

LOWER CENTRAL GARDENS TRUST BOARD

MONDAY, 20TH MAY, 2024

Present:

**Cllr M Gillett, Cllr A Hadley, Cllr J Martin,
Cllr B Nanovo, Cllr L Williams and R Boon**

44 Election of Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Gillett be elected as Chairman of the Board for the 2024-25 municipal year.

45 Election of Vice-Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Martin be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Board for the 2024-25 municipal year.

46 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence received.

47 Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

48 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 March were confirmed as accurate records and signed by the Chair subject to the following amendment on the Minutes of 20 March at Minute 39 – Christmas event proposals for 2024 and 2025 – 2032, a further bullet point be added to the Board discussion as follows:

- In response to a query raised regarding whether the revenue from the ice rink goes into the Lower Central Gardens Trust account, the Board was advised that the only income from the Christmas event into the Lower Central Gardens Trust was the reimbursement of the electricity.

49 Lower Central Gardens Trust Board May Report

The Director of Environment presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'A' to these Minutes in the Minute Book. The report provided service update information to the Lower Gardens Trust Board to demonstrate the Council's commitment to maintain the public gardens known as "The Lower Central Gardens" in Bournemouth for the recreation and enjoyment of the public in accordance with the terms of the Charity Scheme made by the Charity Commission on the 13 May 2011.

Items that were covered as requested by the Board:

- Proposed Scheme of Officer Delegations
- Events programme updates & new proposal
- Concessions cashless payment accessibility
- Planting

- Operational service updates

49 Proposed Scheme of Officer Delegations

The Board was advised that further to the Draft Scheme of Officer Delegations shared with the Board in March 2024, that the LCGT board was asked to feedback and advise on any further amends with the aim of reaching formal authorisation of the delegation of operational activities as laid out in Appendix 1 to the relevant directorates within the Council to support the timely operational delivery of functions and services that reflects the way of working since the Charity was established.

The Board considered the proposal and made the following comments:

- The Board raised concerns that some important issues may not come to the Board's attention due to the Proposed Scheme of Officer Delegations and proposed for it to come back to the Board for consideration annually.
- In response to concerns raised regarding the Board potentially missing important issues such as a large event due to the officer delegations, the Board was advised that the delegation would only involve operational decisions. It was clarified that any fundamental decisions would always come back to the Board, and the proposed officer delegation would only include operational decisions listed in the proposal.
- The Board was advised that any proposed event would come back to the Board for consideration as laid out in the Scheme of Officer Delegations. There would be no change to what had been done historically, the proposal was raised to formalise the Scheme of Officer Delegations.

RESOLVED that the Trustees approve the Officer Scheme of Delegations for operational activities for one year and for the Board to reconsider annually. Any policy changes or new activities are to be referred to the trust board for discussion.

Voting: Unanimous

50 Concessions cashless payment accessibility

The Board was advised that the BCP Council concessions within the Lower Gardens (1 catering kiosk and 1 mini-golf course) are operated by its Seafront Service, using cashless payment systems, and that over recent years BCP had seen a significant reduction in the number of people wanting to pay with cash and like many operators, 4 years ago the Council adopted a card only payment system at Seafront outlets.

Further to this the Board were informed that most of customers prefer to pay by card or phone, which has proven to be more efficient, with contactless payments enabling faster transactions and reducing queues. The Board was advised that this also means we do not incur the costs or security risks of storing and handling cash, enabling us to operate a more efficient service for residents and visitors. To help inform visitors, our websites advise that we only accept card payments and signage is displayed at each of our outlets and payment stations.

The Board was advised that following a successful motion to Council asking for a review of cash-only payments across Council services, we will be working with colleagues in finance to understand accessibility implications for those without regular access to banking services.

The Board considered the report and made the following comments:

- In response to a query raised regarding whether information is recorded of when customers ask to pay by cash the Board was advised that there are some occasions where they are asked if they take cash, but those occasions had not been formally recorded.
- The Board suggested it may be beneficial to take a survey of occasions where residents had asked to pay with cash to collect some data on when this occurs.

