

Item No.	Classification: Open	Date: 21 March 2011	Decision Taker: Cabinet Member for Transport, Environment and Recycling
Report title:		Approval of Grants for Environment & Ecology Programme 2011/2012	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Strategic Director of Environment	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Cabinet Member approves the grant and contract allocations for the Environment and Ecology Commissioning Programme for the year 2011/12 as set out in Appendix 1.
2. That the Cabinet Member notes that discussions are being held with each organisation and wind down arrangements and also if necessary they will be eligible for the second round of transition funding.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. The Environment & Ecology Commissioning Plan for 2011-2012 was agreed through the individual member decision-making process (IDM) in November 2010. The Plan sets out the priorities and themes for Environment & Ecology Commissioning for 2009-2010, the links between Council policy and priorities and the outcomes to be delivered by voluntary organisations that receive funding. The plan also sets out the rationale for commissioning services via a contract or grant aid.
4. Southwark 2016 and the Council's Corporate Plan are key drivers for the Commissioning Plan. The priorities for the Environment and Ecology programme are: A Greener Borough, Increased Usage and Community Management of Parks and Green Learning.
5. 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 Grants Programme contributes to the greener element. The Council will fund projects under the theme "A *Greener* Borough" that:
 - Promote sustainable practices
 - Improve the borough's biodiversity
 - Provide specialist services to Local Nature Reserves and nature parks
 - Encourage wildlife gardening and the reduction of pesticide use
 - Interpreting the local heritage and environment and understanding human impact.
6. The Council aims to increase the involvement of the community in parks and open spaces. The second key theme of the Commissioning Plan is "*Increased Usage and Community Management of Parks*". The Parks Strategy, the Environment and Housing Business Plan and the Corporate Equalities Action Plan include targets to increase the use of parks and open spaces by disadvantaged groups. 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.
7. Two of the Council's priorities are making Southwark Cleaner and Greener and Raising Standards in our Schools. The Commissioning Plan theme of "Green & Sustainability Learning" aims to improve the teaching of environmental issues in Southwark's schools and above all 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.
8. Seven organisations were funded by this programme in 2010-2011, undertaking seven projects. These were through grant aid agreements for a period of one year and will expire on March 31 2011. The total grants awarded for 2009/10 was £311,536. The organisations are:
- Centre for Wildlife Gardening
 - Trust for Urban Ecology (TRUE)
 - Pumphouse Educational Museum Trust
 - Surrey Docks Farm
 - Bankside Open Spaces Trust (BOST)
 - Walworth Garden Farm
 - Groundwork London.

No organisations ceased to operate in this current financial year.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

9. The environment and ecology programme was openly advertised in November 2010, alongside the community support voluntary sector programme. Applications were received from the seven currently funded organisations for a total of eight projects. Of these projects three are suitable for commissioning on a contract basis, and the remaining five projects are considered eligible for grant aid.
10. No new organisations applied to the programme. The total amount of funding requested for 2010/2011 is £426,756.
11. As a result of the Comprehensive Spending Review announced in December 2010, Southwark has had to find savings of £34m for 2011/12 and a further £16m for 2012/13. All departments within the council services were asked to propose savings to their budgets. Draft budgets were made available for public consultation, with a recommendation made to be made to by Cabinet on the 15 February to the full Council Assembly on 22 February 2011.

12. The draft budget proposed a £184,000 saving to the Environment and Ecology commissioning programme; however subsequent to a cabinet recommendation, council assembly agreed on 22 February that the reduction in the environment and ecology grants programme, after the introduction of newly commissioned services¹ would be no greater than 28%.

Assessment and proposals for funding

13. Applications were assessed on the following criteria:
- Is the organisation fit for purpose with appropriate governance and systems in place
 - Projects that meet all or most of the programme priorities in each of the three programme themes.
 - The impact to the community as reflected by visitor or user numbers.
14. Applications were then ranked according to the number of priorities met, and the final recommendations have been made to achieve:
- A balance of high output visible projects across the three themes demonstrating how Environment & Ecology delivers on the Council's core priorities
 - Projects that have the potential to have the most impact on the community with the widest possible participation levels.
15. The recommendations have also been made to reflect a fair distribution of projects across the borough and projects that achieve value for money and lever in funding from other sources.
16. All three projects suitable for funding on a contract basis met either 12 or 13 of the programme priorities and had visitor number of 30,000 or more, and are therefore recommended for funding. No changes were made to the number of priorities met, or users numbers these organisations following the submission of amended applications.
17. The value of contracts is £114,755, which means the amount of funding available as grant aid is £141,682. The funding requested for the remaining five projects, totals £305,861 and this exceeds the amount available for grant aid funding by £164,179.
18. Of the five projects suitable for grant aid funding only two projects met 12 or 13 of the programme priorities, and also had visitor or user numbers exceeding 20,000. These were Surrey Docks Farm and London Wildlife Trust for Centre for Wildlife Gardening. Following the submission of amended applications, the Centre for Wildlife Gardening demonstrated that it could meet all the criteria, by additionally contributing to developing 'Friends groups'. These two projects are recommended for funding (see Appendix 2).
19. Following the submission of amended applications and clarification meetings with officers, the remaining three projects were able to demonstrate some evidence of meeting up to 11 of the programme priorities, namely:
- Walworth Garden Farm demonstrated that it could contribute to developing 'Friends groups'.

