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| <b>Committee:</b>                                  | <b>Date:</b> | <b>Item no.</b>        |
| Open Spaces & City Gardens Committee               | 16 July 2018 |                        |
| <b>Subject:</b>                                    |              | <b>Public</b>          |
| Churchyards Enhancement Programme- Progress Report |              |                        |
| <b>Report of:</b>                                  |              | <b>For Information</b> |
| The Director of Open Spaces                        |              |                        |

### Summary

This report summarises the progress to date on the development of the Churchyards Enhancement Programme and the results of the recent public consultation exercise.

A programme board was established to steer the programme's development and to work closely with the Diocese of London and St Paul's Cathedral.

The development of the programme to date has resulted in:

- Detailed site assessments of all City churchyards;
- A prioritisation exercise to identify those churchyards most in need of improvement. This includes 11 proposed transformational projects;
- Development of cross-cutting work streams such as signage, historic interpretation and smart interventions;
- A detailed consultation exercise involving all parishes as well as the wider public.

Other work that is still to be completed includes:

- A delivery plan and funding strategy;
- Detailed project briefs for the 11 transformational projects.

The full programme will be finalised in September and submitted to this committee for approval in October, after which individual projects can be initiated and implemented, subject to funding.

### **Recommendations**

- Members are asked to note the progress to date.
- Approve the prioritisation of 11 churchyards to make progress on detailed project briefs and develop a delivery plan.

## Main Report

### **Background**

1. In the past, the City has carried out repairs and improvements to its Churchyards on a regular basis to maintain them to a good standard. However, the transformational impact of the award-winning St Andrew's Holborn Garden project has shown the wide-ranging benefits that such enhancements can achieve, particularly given the context of the growing City population. Improvement works to St. Andrew's Holborn Gardens delivered step-free access to the main entrance of the Church and the north garden from St. Andrew's Street. Security railings were installed to address the issue of anti-social behaviour and railings have also replaced a dividing wall between the two gardens to create a visual connection between the spaces. Improvements to the north garden include a welcoming space with areas for seating and improved passive surveillance, encouraging users to visit the previously isolated garden. Promotion of biodiversity has been achieved by providing more greenery and planting and removing physical constraints to enhance the garden's accessibility for disabled users.
2. Churchyards form the setting for the City's listed churches and ancient monuments, are the burial places of past City communities and are part of a rich ecclesiastical, architectural and social heritage. There are over 60 churchyards in the City and these vary greatly in size, condition and character. Many are popular green spaces or 'hidden gems' that provide much-needed places for rest and enjoyment. However, others are underutilised, lacklustre and in need of improvement.
3. In the future, the public realm will need to support increasing working, visitor and residential populations because of new development. The City's churchyards are an essential public amenity; enhancing and increasing access to these assets to make them relevant and usable is vital for the benefit of this community and the Future City.
4. The Churchyard Enhancement Programme (CEP) was developed to address the need to increase the amount of accessible open space whilst improving their quality. The development of the Churchyards Enhancements Programme provides an umbrella under which individual projects are coordinated, with the following benefits:
  - Responding to the projected increase in worker, visitor and resident numbers in the City by providing enhanced areas to sit, eat lunch, relax or play;
  - Accommodating 'agile working' (working outside the office) or active uses such as small-scale community or corporate events (in those churchyards where such uses are permissible or compatible with the space);
  - Providing inclusive access (wherever possible) to enable those with mobility issues to access the spaces, and improve connections and signage;
  - Reducing pressure on current maintenance budgets by delivering new spaces that require less maintenance and including funds for future maintenance within project budgets;
  - Bidding for and securing external funding for the enhancement of churchyards;
  - Prioritising the enhancement of those churchyards in most need, or of most strategic importance to the City, recognising that the latter are often the

