

Item No.	Classification: Open	Date: 25 October 2010	Decision Taker: Cabinet Member for Transport, Environment & Recycling
Report title:		Environment and Ecology Commissioning Programme 2011/12	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Strategic Director of Environment and Housing	

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Cabinet Member for Environment approves the Environment and Ecology Commissioning Plan for 2011/12 attached as Appendix1.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The corporate and departmental arrangements for managing the Council's funding of voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations require annual Commissioning Plans to be produced for each separate programme of activity resourced by departments. These plans set out the business case for seeking voluntary sector providers, expected links between the Southwark Alliance Sustainable Community Strategy 2016, the council's priorities and policies, and the outcomes that are to be delivered by the voluntary organisations which receive grant-aid. The plans also make reference, where appropriate, to the contracting arrangements for the delivery of services, in line with the Council's Contract Standing Orders.
3. Approval of the Commissioning Plan for Environment and Ecology Grants is a matter reserved for decision by the Cabinet Member for Transport, Environment and Recycling.
4. Responsibility of the council's relationship with the voluntary sector, the council's conditions of grant aid and the overall processes for commissioning services from the voluntary and community sector (VCS) is the responsibility of the Cabinet Member for Equalities and Community Engagement.
5. The process for commissioning grant aided voluntary sector service providers for 2011/12 involves 3 key stages:
 - Development and agreement of the commissioning plan
 - Advertising and assessment of applications
 - Report and final decisions

6. A draft indicative timetable for this process is as follows:

Action	Date for Completion
Commissioning plan drafted and signed off by the Cabinet Portfolio Member	November 2010
Advertisement of environment and ecology programme and any other departmental funding	November 2010
Closing date for receipt of completed applications	Mid December 2010
Assessment of applications and draft report to departmental management team	Jan 2010
Report to Individual Member Decision maker	Feb 2010
Notification to groups of IDM decision	Feb 2010

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Environment and Ecology Programme

7. All funding to the voluntary sector is allocated according to the three priorities stated in the Environment and Ecology Commissioning Plan that is attached as Appendix 1, namely:
- A Greener Borough,
 - Increased Usage and Community Management of Parks and Open Spaces
 - Green and Sustainability Learning.
8. The commissioning plan is linked to National and Regional Policy, London wide policies including the Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy and Sustainable Development Framework, and the 2016 Community Strategy. It is also linked to the Council/VCS framework report, with particular reference to the needs identified through community councils.
9. There is a need to ensure that there is an effective and consistent monitoring and evaluation system in process linked to identified standards and outcomes. This is achieved through regular grants monitoring and agreement of outcomes, which will be monitored on award of funding.
10. The programme for 2011/12 is to be openly advertised in November 2010.
11. The full commissioning plan is set out in appendix 1.

Strategic Review of the Council's Relationship with the Voluntary Sector

12. From April 2006 to April 2007 the council undertook a strategic review of its relationship with the voluntary and community sector. The findings and recommendations of the review were set out in the Council/Voluntary Sector Framework, which was agreed by the Executive on 24 April 2007. This document sets out the policy and principles governing the council's arrangements for partnership with, support to and resourcing of Southwark's voluntary and community sector (VCS).

13. In relation to commissioning and funding the VCS, the Framework sets out that the council will operate a mixed economy of grant aid and contracts and will where possible operate on a three-year cycle. Specialist functions such as waterways maintenance will be commissioned via a separate gateway process.
14. For 2011/12 within the Environment and Ecology Programme some VCS organisations will be commissioned through grant aid. It is the intention to commission the management of specialist ecological or open space sites on the basis of a formal contractual arrangement (in particular, where voluntary sector organisations have a lease which regulates their occupation of the site). In such cases, the requirements of the Council's Contract Standing Orders will not apply.
15. In 2010 it was intended to assess the viability of operating a commissioning cycle on a three year basis for the Environment and Ecology grant programme with effect from 2011/2012, in line with the Council/Voluntary Sector Framework which was agreed by the Executive on 24 April 2007. This will now be deferred pending the outcome of the comprehensive spending review and further anticipated budget reductions.