¹ This refers to those services to be commissioned as a contract, rather than grant aid

- Groundwork Southwark demonstrated it would seek to encourage wildlife gardening, interpret the local heritage and environment, and provide curriculum support.
- The Pumphouse Museum offered some evidence that it contributes to improving biodiversity and encourages wildlife gardening.

However, whilst following representations to officers additional points have been awarded, it is noted that for all three organisations, their contribution to the programme priorities overall were significantly weaker than the other organisations which are recommended for funding. All had significantly fewer estimated visitors or users. It is therefore not recommended to fund these projects for 2010/2011, other than three months notice period as required.

20. It is proposed that no inflation or funding above that awarded for the same project in 2009/2010 is awarded to organisations for 2010/2011 (Appendix 1).

Community Impact Statement

21. The purpose of this element of the Environment & 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 of organisations funded would have upon the community or any groups within that community.
22. According to the principles for the 2011 budget process, an equalities impact assessment (EqIA) has been carried out on all organisations and on the budget proposal (see Appendix 3).
23. Further to this, as part of the budget setting process the Council agreed a transition fund to enable organisations suffering cuts to become more sustainable. All organisations were encouraged to apply to this fund, however the timing is not ideal as the decision for funding is also made in March 2011. Therefore a second round of transition funding will be made available later in the year.

Resource Implications

24. The overall recommendations for this programme can be met within the 2010/2011 the Parks and Open Spaces budget. The proposed allocation of £256,437 of which £114,755 will be awarded as a contract and £141,682 as grant aid is set out in Appendix 1.
25. The council where possible undertakes to give 3 months notice of funding recommendations to the voluntary sector in the event that funding is not recommended, the sector has sufficient notice period in which to prepare exit strategies and fulfil its obligations to employees. This is reflected in the tapering funding recommended for those organisations expected to have such commitments.

Consultation

26. All organisations that applied for funding received regular communication to update them on the challenges facing the council in the light of the government spending reductions, and to inform them of the timetable and process for decisions on budget reductions and subsequent funding decisions.
27. In October 2010 organisations were invited to submit a response should their organisation be cut on the basis of 10%, 25% or 100% funding and an initial impact assessment including EqlA was carried out on all organisations. Any cut greater than 10% would have a significant effect on any of the organisations currently funded. This was taken into consideration when later informing groups (letter 01 March 2011) that whilst the cuts to the grant aid programme would be no greater than 28%, this did not necessarily mean that the reduction in the amount awarded to any one organisation would be no greater than 28%.
28. Following the Council Assembly on 22 February which set the budget for 2010/2011, organisations were again written to advise them of the reduction of budget for the Environment and Ecology commissioning programme. Applicants were made aware that the available funding would be targeted toward organisations that could clearly demonstrate that they meet all or most of the programme priorities and have the greater number of visitors or users, and as such were invited to amend their applications. All applicants were invited to meet with the council prior to the decision being made.
29. All applicants acknowledged the letter and submitted further evidence. Of the groups not recommended for funding, all three accepted the invitation to meet with the council. At this meeting they were advised on why they had not met the criteria. Any further evidence provided at this meeting was amended for inclusion, however this has not affected the proposed recommendations and groups were made aware of this in the meeting/s. Organisations were also further advised of the process, that is, once the proposed decision is published they will be notified in writing, provided with a copy of their project summary report and be given the opportunity to make representation to the Cabinet member prior to the decision being made.
30. When the decision is implementable, further meetings with groups will be offered by the council in order to support and assist with referral to the transition fund, other sources of funding or exit strategies as may be required.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance (CLG/SB/160311)