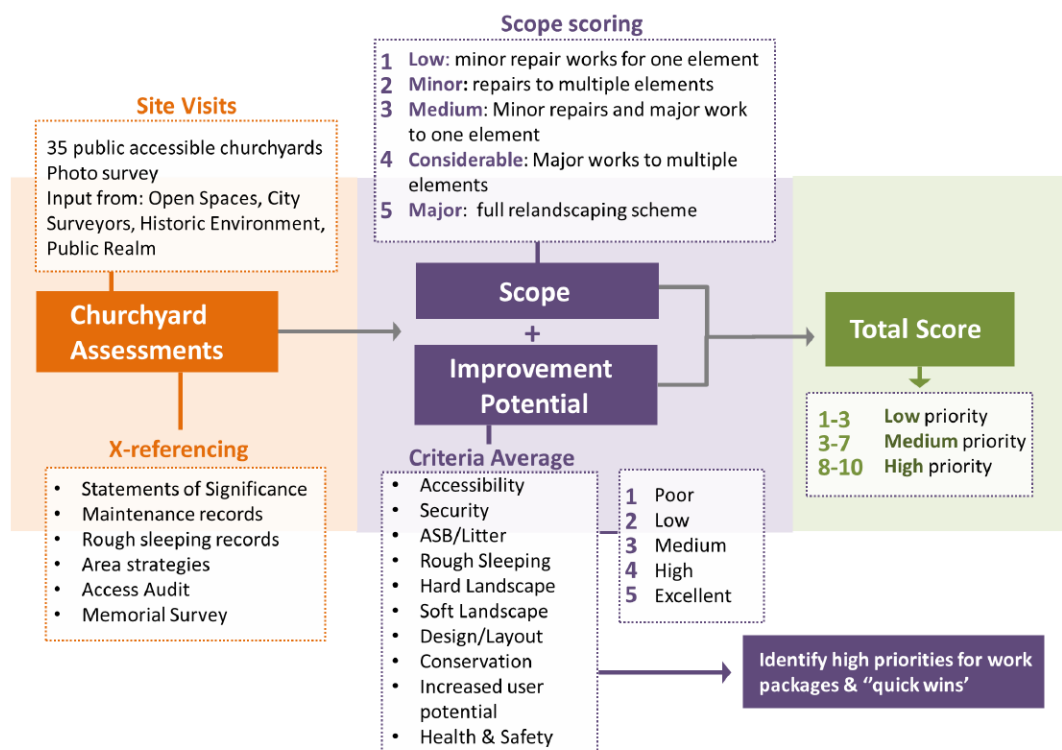
churchyards with restrictions or complex land ownership or other factors that may restrict or influence their use.

A programme board involving City Officers, The Diocese of London and St Paul's Cathedral has been established to guide the development of the work.

## Progress to date

### 1. Prioritisation

- a. An initial prioritisation of churchyards for enhancement was carried out by officers based on site assessments carried out by officers (A sample assessment is attached as Appendix 3) This preliminary prioritisation categorised churchyards into low, medium and high priority based on both the scale of work required and the number of aspects that required improvement. A second layer prioritisation was subsequently carried out to take account of strategic opportunities for improvement. The methodology for prioritisation is summarised as below.



- b. The preliminary list was refined following consultation and meetings with stakeholders. This final list was presented and agreed with the Programme Board. The top 11 priority churchyards are as below:

1. St Helen's Bishopsgate
2. St Anne & St Agnes
3. St Paul's Cathedral

4. St Bartholomew the Great
  5. St Mary Aldermary
  6. St Olave's, Silver Street
  7. St Botolph Bishopsgate
  8. St Brides Fleet Street
  9. Christchurch Greyfriars
  10. St Mary at Hill
  11. St Peter Westcheap
- c. Following public consultation, in addition to the top 11 high priority churchyards several cross-cutting thematic workstreams are proposed to consider individual elements of churchyards across the City e.g. interpretation, wayfinding, seating and soft landscaping. (Appendix 2)