Community Impact Statement

16. As part of the application process VCS organisations must demonstrate who will benefit from their organisation's activities and how they will ensure that no particular community is excluded from their services. Within their annual reports organisations must evidence the benefits users gain from their services or activities.
17. The purpose of this element of the Environment and Ecology Grant Programme is to ensure that communities that may face exclusion and discrimination because of race and ethnicity, gender, age, sexuality, disability or faith, have access to environmental and ecological education and resources. The Council recognises the importance of having specific organisations that support and enable specific communities to access mainstream services and to integrate. We are not aware of any adverse impact which the recommended programme would have upon the community, or any groups within that community.
18. All organisations previously in the programme were awarded one-off project grants only so were not planning on the basis of longer term funding.

Resource implications

19. In 2010/11 the year budget for grant awards for the Environment & Ecology programme was £311,536. The Council will determine the level of resources for the Environment & Ecology programme within the context of tight financial constraints of the 2011-14 local government settlement and through the council's budget setting process, taking into account the specific priorities for this area of service and according to the 2011 principles agreed by the Cabinet in September 2010.
20. Programme managers will ensure that the total grant allocated to the voluntary sector remains within the, as yet undecided, budget allocation for 2011/12. This applies to both the grant and the rental elements of the approved budget.

21. In 2010/11 the council committed to providing 3 months notice of funding decisions from April to June. This will be considered through the council's annual policy and resources process for 2010/12.

Consultation

22. Copies of the final report and commissioning plans will be made available to other council departments and to Community Action Southwark (CAS), the borough Council for the Voluntary Sector (CVS). There will be consultation with providers to assess their capacity for sustainability.

Supplementary Advice from Other Officers

Head of Resources, Environment & Housing (Env/ET/151010)

23. The costs of implementing the proposed strategy need to be contained within the budget envelope remaining after any budget adjustments for savings are implemented for 2010/11 and beyond. This may require reconfiguring the strategy to fit the resources available to deliver it. In the event the resources are deemed less than the minimum level required to effectively deliver the strategy, then a further review will be necessary.
24. The budget setting process aligns closely with the allocation timetable set out at paragraphs 6 and 11.

Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance (SB/151010)

25. The Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance ("SDCLG") notes the content of this report, and confirms that approval of the Commissioning Plan is one of a number of matters expressly reserved to the Cabinet Member under Part 3D of the Council's Constitution. The Council has powers to give grants pursuant to section 48 of the Local Government Act 1985 and to take steps to improve the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of its area and its local residents under section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000, particularly where the objects link into the Council's Community Strategy. The priorities and criteria detailed within the Commissioning Programme in Appendix 1 are consistent with national, local and corporate policy. The SDCLG will advise officers in connection with the structure of the contractual arrangements which are to regulate some particular services to be provided by voluntary sector organisations, once funding allocations have been decided.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Council - Voluntary and Community Sector Framework Document – April 2007	160 Tooley Street 2 nd Floor London SE1 2TZ	Bonnie Royal 020 7525 7389
Grants files	160 Tooley Street 3 rd Floor London SE1 2TZ	Christine Wildhaber 020 7525 0868

APPENDICES

Appendix	Title
1	The Environment & Ecology Commissioning Programme 2011/12

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Gill Davies, Strategic Director Environment & Housing	
Report Author	Des Waters, Head of Public Realm	
Version	Final	
Dated	1 September 2010	
Key Decision?	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Finance Director	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Officer		25 October 2010

Environment and Ecology Commissioning Programme

Appendix 1

Programme for the commissioning of community environment & ecology services from the voluntary sector

1. The Environment & Ecology Programme 2010-11

The council wishes to commission services that contribute overall objectives of the Environment & Ecology programme. These are to:

- Improve the lives of people in Southwark through opportunities to experience parks, open spaces and the natural environment whether for leisure or for learning.
- Provide services that deliver environmental education and life-long learning, social inclusion and community cohesion outcomes.
- Develop the environment sector for the benefit of the people of Southwark, recognising the importance of the natural environment in regeneration and neighbourhood renewal, and improving the life chances of young people in the borough.