31. Officers from the Contracts Section of Legal Services have reviewed this report and confirm that under the provisions of Part 3D of the council's Constitution the Cabinet Member for Transport, Recycling & Environment may approve the recommendation set out in paragraph 1.
32. Paragraph 12 notes the effect of the Comprehensive Spending Review on the Environment & Ecology commissioning programme and available budget.
33. Positive equalities obligations are placed on local authorities, sometimes described as equalities duties with regard to race, disability and gender. Gender equality duties were introduced by the Equality Act 2006, which amended the Sex

Discrimination Act 1975. The general duties in summary require local authorities to have due regard to the need to: (a) eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment and; (b) promote the equality of opportunity between men and women. Race equality duties were introduced by the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 which amended the Race Relations Act 1976. The general duties in summary require local authorities to give due regard to the need to: (a) eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment; (b) promote the equality of opportunity; and (c) promote good race relations between people of different racial groups. Disability equality duties were introduced by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 which amended the Disability Act 1995. The general duties in summary require local authorities to carry out their functions with due regard to the need to: (a) promote equal opportunities between disabled persons and other persons; (b) eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act; (c) eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities; (d) promote a positive attitude towards disabled persons; (e) encourage participation by disabled persons in public life; and (f) take steps to take account of disabled person's disabilities even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons.

34. Section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976, section 49A(i) of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and section 76A of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, require local authorities to act in accordance with the equalities duties and have due regard to these duties when we are carrying out our functions, which includes making decisions in the current context.
35. The report author refers to the fact that equalities have been considered as part of the funding decision for the Environment & Ecology commissioning programme in 2011/12 and that equalities impact assessments have been undertaken.
36. .As part of the process for deciding how this spending reduction is to be made in 2011/12, it will be necessary to prepare robust equalities impact assessments (or equality analysis in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 (if that is applicable) in accordance with good practice at critical stages as proposals in relation to spending reductions are made which identify the potential or actual effects the spending reduction could have in respect of disability, gender, race and religion or belief, sexual orientation, age and human rights. The Equality Act 2010 does not come into effect in relation to public sector equalities duties until 6 April 2011. However, in line with good practice, equalities and human rights impact assessments that are carried out before that time should be carried out in relation to the proposed spending reductions for the Environment & Ecology commissioning programme in 2011/12, mindful of the protected characteristics.
37. In addition, the council has a statutory duty under the current legislation to consult in relation to race and gender and promote participation and involve disabled people. In relation to the future spending reduction, this consultation should: (a) take place before a decision is made at the formative stage; (b) be meaningful and set out clearly the background, proposal and/or options, potential implications for funding, criteria, so that those consulted have no doubt about the proposals and implications and can provide a meaningful response; and (c) follow a process that is clear and transparent.
38. In addition, it is good practice for groups who are to be affected by the proposed spending reduction to be: (a) given copies of any relevant reports to comment on; and (b) given the opportunity to make representations before a decision is made.

Finance Director (ENV/JM/160311c)

39. Ecology grants programme was left with £156k for 2011-12 after £184k savings taken from its 2010-11 total budget of £340k budgets. The grants allocation as shown in Appendix 1 below for 5 organisations amounts to £141k and can be easily met from the remaining grant budget. Cost of £114k for the award of 3 contract led projects (as shown in Appendix 1 below) will be funded by the remaining £15k left in Ecology Grants budget and existing Parks & Open Space's revenue budgets.
40. The expenditure against the total allocation will be monitored and reported on as part of the overall business unit's monthly revenue monitoring.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Grant information, and copies of applications 2010/2011	Parks and Open Spaces 160 Tooley Street London, SE1 2TZ	Christine Wildhaber Tel: 020 7525 0868
Project Summary Sheets	Parks and Open Spaces	Christine Wildhaber
Initial EQIA assessments	Parks and Open Spaces	Christine Wildhaber
Letters to VCS applicants	Parks and Open Spaces	Christine Wildhaber
VCS Responses to proposed cuts	Parks and Open Spaces	Christine Wildhaber

APPENDICES

No.	Title
1	Environment and Ecology Programme Recommendations 2009/2011
2	Application assessments
3	Equalities Impact Assessment on the budget proposal

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Gill Davies, Strategic Director of Environment	
Report Author	Des Waters, Head of Public Realm	
Version	Final	
Dated	21 March 2011	
Key Decision?	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	Yes	Yes
Finance Director	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Officer	22 March 2011	

