

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
Open Spaces and City Gardens	16 July 2018
<b>Subject:</b> <b>City Gardens Events Policy - Review</b>	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Open Spaces	<b>For Decision</b>

### **Summary**

This report presents the updated City Gardens Event Policy. The Events Policy was approved by Open Spaces Committee on the 6<sup>th</sup> June 2016 following a trial of a draft policy presented to Committee on the 20<sup>th</sup> April 2015. Some minor amendments have been made as result of feedback from users and to assist with the administration of events. It has also incorporated some minor changes to align it with the Open Spaces departmental events policy that was presented to committee in April 2018.

The fees and charges in appendix 2 have been updated.

Members are asked to agree the final version of the events policy and updated schedule of fees and charges.

### **Recommendations**

Members are asked to:

- Approve the updated version of the City Gardens Events Policy, attached at Appendix 1;
- Agree the updated schedule Fees and Charges as detailed in Appendix two.

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. The City Gardens team regularly organises and facilitates small scale events and activities, the majority of which are walks and talks 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 professional photography requests; these are managed by the City's 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 that help protect and govern the use of the gardens and restrict certain activities.
4. All of the City of London's City Gardens 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'. Few if any of the City Gardens could accommodate such numbers so events tend to be very small scale.
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, this was undertaken on an event-by-event basis, with no formal guidelines in place to assist officers.
6. 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 Events 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. Events have generated an income of £7,057 between May 2017 and April 2018 compared with £2,000 for the same period in 2015/16. Applications have been and continue to be assessed monthly by the City Gardens Event Group (CGEG). The most popular events continue to be group wedding photography and associated celebrations with up to 50 participants.
9. A few larger events such as the NOMAD pop up cinema held on Festival Gardens have been held. This demonstrates a potential for larger events to be staged.
10. 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 residents or businesses
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. 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. As fees and charges have not increased since 2015, it is proposed that the fees and charges for garden hire are increased in line with inflation. The inflation rates applied were the Office for National Statistics annual rate of inflation for May in each year. The compound inflation uplift applied for this period is equal to 5.5%
13. For non-corporate events it is proposed to abolish the application fee that was payable at the point of submission. Feedback indicated that this was putting off some customers who were unsure if their event would be allowed to go ahead or not. There is now one fee that has been increased to include the hire fee and the application fee. Corporate events will still need to pay an application fee, due to the additional and sometimes abortive work this entails for officers.
14. The largest increase is to the fee for additional days, which was previously set at £396. This has now been increased to 50% of the costs of the first day's hire, i.e. £780. This uplift is proposed as the previous fee was felt to be too low when considering that multi-day events restrict the use of the spaces by others and restricts the income that City Gardens can make.
15. Fitness training and similar activities have been removed from the policy as these have proved to be difficult to govern within the current policy as they come in many various forms and need to be managed accordingly. It is the team's intention to develop a separate policy and fees structure to manage those activities.
16. The updated Events Policy, incorporating the changes outlined above, is attached at Appendix 1, along with the updated Schedule of Fees & Charges at Appendix 2

## Corporate & Strategic Implications

17. The provision of a well-designed events programme supports a number of key City of London Corporate Plan objectives as follows:
  - 4. Communities are cohesive and have the facilities they need.
  - 12. Our spaces are secure, resilient and well-maintained.
18. It also supports objectives in the Open Spaces Departmental Business Plan:
  - C. Business practices are responsible and sustainable
    9. Our practices are financially, socially and environmentally sustainable
    10. London's capital and heritage assets are enhanced through our leadership, influence, investment, collaboration and innovation.

## **Implications**

19. Financial implications

The financial implications are contained within the body of the report

20. Legal Implications

The City Gardens Events Policy does require updating to ensure that all relevant information is provided to potential event organisers. Particular conditions may apply in relation to the use of disused burial grounds and sites which are subject to Byelaws or other regulations or conditions to which potential applicants' attention should be drawn.

## **Conclusion**

21. The completion and adoption of a comprehensive revised City Gardens Events 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.
22. To date, interest shown for undertaking events in City Gardens has been gradually growing. It is envisaged that once the City Gardens Events Policy has become more established and with future marketing activities, interest in event activities is expected to increase with a corresponding likely increase in revenue.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix one - City Gardens Events Policy 2018
- Appendix two – City Gardens Events - Fees and Charges 18-19
- Appendix three – Calculation of Fees and Charges

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