These objectives fall within the Council's overall objectives and priorities in the Community Strategy – Southwark 2016, agreed by the Executive on 11 September 2006.

National & Regional policy that influences the Council's programme

Any organisations considering applying to the Environment & Ecology Programme are advised to keep in mind the broad context within which Southwark Council operates.

2. Duty to promote the well-being of communities

Councils have a duty to promote the economic, social and environmental well being of their areas and to work in partnership with others in order to achieve this. At the highest level, the Council is a partner in the Southwark Alliance - the local strategic partnership, and supports the development and implementation of the community strategy (Southwark 2016).

3. Key national policies or strategies include:

The last twenty years have seen a massive growth in the number and extent of environmental legislation and policy. This includes:

- The Local Government Act
- UK National Sustainable Development Strategy
- Local Government White Paper (2007)
- The Government's wider Cleaner Safer Greener and Sustainable Communities agendas
- Living Places: Caring for Quality (Jan 2004)
- The UK Climate Change Programme

See: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/>

4. London-wide policies:

The Mayor has produced eight environmental strategies, which set out his priorities and proposals for London. These are:

- Air Quality Strategy
- Ambient Noise Strategy
- Biodiversity Strategy
- Climate Change Strategy
- Energy Strategy
- Municipal Waste Strategy
- Business Waste Management Strategy
- Water Strategy

The Mayor has produced a number of environmental frameworks:

- Animal Welfare Framework
- Trees and Woodlands Framework

There are also a number of other London wide strategies that impact on the environment and ecology including:

- Sustainable Development Framework for London
- The London
- Central London Sub-regional Development Framework

See: <http://www.london.gov.uk/londonissues/>

Council Policy

5. The 2009-11 Corporate Plan sets out the Council's key priorities and describes what will be done to ensure progress is made. It is grouped under six priority themes and takes Southwark 2016 as a starting point. The six priority themes are:

- Places where people love to live
- Everyone achieving their potential
- Promoting healthy and independent living
- Valuing the environment
- Tackling the crimes that concern people the most
- Transforming public services

Organisations will demonstrate how their proposals support the Community Strategy and the Corporate Plan. See:

<http://www.southwark.gov.uk/YourCouncil/CorporatePlan/>

6. Southwark Alliance and the Community Strategy

Southwark Alliance is our Local Strategic Partnership, which includes key agencies and individuals responsible for improving the borough. This includes the Council, Police, Primary Care Trust, JobCentrePlus, Southwark College, South Bank University, Chamber of Commerce, several other key agencies and fora, and eight local residents (one for each Community Council area). Southwark Alliance "exists to make Southwark a better place to live, learn, work and have fun in." Its key responsibility is to agree the Community Strategy (Southwark 2016) – the overall vision for the future of the borough; agree goals, targets and key decisions required; to

problem solve “big issues”; and to negotiate with and influence Government departments and other agencies.

The objectives and priorities of the Sustainable Community Strategy – Southwark 16 can be summarised as follows:

Objective	Priorities
Improving life chances	For Southwark people to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve economic well-being • Achieve educational potential • Enjoy cultural and leisure opportunities • Be healthy • Stay Safe • Value diversity and be active citizens
Making the borough a better place for people	A place that has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Localities of mixed communities • The sustainable use of resources • A vibrant and mixed economy • More and better homes • A liveable public realm
Delivering Quality Public Services	Our outcomes for services are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible and integrated localities • Customer focused • Efficient and modern

Organisations should demonstrate how their proposal can help the Community Strategy to succeed.

See: <http://www.southwarkalliance.org.uk/>

The Environment & Ecology Programme Priorities

Working at a neighbourhood level is prioritised nationally, locally and departmentally. Applications from projects working at the neighbourhood level are encouraged. All proposals should demonstrate how they will address one or more of the programme’s priorities.