- In response to concerns raised regarding residents who are not comfortable or able to use cashless payment the Board was advised that the concerns and recommendations made by the Board would be taken back and highlighted as a part of the review.
- The Board discussed the challenges of offering cash transactions at the kiosks and the safety concerns associated with handling cash. While some individuals do not have access to cashless payment, and some prefer using cash, accepting cash transactions comes with costs that must be considered by the council in the future.
- The Board discussion centred on the inclusion of allowances for cash transactions in the budget of the gardens. The issue was brought to the Board's attention due to concerns regarding residents who may not have access to cashless payment methods. The Board emphasised the importance of making the gardens as accessible as possible for all groups within the conurbation. It was also noted that cashless transactions may have a significant impact on vulnerable groups, and these concerns should be carefully considered.

RESOLVED that the Board accepted the report with the understanding that officers would look into cashless payment accessibility specifically for vulnerable groups.

Voting: Unanimous

51 LCG 2024 Activities and Events

The Board were informed that the report showed the annual events programme, including those already approved by the board and the continuation of other annual activities. The Board was made aware of the upcoming events and asked to note the programme.

RESOLVED that the note the annual events programme, including those already approved by the board and the continuation of other annual activities.

Voting: Unanimous

52 Trial Event Proposal Summer Skate

The Board were advised that a proposal to BCP Council had been submitted for a summer roller rink with bar, big screen and catering for six weeks during July and August in the Lower Gardens, and that the proposed dates for this are Friday 19th July – Monday 26th August 2024.

In relation to this the Board were informed that Summer SKATE aimed to be an inclusive event, which supports Dorset Mind, and that it activates health, which matches the Bournemouth Gardens heritage, and that not only SKATE but a supporting calendar of events included yoga mornings, a big screen to show a family movie nights, free to attend SKATE sessions for local schools and hospice charities and plus events such as 80's nights, Motown/soul nights, and even SKATE with film nights.

Further to this the Board were advised that the proposed event aligned with the ambitions of Bournemouth Town Centre Partnership Group, a multi-agency initiative aimed to deliver action for the town centre, made up of key partners including BCP Council, community groups and organisations.

The Board considered the proposal and made the following comments:

- In response to a query raised regarding the damage to the grass in the garden the Board was advised that the operator had submitted a protection plan for the grass and had offered an alternative location for the event, different to the location of the ice rink, to allow the ground an opportunity to recover.
- The Board discussed the possibility of creating a dedicated event space in the Lower Central Gardens that would be suitable for hosting both summer and winter events. There were concerns about the ongoing issues with the grass in the gardens, and it was suggested that covering the grass could help alleviate this problem.
- The Board emphasised that the Lower Central Gardens hold historical significance and have long been an integral part of the Bournemouth town centre. The residents of the

town centre cherish the gardens and value the opportunity to sit on the grass. Preserving the gardens for public enjoyment was deemed a priority, and there was a consensus that preserving the space as a commercial asset should not take precedence.