## **2. Public Consultation**

- a. The consultation on the programme was carried out in two stages: A workshop was held with key Diocese, parish and landowner stakeholders in June 2017, followed by a full public consultation exercise, undertaken in October-November 2017.
- b. The first-stage consultation workshop was held with several stakeholders in St Pauls Cathedral, to present the work completed and to gather feedback on priorities, objectives and issues for the City churchyards. Prior to this, initial consultation involved presenting the programme to the Diocese Advisory Committee (DAC) and to the Registrar of St Pauls to gather initial comments and support for the project. Following the workshop, key themes to consider for the City churchyards were established: Character, Care, Community and Connectivity. These were presented to the public for further refinement and feedback.
- c. The public consultation was carried out through several methods to gather feedback from a wide audience, such as:
  - Online surveys;
  - Postcards, which were available in churches and other locations throughout the City;
  - Drop-in sessions in churchyards around the City;
  - A collaboration with Archikids and St Paul's Cathedral, to engage families, professionals and visitors in various activities;
  - Presentation to Open Spaces Committee and the Department of the Built Environment User Group (developers and key built environment professionals in the City).

- d. The consultation was communicated through newsletters, online, Diocese and parish communications, resident publications and other publications such as City AM.
- e. The consultation was carried out by City officers and received a total of 480 responses. The feedback was largely consistent with that of the initial workshop, however greater importance was placed on the need for greenery, wayfinding and high standards of grounds maintenance and conservation. (Consultation report attached at Appendix 1)
- f. Parallel to this, meetings with individual Parishes from the preliminary list of priority churchyards were held to understand site-specific issues and opportunities for improvement. These were documented and agreed with the Parish. These will be used as a basis for progressing briefs for high priority churchyards.
- g. The consultations evidenced that a Churchyards Enhancement Programme is strongly supported by both the public and stakeholders. These spaces are valued for both their character and their amenity value as pockets of green space in the City. In addition to conserving these spaces, there was an overwhelming support for enhancements, to ensure the churchyards continue to provide high-quality green, historic spaces for the City community in the future. The analysis of public consultation responses revealed the following most supported priorities for the Churchyards Enhancement Programme:
  - Preserve the churchyards as tranquil, historic spaces that can be enjoyed by everyone;
  - Enhance the quality of the greenery in churchyards and increase biodiversity;
  - Continue to provide high grounds/ historic features maintenance standards;
  - Improve signage across all churchyards and include further historic information.

### **3. Workstream progress**

- a. A maintenance workstream was initiated to understand the overall yearly costs of churchyards in the City, and how higher costs might be linked to churchyards in poor condition. It is intended that enhancements to churchyards through the programme will eventually lead to lower yearly maintenance costs. This work has been completed, and it was found that although enhancements would reduce maintenance associated with litter and anti-social behaviour, a reduction in maintenance would be largely dependent on the level of planting and materials used.
- b. A workstream looking into the historic layouts and designs of the churchyards was progressed by the Historic Environment team. This research will provide an invaluable point of reference for future enhancements and historic interpretation proposals. It has also provided an evidence base for the site assessments and briefs being developed for priority churchyards.

- c. A workstream on commercial activity is being progressed by the Historic Environment team in collaboration with the Diocese. This workstream includes a review of the churchyards in the City that would be suitable for commercial activity and enforcing any commercial activity without planning permission. A document outlining the agreed approach and list of suitable churchyards for commercial activity is being drafted.

## **Next Steps**

The next steps in finalising the churchyards programme include:

- A delivery plan for churchyard enhancements, for implementation over the next 5-10 years. This will include a priority list of 11 churchyards for larger-scale landscaping improvements, a list of smaller-scale, specific improvements, and recommended cross-cutting workstreams.
- A set of detailed project briefs for the top-priority 11 churchyards.
- Compilation of the work into a full Churchyards Programme Report, which will be submitted to committees for adoption in October 2018.

## **Appendices**

1. Public consultation report
2. Emerging high priority churchyards and workstreams
3. Site assessment sample

## **Background Papers:**

- Initiation report to Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee and Planning and Transportation committee (July 2016)

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