7. A Greener Borough

One of the Council’s major priorities is to deliver a cleaner, greener and safer Southwark. The voluntary sector is a key partner in the delivery of this priority and the environment and ecology programme contributes particularly to the greener element. The Council will fund projects that involve local communities in:

- Promoting sustainable practices
- Improving the borough’s biodiversity
- Providing specialist services to Local Nature Reserves and nature parks.
- Encouraging wildlife gardening and the reduction of pesticide use.
- Interpreting the local heritage and environment and understanding human impacts.

Organisations should take note of the borough’s Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and consider initiatives that will help meet the BAP’s objectives.

8. Increased Usage and Community Management of Parks and Open Spaces

The Council aims to increase the involvement of the community in parks and open spaces. In particular, the Parks Best Value Review, the Parks Business Plan and the Corporate Equalities Action Plan include the target to increase the use of parks and open spaces by disadvantaged groups. Southwark's Vision for Equalities (October 2004) seeks to promote equality and diversity by:

- Building values of mutual respect where individuals have a sense of belonging and where individuals are encouraged to participate and gain full access to services to which they are entitled
- Recognising that some individuals and certain communities are particularly disadvantaged and will require extra recognition and support to deal with their disadvantages

The Council's Corporate Equalities Action Plan identifies the following communities of interest in Southwark: ethnicity/cultural background; Faith; Refugees/asylum seekers; Travellers; Disability; Women; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT); and Age – both young people and older people

The Council will support initiatives that seek to:

- Increase the involvement of all sections of the community in parks and open spaces.
- Develop 'Friends of' groups.
- Raise the community's capacity for involvement in the management of local parks and open spaces.
- Build the capacity of voluntary sector organisations to undertake whole-site management.
- Provide training opportunities or programmes for volunteers that will increase the capacity of local people to undertake maintenance and management of parks or ecological sites.

Funding will be directed to areas of greatest need.

9. Green & Sustainability Learning

We aim to improve the teaching of environmental and sustainability issues in Southwark's schools and to promote life-long learning for all of Southwark's communities. The Council aims to support projects that:

- Provide curriculum support at the appropriate levels – pre-school, primary, secondary, special needs and post-16.
- Provide opportunities for children and young people to interact with the environment in a structured manner.
- Provide life-long learning opportunities for all in relevant subjects.

Outcomes

In line with the three priorities noted above, organisation's proposals will be expected to demonstrate which of the following outcomes will be achieved; proposals will need to demonstrate how these will be measured.

10. A Greener Borough

- i) An increase in the amount of publicly owned and/or community managed green space.
- ii) An increase in the use of sustainable practices within parks and open spaces within Southwark.
- iii) An increase in local biodiversity.
- iv) An increase in the number of individuals gardening sustainably and for wildlife.

11. Community Management of Parks and Increasing Usage

- i) Increased involvement of minority communities in parks and open spaces
- ii) An increase in the numbers involved in 'Friends of' groups.
- iii) An increase in community involvement in the management of parks and open spaces.
- iv) An increase in local community organisations' capacity to undertake whole-site management of parks and open spaces.
- v) Increased use of parks and open spaces especially by priority groups.
- vi) Increased opportunities for volunteers and local people to obtain training and gain new skills to manage parks and open spaces.

12. Green & Sustainability Learning

- i) An increase in the number of children and young people taking part in environmental & sustainable development education initiatives.
- ii) Improved environmental & sustainable development learning, evidenced by the gain of specific skills and accreditation.
- iii) An increase in the opportunities for structured interaction with the natural environment.
- iv) An increase in life-long learning opportunities.

13. Funding Agreements

The council voluntary sector framework sets out that there should be a mixed economy of grants and contracts for funding the VCS. The Council has developed appropriate conditions of contract to regulate services provided by voluntary sector organisations.

Awarding of grants

14. Available Resources

The council's budget for the 2010.2011 Environment and Ecology programme was £311,536. The budget for 2011/12 is unknown at present and subject to the annual budget setting process.