Approval of Grants for Environment & Ecology Programme 2010/2011

Appendix 1

Funding Recommendations

Environment & Ecology Voluntary Sector Grant Aid Programme 2010/2011 - Recommendations					
	Grant Awarded 2010/2011	2011/2012 Amount Requested	2011/2012 Amount Recommended	What the Funding is for: Project description	What the Funding is for: Costs
Centre for Wildlife Gardening (London Wildlife Trust)	£46,924	£49,327	£46,924 Grant	Centre of excellence demonstrating wildlife gardening and sustainable practices. Community engagement and educational activities and projects. Open days and events.	Part funding of 3 core staff (1x60%, 2x30%) and training costs. 50% of overhead costs Volunteer expenses Events materials
Groundwork London	£29,970	£30,444	£7388.70 Tapering funding for services to be provided (grant)	Servicing borough steering groups and development work for Groundwork projects in Southwark Capacity building to engage communities in open spaces and development of food growing projects	Salary and contribution to overhead costs at a full cost recovery rate for services delivered
Surrey Docks Farm	£62,822	£120,000	£62,282 Grant	Promotion of sustainable practice and biodiversity on site. Schools education and events Volunteering and young people's programmes and activities on sustainable living, food and farming.	3 core staff salaries (100%) Volunteers expenses Marketing and management

	Grant Awarded 2009/10	2010/2011 Amount Requested	2010/2011 Amount Recommended	What the Funding is for: Project description	What the Funding is for: Costs
Trust for Urban Ecology	£38,262	£39,400	£38,262 Contract	Management of 3 Nature reserves – Support management of other LBS ecological sites Develop interpretation and education facilities for schools and public Encourage active participation by community in management	Part funding of 3 core staff wardens (51%)
Bankside Open Space Trust	£46,013	£51,013	£46,013 Contract	Increase community engagement in improvement of parks and open spaces, Facilitation of steering groups Events, open days, food growing projects, inclusion of older people, volunteers	Part funding of 5 core staff (30%) Organisational costs and rent uplift (£640) Volunteer expenses Gardening materials
Sydenham Hill Wood (London Wildlife Trust)	n/a	£30,480	£30,480 Contract	Management of Sydenham Hill Woods and Cox's walk. Community events and programme for volunteers, Educational activities.	Funding of conservation officer post Volunteer expenses
Walworth Garden Farm	£19,037	£26,940	£4759.25 Three months tapering funding (grant)	Facilitation of on site school visits and public workshops Outreach service to schools and play/park spaces on sustainable gardens, food growing and bee project	Community education officer (100%), professional fees Resources and materials

	Grant Awarded 2009/10	2010/2011 Amount Requested	2010/2011 Amount Recommended	What the Funding is for: Project description	What the Funding is for: Costs
Pumphouse	£68,508 (excl rent)	£79,152	£19,788 Three months tapering funding (incl rent quarter) (grant)	Resource heritage and environment centre Provision of formal and informal educational opportunities Volunteers, open days, family clubs	Core staff post funding (100%), professional fees Rent (£10,644) Overheads and insurance Resources
TOTAL	£311,536	£426756	£256,437		
Amount available		£256,437			
Difference		£170,319			

Appendix 2. Application assessments

Organisation	Surrey Docks Farm	Pumphouse Museum	BOST	Walworth Garden Farm	TRUE	London Wildlife Trust /CWG	London Wildlife Trust /SHW	Groundwork London
PROGRAMME PRIORITY								
A greener borough								
Promoting sustainable practices	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Improving the borough's biodiversity	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Providing specialist services to Local Nature Reserves and nature parks	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0
Encourage wildlife gardening and the reduction in pesticide use	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
Interpreting the local heritage and environment and understanding human impacts	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1
Increased usage and community management of parks and open spaces								
Increase the involvement all sections of the community in parks and open spaces	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Develop 'Friends of' groups	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Raise the community's capacity for involvement in the management of parks and open spaces	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1
Build the capacity of voluntary sector organisations to undertake whole site management	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0
Provide training opportunities or programmes for volunteers ... to undertake maintenance and management of parks or ecological sites	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1
Green and Sustainable learning								
Provide curriculum support at the appropriate levels	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Provide opportunities for children and young people	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Provide life-long learning opportunities for all in relevant subjects	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	12	10	12	9	13	13	12	11
Visitor/User numbers	50,000 +	6,000	50,000+	7,000	30,000	20,000	30,000	6,000
Cost to the council per user (2010/2011)	£1.26	£13.00	£0.92	£2.71	£1.26	£0.94	£1.5	£5.00

