

Appendix 1 - GAG Report to RCC

GAG meeting held 6th February 2018

The meeting opened with introductions to Jake Tibbetts, the new City Gardens Manager. Jake outlined his previous experience and said how keen he had been to work in the City. A tree specialist by background, Jake explained his holistic approach to the “green infrastructure” of the City rather than having silos of expertise.

The Barbican gardens team also has a new leader, Paul Baldassari, and Jake said the Barbican team was being expanded, although with the additional responsibility of a couple of extra sites. Jake is keen to increase the plant knowledge and horticultural skills of the gardeners. He has also set up a meeting with Nigel Dunnett to discuss the management of Beech Gardens which needs a different regime to the other green spaces.

Speed Garden’s future was the main topic for the meeting. Comments from residents during the consultation suggested there was not a widespread demand for a radical redesign of the garden. It was agreed that the idea of retaining design consultants to come up with a scheme would be dropped.

However, residents’ comments did support a rethink of the children’s play area with many suggesting more naturalistic play equipment. There was also support for refreshing the planting, while many wished to retain the lawn as a place for relaxing. Some ideas were discussed during the walkabout which focussed on Speed Garden. It was agreed that a sub-group would examine the many comments in more detail, and Jake would begin researching possible play equipment. The aim is to give children a more interesting play space, while retaining areas for other residents to enjoy in peace. This group would meet again next month (March) and report to the next full GAG meeting scheduled for 19th April.

The new inspection teams had not all been able to complete their work because of illness and holidays, although reports were received from 3 of the 5 areas. It was noted that a lot of work was being carried out in the Breton/Ben Jonson area, so the inspection report for that area would be rapidly out of date.

Sadly, the large mimosa tree in Thomas More garden is riddled with fungus and is decaying. It needs to be removed and this work has been scheduled for the week beginning 19th February. At the same time the tree near Seddon House will be pruned as previously agreed. A replacement mimosa is being sought although a suitable tree may take some time to find. Once planted it should be fast growing.

The GAG meeting was relatively poorly attended with some resident members away or unwell. It was agreed to add Wendy Spurry to the membership, and her joining would help to boost attendances. However, with fewer members present the question of the communications strategy was set aside for the moment. The discussion paper will be re-circulated to members with a request for email comments which would lead to an on-line debate.