to reinstate a specialist sporting surface. The Bowling Club has been invited to do make written representations by the 15 October, with the intention of presenting these to your meeting on 5 December 2016, together with officer views and recommendations.

### Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

### Main Report

#### Background

1. In December 2009, the Open Spaces Committee approved potential options for the reinstatement of Finsbury Circus Garden following completion of the Crossrail works, and resolved that;
  - a. The City of London Bowling Club be advised that, should it return to Finsbury Circus following the completion of Crossrail works, the City would want to formalise its future occupation of the club room at a rent with maintenance obligations and appropriate costs and recovery, including staff time;

- b. Subject to the City of London Bowling Club declining the basis for returning to Finsbury Circus, a project evaluation group consisting of relevant officers be set up to fully explore suitable options for the reinstatement of Finsbury Circus upon completion of Crossrail.
- 2. CoLBC was advised of the City's approach and responded stating that it would be unable to afford to meet the City's reasonable costs, and consequently would not be able to return to Finsbury Circus.
- 3. Furthermore, in December 2014 your Committee considered a report on the reinstatement design for Finsbury Circus. Your Committee resolved to:
  - a. Endorse the reinstatement of Finsbury Circus Garden to be laid out for general public access as a high quality garden space and without the introduction of specialist sporting surfaces exclusively aimed at specific user groups.
  - b. Note the Equalities Impact Assessment which indicates that a reinstated garden without specialist sporting surfaces would serve all users rather than any one specific user group.
- 4. The decision taken in December 2014 impacts directly on the reinstatement of a bowling green at Finsbury Circus.

### **Current Position**

- 5. This summer, the Superintendent of Parks & Gardens met with a representative of CoLBC who expressed his extreme displeasure with the decisions that had been taken. It was stated that the Club had always expected to return to Finsbury Circus once the garden had been reinstated post-Crossrail, and that this aim had not changed. It was also stated that, were they able to put their case directly to your Committee, they would be confident that the decision taken in 2014 would be overturned.
- 6. Background data demonstrating why the decisions had been taken was provided to CoLBC. This was primarily based on the cost of maintaining a green versus the benefit derived, and on the area of garden taken up by the facility which directly conflicts with City policies on the amount of publicly accessible open space.
- 7. CoLBC proposed that the reinstated green could be directly managed by the Club much more economically than by the Corporation's City Gardens' team.

### **Proposals**

- 8. In consultation with the Deputy Chairman and Director of Open Spaces, and having taken advice from the Town Clerk's and City Solicitor's departments, the Chairman has agreed to consider a written submission from the CoLBC at this Committee's December meeting.

9. CoLBC have been invited to submit a proposal of up to three sides of A4 paper for consideration in advance of the meeting. This submission should set out the Club's business case for running the facility, should state the currently active membership of the Club, and its activities since the closure of Finsbury Circus six years ago. The submission deadline agreed with the Club is 15 October 2016.
10. A representative from CoLBC has been invited to attend the public part of the December meeting, at which a report covering the submission will be heard.

## **Implications**

11. Legal Implications - It is open to your Committee to accept representations on a matter on which resolutions have been passed, at the Chairman's discretion. Any legal implications arising from the bowling club's representations will be provided once the representations have been received.

## **Conclusion**

12. CoLBC has expressed dissatisfaction at a decision taken by your Committee in December 2014, which effectively opposed the reinstatement of a bowling green at Finsbury Circus once Crossrail's works are completed.
13. The Chairman has indicated that he will allow written representations from the Club to be reported on if they are submitted by 15 October 2016 for consideration at your Committee's December meeting.

## **Appendices**

- None

## **Background Papers**

Committee Report 7 December 2009 – Finsbury Circus Bowling Green  
Committee Report 9 December 2014 – Finsbury Circus Reinstatement Update

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