- In response to a query raised regarding the benefit of having a commercial skate event during the summer the Board was advised the applicant had submitted an events proposal, but the estimation of a possible council fee and revenue generation from the event was yet to be determined. The event was seen as a supportive element for the town centre action plan, contributing to the overall activity and regeneration in the town centre. Additionally, it was noted that the event could potentially bring more business to other establishments in the town centre by increasing foot traffic.
- The Board suggested alternative locations for the events to take place within the town centre including Horseshoe Common or the seafront. The Board recognised the residents of Bournemouth town centre who do not have access to any green spaces and use the gardens for their enjoyment would lose an aspect of that green space.
- The Board was advised that the proposal is for a one-year trial and is not a long-term commitment at this stage. The event could provide a good learning opportunity when it comes to summer events in the gardens.
- The Board was informed that the event organiser is aware of the grass issue, which is why they have suggested an alternative location. The grass where the ice rink was would have only just recovered from the winter event. Additionally, they plan to use a canopy that allows light through to provide better protection for the grass.
- The Board was advised that the event could still operate in the rain as there is cover for users under the canopy if it were to rain.
- In response to a query raised regarding established businesses in the town centre and their potential benefit from the event held in the gardens. The Board was advised that as this was a trial event, data regarding the impact on local businesses would only be available after the event had taken place. Although local businesses have expressed their support for the Christmas event in the town centre, as it attracts more visitors to the area. It was hoped that this event would have a similar positive impact.
- The Board discussed the similarities of this event to the events tent that had been organised in previous summers and put up in the gardens.
- In response to a query raised regarding the free events the organiser would hold the Board was advised that the majority of the events would be ticketed to manage capacity issues. However, the organiser would be offering free elements to certain groups and was working with local schools and hospice charities. It was confirmed to the Board that the events would not offer free activities for all.

RESOLVED that the Trustees support the proposed Summer Skate trial event at the second proposed location.

Voting: For – 4 Against – 2

53

Gardens Planting

The Board were advised that BCP Council had moved to perennial planting across its managed parks and open spaces following a decision made by Council in February 2023 to remove funding for annual bedding and alternatively invest in a perennial planting approach to support alignment with the Council's Climate and Ecological declaration across council-maintained flower beds in all our destination parks and spaces including LCG.

In relation to this the Board were informed that no formal legacy Council or BCP Council policy for planting is known to have existed with planting having historically been designed and delivered as part of operational decisions within approved Council budget with styles and themes changing over years in line with The Bournemouth Borough Act 1985 Section 26 (3) stating The Council may purchase or acquire botanical specimens and exhibits.

The Board were further informed that in December 2023 a decision was taken to permanently cease the operation of a plant nursery at King's Park Drive (King's Park Nursery) which prior to the decision to move to perennials in February 2023 was the subsidised provider of LCG

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bedding plants, and instead seek alternative community uses for the site in line with the Bournemouth Borough Council Act 1985.

The Board was advised that perennial planting had been introduced in LCG alongside other parks in Spring 2023 with planting continuing to establish itself.

The Board considered the proposal and made the following comments:

- In response to a query raised regarding the additional bulbs that were planted the Board was advised that there is not an exact number that reflects the bulb split but they are part of a mix.
- The Board praised the planting as shown in the report.
- The Board requested a visit be organised for the Trustees to visit the Lower Central Gardens in the summer to view the planting.
- The Board was advised that the planting would be continually monitored to ensure it continued to flourish.

RESOLVED that the Trustees reviewed the established perennial planting and noted BCP Council budgetary, resource and facility changes.

Voting: Unanimous

50 Next Steps - Future Meeting Dates and Work

The Board received an update on the increasing antisocial behaviours in the public toilets at the Lower Central Gardens, and in were advised that this issue was being addressed in collaboration with Dorset Police, community safety teams, and public convenience contractors. In relation to this the Board were informed that alternatives to radar keys were currently being explored to ensure that genuine users could still access the toilet facilities.

The Board also received an update on the ongoing efforts to remove graffiti in the Lower Central Gardens.

The Board was informed about the upcoming expiration of the litter compactor bin contract and the Council's plan to introduce a new litter bin policy that would standardise the use of litter bins across the conurbation, with the intention being to phase out the small number of compactor bins in the gardens and continue using the 1100L bins while the Council-wide litter bin policy is being developed and reviewed throughout the summer. Further to this the Board was advised about the ongoing collaboration with the planning department to explore potential ideas for making the bins more visually appealing, such as considering housing them in wooden units.

The Board discussed and suggested items that they wished to be included on future meeting agendas.

It was agreed that the following items would be brought to the next meeting in December:

- The Art and Makers market update
- Tourist tax update

Duration of the meeting: 10.00 - 11.16 am

Chairman at the meeting on
Monday, 20 May 2024