London Green Spaces Commission: Meeting of 1 April 2019

Chair: Shirley Rodrigues, Deputy Mayor for Environment and Energy, GLA
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 | Fiona Dean, Director of Leisure, LB Southwark | Ruth Holmes, Design Principal, Landscape and Public Realm, LLDC | Nigel Hughes MBE Chair, Victoria Business Improvement District; Estate Surveyor, Grosvenor | Trina Lynskey, Chair of park user group Deptford Folk & Early Years Education Consultant | Nicola Mathers, Deputy Chair Executive/Head of Leadership, Future of London | Jill McLaughlin, Director, Swans Solutions | Peter Neal, Peter Neal Consulting | Tim Pope, PPL, Associate Director. Previously senior manager at PwC | Keith Townsend, Former Executive Director, Environment, LB Ealing and Adrian Wickham Managing Director - South, Glendale.
Observers: Leah Davis, Senior Adviser to Deputy Mayor, GLA | Tony Leach, Chief Executive, Parks for London | Dr Meredith Whitten, Researcher and Katharina Winbeck, Head of Transports, London Councils.
Officers: Andrew Jones, GLA Environment Team, Ruth Knight, GLA Environment Team | Peter Massini, GLA Environment Team.

Background

Under Policy 5.3.1 of the London Environment Strategy, the Mayor committed to: address under investment, 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.

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Terms of Reference: The Chair and Deputy Chair suggested several minor amendments to the proposed Terms of Reference for the Commission. Members agreed that the Commission should report back to the London Councils Transport and Environment Committee (TEC) where necessary; that the Terms of Reference acknowledged that work carried out by past groupings, such as the Green Infrastructure Taskforce, should not be replicated; and that a representative of the London Environment Directors’ Network (LED Net) would be invited to attend future Commission meetings as an observer.

State of Park Services Review: The Commission was presented with the State of Park Services Review. This report was commissioned from Parks for London by the GLA to inform the work of the Commission by providing a snapshot of funding, managing and governing arrangements for London borough parks and green spaces. Tony Leach and Dr Meredith Whitten, co-authors of the review summarised key findings from their research and answered any questions that the Commissioners had.

London Accelerator Pilot Proposal: Members heard that the boroughs of Camden and Islington (with support from the GLA) had submitted a proposal to the Parks Accelerator Fund. This fund had been established by Heritage Lottery Fund and National Trust, with support from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to pilot parks service transformation projects. Eight projects will be supported across the UK, to test solutions to secure and enhance the future of public parks for long term public benefit. The pilot projects will last two years and will be supported by the £10 million made available. A public announcement on the successful pilot projects is expected in the next few months.

Discussion Paper: The Commission was presented with a Discussion Paper to help frame the Commission’s future work. The Chair explained that the Commission can call in written and oral evidence to meetings, propose new research and undertake targeted Commissioner-led investigations. Commissioners suggested a broad range of areas of research and investigation for the Commission to examine and proposed numerous organisations that could assist with the work.

The Mayor joined commissioners after the meeting to thank them for their work and commitment and outline how the Commission supports making London a National Park City.

Cleared by: Shirley Rodrigues, Deputy Mayor for Environment and Energy, GLA
Secretariat Officer: Laura Marshall, Board Officer