London Green Spaces Commission: Meeting of 10 December 2019

Chair: Shirley Rodrigues, Deputy Mayor for Environment and Energy
Deputy Chair: Cllr Julian Bell, Chair of London Councils’ Transport and Environment Committee, Leader of Ealing Council
Members: Fiona Brenner, Area Manager, Groundwork London | Prakash Daswani MBE, Cultural activist, Past Chief Executive of Cultural Co-operation [Apologies] | Fiona Dean, Director of Leisure, LB Southwark [Apologies] | Ruth Holmes, Design Principal, Landscape and Public Realm, LLDC | Nigel Hughes MBE Chair of Victoria Business Improvement District | Trina Lynskey, Chair of park user group Deptford Folk & Early Years Education Consultant | Nicola Mathers, Deputy Chief Executive/Head of Leadership, Future of London | Jill McLaughlin, Director, Swans Solutions | Peter Neal, Peter Neal Consulting | Tim Pope, PPL, Associate Director | Keith Townsend, Corporate Director - Environment & Regeneration LB Islington and Adrian Wickham, Head of Business Development, Oracle Solicitors.
Observers: Katharina Winbeck, Head of Transport, London Councils
Officers: Andrew Jones, GLA Environment Team; Ruth Knight, GLA Environment Team.

Background: Under Policy 5.3.1 of the London Environment Strategy, the Mayor committed to ‘address underinvestment, and improve the management of London’s green infrastructure, by developing new business models and improving awareness of the benefits of London’s green infrastructure’. This included establishing a London Green Spaces Commission to develop new models for the delivery and management of London’s green infrastructure. The aim of the Commission is to support London boroughs to transform the way they manage and fund their services so that they can maintain or increase investment in parks and green spaces, in the context of substantial and ongoing constraints imposed on public sector funding.

Meeting of 10 December 2019:

Officer update and report back on research and borough workshops: Commissioners received an update on the conclusion of evidence taking, an update on the work programmes and research progress. They heard about the progress of the skills research, including a survey sent to all London boroughs and interviews undertaken with organisations and contractors to gain a greater understanding of their workforces. The work was providing effective analysis and Commissioners would be updated on progress.

Work stream report back and run through of the recommendations proposed: Commissioners considered the key recommendations being proposed around catalysing action and funding.

There was a consensus that there was a need to create a new approach focused on promoting a strategic vision for green spaces in London. It was agreed that a new decade was a good time to change the narrative in the sector to reframe park services to respond to 21st century pressures, in particular the climate and ecological emergency and public health issues. Commissioners agreed that this new approach should provide a strong message that everyone could buy in to and understand.

Regarding a mechanism to attract public, private and social investment, the Commissioners also noted that the draft Social Finance research suggested that foundation funding and levies were worth further exploration. Following discussion, it was agreed that the potential of green bonds also needed further exploration.

Discussion of report structure: Commissioners discussed the proposed outline, structure and launch of the London Green Spaces Commission’s report, which is planned for publication in the new year. Commissioners agreed that a short and forward-looking report would be preferable as there is already a substantial amount of information available in the sector. Commissioners considered the date and location of the report launch. The final draft report would be considered at a meeting to be arranged for January 2020.

Cleared by: Shirley Rodrigues, Deputy Mayor for Environment and Energy, GLA
Secretariat Officer: Alice Delaney, Board Officer | Felicity Harris, Board Officer, GLA Secretariat