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| <p>King George's Field Charity Board</p> <p>4 October 2016</p> |  TOWER HAMLETS |
| <p>Report of: Will Tuckley, Chief Executive, on behalf of the Communities, Localities and Culture Directorate</p> | <p>Classification: Unrestricted</p> |
| <p>Update on Mile End Park</p> | |

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| Lead Member | Councillor Asma Begum, Cabinet Member for Culture |
| Originating Officer(s) | Steve Murray, Head of Parks and Events |
| Wards affected | Bow West; Mile End |
| Key Decision? | No - No Decision Required |
| Community Plan Theme | A Great Place to Live |

Executive Summary

To provide an update on activities in Mile End Park, management planning for the park and Mile End Friends' Group.

Recommendations:

The King Georges Fields Charity Board is recommended to:-

- 2.1 Note the information update on Mile End Park.

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 N/A – No decisions are being sought; the report gives an update on Mile End Park.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 N/A.

3. DETAILS OF REPORT

- 3.1 Mile End Park is managed by the Council's Parks and Open Spaces Team which sits in Arts Parks and Events, part of Culture Learning and Leisure, within the CLC Directorate.
- 3.2 The grounds maintenance and cleaning of the Park is undertaken by the Clean and Green Team which sits in Public Realm within CLC.
- 3.3 The Park's financial objectives are to at least break even and any income generated within the park is ring fenced for Park use. This includes all rentals and hire fees from pavilions. Any surplus is held in reserve. Whilst for many years the Mile End Park's budget has been subsidised by the Parks and Open Spaces budgets, it is currently operating at zero subsidy.
- 3.4 This report is an update on park management and activities, including commercial and community engagement and work with Mile End Friends' Group.
- 3.5 The commercial units located under the Green Bridge are all now let including a newly created unit from an underused office space. These units generate income of £495,000 pa.
- 3.6 The car park next to the Green Bridge, Lawton Road, was resurfaced and marked out as an official car park last year. The car park is managed by the Council's Parking Service and the income generated contributes to the Mile End Park budgets.
- 3.7 A number of new parking bays were also created last year inside the park at Haverfield Road on the same arrangement as Lawton Road.
- 3.8 From April to August 2016 the income generated by these new bays has averaged £2,212 per month for Lawton and £1,373 for Haverfield Road.
- 3.9 Bookings at both the pavilions continue to improve with a mixed programme of private functions and weddings and events open to the public, such as exhibitions. Turnover in 2015/16 for the pavilions was £89,877 for the Arts and £90,707 for the Eco. Projected income on existing bookings for 2016/17 as at September is Arts £118,561 and Eco £88,658. Bookings for 2017/18 have been made, totalling an expected £34,550.

- 3.10 Whilst income generation from the parks assets is increasingly important the aim is to try to strike a good balance in the pavilions between private hires and hires open to the public. In 2015-16 there were 169 hire days of which 101 were open to the public. These included 5 community events, 10 public events, 10 exhibitions totalling 91 days, 33 days for Queen Mary University exams and 12 days closed for works. There is now an annual exhibition specifically to promote locally based artists.
- 3.11 Last year saw many physical improvements to the park, including a new children's growing zone, new planting to central reservation area, 50,000 spring bulbs planted, 20 new bird boxes and a bug city. There are now 30 habitat piles to support the park's bio diversity. Both ponds have been cleaned and replanted in some areas. Water levels in the main eco pond have dropped due to a probable leak and bore hole pumps have recently failed. These issues are being addressed.
- 3.12 Mile End Park is staffed by rangers who also have duties at Mile End Play Centre and other parks across the borough. The staffing of the pavilions is now undertaken largely by casual staff, allowing rangers more time for park duties. Rangers patrol the park, inspect equipment, organise up to 12 community events per year, organise corporate volunteer groups and monitor grounds maintenance and cleaning.
- 3.13 **Parks Maintenance.** The bulk of grounds maintenance in the park is carried out by the Council's Green team who meet fortnightly with the parks team to monitor works and deal with any issues. The Council's bio diversity officer advises on maintenance aspects such as which areas to leave uncut and encouraging certain plant growth. An annual management plan is produced which also plays a part in the maintenance of Green Flag status. A now firmly-established corporate volunteer programme is in place which both generates income and covers tasks in the park which cannot be covered by the regular maintenance regimes. The Park retains its Green Flag status for 2016.
- 3.14 Maintenance of the shops units and the pavilions falls to Parks along with play equipment and other structures. There have been a string of problems with older equipment and some buildings in the park, leaks to shop units, failing bore hole pumps, leaking ponds and air conditioning at Arts Pavilion. These have been or are being addressed and additional income has enabled maintenance issues to be addressed and managed and general improvements to the park and its infrastructure to be made.
- 3.15 **Mile End Friends' Group.** Mile End Friends' Group have an established relationship with the park. Rangers attend Friends' meetings on request and have regular meetings to discuss parks issues. The group acts as one route for consulting local residents and receive feedback on a variety of issues and concerns. They are able to feedback on parks' management plans and regularly walk the park with rangers. Rangers also support Friends' events in the park.

4. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 4.1 This report provides an update for the King Georges Fields Charity Board (KGFB) on the activities undertaken within Mile End Park. The budgeted expenditure for the current year for maintenance of the Park is expected to be £772,000, this compares with £815,189 in 2015/16. The expenditure is financed by income generated from rental income of £582,000, fees and charges are projected to achieve £207,000 mainly from the hire of both the Arts Pavilion and the Ecology Centre and £43,000 income from parking in the park.
- 4.2 Mile End Park is projecting to achieve total income of £832,000 which will generate a surplus of £60,000. This will be used to support the net costs of the other parks within the KGFB responsibility, Belgrave Open Spaces, Whitehorse Road and Stepney Green. The projected net cost is expected to be around £8,000 for the year. A surplus on operations of £52,000 is anticipated for the year. This will mean that no general fund contribution is required to support the KGFB in 2016/17.
- 4.3 The income contributes to offsetting the rising costs of the Park and to improve the community access subsidy and community access to arts activity whilst reducing the dependence on General Fund resources. Therefore, the extent to which any additional income generated is realised and used as a subsidy will need to be considered alongside the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy process, and the ongoing need for investment in the parks infrastructure.
- 4.4 The KGFB reserve position at the end of the 2015/16 financial year shows a total of £142,399. The balance is available to support the parks' operations and is also earmarked for the upkeep of the park infrastructure.

5. LEGAL COMMENTS

- 5.1 This is a report upon activities which took place in Mile End Park in 2015/16 and April 2016 to date. There are no immediate legal implications arising from the report.

6. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 Mile End Park is an important community asset that is open to all. As the population of the borough increases it, along with other parks, becomes increasingly important as a facility for healthy living and community activity promoting community cohesion.

7. BEST VALUE (BV) IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 We will continue to carry out bench marking against similar facilities in the area to ensure we remain competitive in the hire of our buildings and spaces.

7.2 The maintenance of the Park is carried out by the Council's Green Team which services were subject to best value testing when the service was brought back in house from external contracting.

8. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

8.1 The management of Mile End Park is focussed on providing good quality green spaces in a sustainable way.

8.2 The commercial aspects of the park directly link to supporting the maintenance of this key green space.

8.3 The park plays an important role in promoting biodiversity and educating the public on environmental issues.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Park management acts to create a sustainable income stream to support the maintenance of the park and its infrastructure.

9.2 The Park management operate a comprehensive inspection and repair regime for its facilities.

10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Mile End Park forms part of the borough's facilities that help to engage young people in healthy outdoor and indoor activity.

11. SAFEGUARDING IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no safeguarding implications.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- None

Appendices

- None

Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012

- None

Officer contact details for documents:

Steve Murray, Head of Parks and Events