15. Principles for the 2011 Budget Process

The principles for the 2011 Budget process as agreed by Cabinet in September will be applied when considering priorities for the Environment and Ecology grants including should it be necessary to make any cuts or reductions in service provision. This includes the application of an equalities impact assessment, exploring alternative provision, and ensuring the council is transparent and provides value for money.

16. Value for Money

Organisations will be expected to demonstrate how any core funding through the Ecology and Environment programme adds value to and supports leverage from other funding programmes (within the council and externally). Evidence of fundraising efforts must be demonstrated.

17. Managing the relationship with the voluntary sector.

In February 2010 high level principles and proposals for future ways of working were developed by Communities Law and Governance Department, which all senior management teams and chief officers have been asked to sign up to. This is not a change of policy but builds on the existing framework. These principles, to cascade them through departments and ensure adherence by commissioners. These principles are listed below as follows:

- The Council recognises the importance of the relationship with the VCS and of the Southwark Compact which provides a code of conduct for the Council and the VCS.
- The Council wishes to coordinate commissioning of VCS organisations more effectively in order to provide better value for money and better performance.
- There needs to be clarity about the difference between grants and contracts and which most appropriately apply
- CLG is responsible for information on all grants to the VCS while Departments are responsible for their own contract arrangements.
- Departments are to support CLG in maintaining the database by providing information on all grants (including Working Neighbourhoods Funding and other Area Based Grant), and contracts with VCS organisations as required. CLG will manage coordinated information for the benefit of all departments and to provide a strategic overview for the council.
- There should be transparent criteria for the evaluation of all grants and contracts and fairness of distribution across functions and geographically.
- There should be consistency of both standards and processes in managing performance across the Council.
- No grants should be made that do not comply with corporate standards and timescales and without advice from CLG.
- The VCS/Council quarterly liaison meetings should be supported by officers at an appropriate senior level from each department

Departments also requested to nominate a Head of service with responsibility for commissioning to attend the quarterly council/VCS liaison meetings and to make a commitment to and ensure that departments respond to requests for information e.g. financial, monitoring in a timely fashion

18. Premises

In the community support programme, a number of organisations receive grants, which incorporate a rent element where the council is the landlord. This rent element is withheld at source and is payable to property division. Organisations will be required to adhere to the council's premises and asset management strategies to ensure that buildings are compliant and fit-for-purpose. **Any support provided by the council in relation to premises must be based on fairness and transparency and organisations in receipt of council funding, in occupation of council premises, must have a lease agreement in place.** The premises policy and asset management

strategy and resulting actions are now the joint remit of a VCS Premises Portfolio officer in Property and a newly appointed community engagement premises officer.

19. Ineligible activities / other Council services and support

The Environment & Ecology grant aid programme will **NOT** consider applications for funding for organisations whose main activities fall within the following theme/service-based programmes:

- Advice Services (Strategic Services Department)
- Children’s Services – Early Years (Education Department)
- Mother tongue & Supplementary Education (Education Department)
- After-school, Play & Holiday Playschemes (Education Department)
- Arts and Culture (Environment & Leisure Department)
- Community Safety (Strategic Services)
- Economic Development (Regeneration Department)
- Sports Development (Environment and Leisure Department)
- Community Support (Social Inclusion Division)
- Social care (Social Services Department/PCT)
- Youth provision (Education Department).

Each of these Council programmes has its own arrangements and timetables for commissioning from voluntary sector providers, including through formal tendering.

For more information on these programmes contact:

Bonnie Royal,
Principal Commissioning Officer
Communities Law & Governance
160 Tooley Street
London SE1 2TZ

Telephone: 020 7525 7389, Email: bonnie.royal@southwark.gov.uk

20. Funded Groups 2010/2011

Organisation	Funding Mechanism
Centre for Wildlife Gardening	Grant
Groundwork Southwark & Lambeth	Grant
Surrey Docks Farm	Grant
Trust for Urban Ecology	Grant
Bankside Open Spaces Trust	Grant
Walworth Garden Farm	Grant
Pumphouse	Grant

All organisations will need to submit new applications for funding for 2011/12.

All applications will be considered on the basis of the quality of the application and the total value brought by the organisation.