

Item No.	Classification: Open	Date: 3 September 2012	Decision Taker: Cabinet Member for Transport, Environment and Recycling
Report title:		Approval of Grants for Environment & Ecology Programme 2012/2013	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Strategic Director of Environment and Leisure	

Recommendation

1. That the Cabinet Member approves the allocations for the Environment and Ecology Commissioning Programme for the year 2012/13 as set out in Appendix 1.

Background Information

2. The Environment & Ecology Commissioning Plan for 2012-2013 was agreed through the individual member decision-making process (IDM) in December 2011. The Plan sets out the priorities and themes for Environment & Ecology Commissioning for 2012/13 and the links between Council policy and priorities and the outcomes to be delivered by voluntary organisations that receive funding.
3. The priorities for the Environment and Ecology programme are: A Greener Borough, Increased Usage and Community Management of Parks and Green Learning.
4. The commissioning plan also links the key priorities to those identified in the Council's Community Strategy and the Corporate Plan in particular against the 10 fairer future promises and each of the priority statements for each Cabinet member:
 - a. Children's Services
 - b. Community safety
 - c. Culture, leisure, Sport and Olympics
 - d. Equalities and Community engagement
 - e. Finance and resources
 - f. Health and Adult Social Care
 - g. Housing
 - h. Regeneration and Corporate strategy
 - i. Transport, Environment and Recycling
5. Two organisations were funded by this programme in 2011-2012, undertaking two projects. These were through grant aid agreements for a period of one year. The total grants awarded for 2011/12 was £109,206. The organisations were:

- Centre for Wildlife Gardening (London Wildlife Trust)
- Surrey Docks Farm

6. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) was undertaken through meeting and consulting with each organisation to understand their current status financially and to also understand and discuss what implications a reduction in grant of 9% would have in terms of their service provision.
7. The EqIA identified that each organisation would be impacted in some form but each organisation would be able to continue to operate and deliver the current service provision by re-working their business plan to reflect such a reduction in grant allocation.

Key Issues for Consideration

8. The Environment and Ecology Programme was openly advertised in January 2012, alongside the community support voluntary sector programme. Applications were received from the two currently funded organisations for a total of two projects.
9. No new organisations applied to the programme. The total amount of funding requested for 2012/13 is £112,924. See Appendix 1 for details.
10. The Parks Service has subsidised the ecology grant programme in previous years and as such it is proposed that the grant allocation in 2012/13 be reduced by the equivalent of 9% to reduce this overall subsidy.

Assessment and Proposals for Funding

11. 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.
12. Applications were then ranked according to the number of priorities met, and the final recommendations have been made to achieve (Appendix 2):
 - 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.
13. 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.

Community Impact Statement

14. 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.

15. 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.

Resource Implications

16. The total amount of grant recommended for 2012/13 in the report is £99,377 as shown in appendix 1. The budget available for ecology grants programme in 2012/13 is £99,451 which is sufficient to contain the proposed amount.
17. 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.

Consultation

18. 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.
19. Individual consultation meetings were held with each organisation to update them on the current financial impact and to understand what the proposed reduction in budget would have on their service provision.
20. When the decision is implementable, further meetings with the groups will be offered by the council in order to support and assist them where possible.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Director of Legal Services

21. Officers from the Corporate Services Team 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, Environment & Recycling may approve the recommendations that are set out in this Report.
22. The report author notes that it is proposed to make a 9% reduction in the grants made pursuant to the 2012/13 Environment and Ecology Commissioning Programme as compared with the 2011/12 Programme. The implications of this reduction are considered in this report.
23. The Equality Act 2010 introduced a single public sector equality duty. This duty requires the Council to have due regard in its decision making processes to the need to:

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other prohibited conduct;
- b) advance of equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it; and
- c) foster good relations between those who share a relevant characteristic and those that do not share it.

The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. It also applies to marriage and civil partnership, but only in relation to (a) above.

- 24. The Council is required to act in accordance with the equality duty and have due regard to the duty when carrying out its functions, which includes making decisions in the current context.
- 25. The report author refers to the fact that equalities have been considered as part of the funding decision and that an equalities impact assessment has been undertaken in relation to the 2012/13 grant allocation.
- 26. As part of the process for deciding how this spending reduction is to be made, it is necessary to prepare an equality impact assessment/equality analysis in accordance with the Council's approach to equality.
- 27. The equality duty requires public bodies to have an adequate evidence base for our decision making; consultation/engagement is a useful tool to provide an adequate evidence base. Case law has shown how important it is for public bodies to consult/engage to ensure that we understand the impact our decisions have on our community.
- 28. In paragraph 6 above, the report author confirms that consultation has been undertaken with the two organisations that received a grant in 2011/12 to ascertain the impact of such a reduction on their business and service provision.

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services (NR/8/8/12)

- 29. This report recommends that the Cabinet Member approves the allocations for the Environment and Ecology Commissioning Programme for the year 2012/13.
- 30. The SDFCS notes the resource implications contained within the report. Officer time to effect the recommendations will be contained within existing budgeted revenue resources.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
IDM Environment and Ecology Commissioning Programme 2012/13	Parks and Open Spaces 160 Tooley Street London, SE1 2TZ	John Wade Tel: 020 7525 0771

APPENDICES

No.	Title
1	Environment and Ecology Programme Recommendations 2012/2013
2	Application assessments

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Deborah Collins, Strategic Director of Environment and Leisure	
Report Author	Des Waters, Head of Public Realm	
Version	Final	
Dated	3 September 2012	
Key Decision?	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Director of Legal Services	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director Finance and Corporate Services	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Officer		3 September 2012

Approval of Grants for Environment & Ecology Programme 2012/2013

Appendix 1

Funding Recommendations

Environment & Ecology Voluntary Sector Grant Aid Programme 2012/2013 - Recommendations						
	Grant Awarded 2011/2012	2012/2013 Amount Requested	% of Overall Funding	2012/2013 Amount Recommended	What the Funding is for: Project description	What the Funding is for: Costs
Centre for Wildlife Gardening (London Wildlife Trust)	£46,924	£46,924	50% for site. 1.9% for entire organisation	Q1 - £11,731 Q2 - £11,731 Q3 - £11,731 Q4 - £7,507 Total £42,700	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
Surrey Docks Farm	£62,282	£66,000	16%	Q1 - £15,570.50 Q2 - £15,570.50 Q3 - £15,570.50 Q4 - £ 9,965.50 Total £56,677	Further Develop educational and community work. Develop mobile farm. Increase engagement with young people and adults with learning difficulties.	Employment Costs for Farm Manager (£28,000) & Animal Manager (£25,000) + insurance and on costs (£13,000)
TOTAL	£109,206	£112,924		£99,377		

Appendix 2. Application assessments

Organisation	Surrey Docks Farm	London Wildlife Trust /CWG
PROGRAMME PRIORITY		
A greener borough		
Promoting sustainable practices	1	1
Improving the borough's biodiversity	1	1
Providing specialist services to Local Nature Reserves and nature parks	0	1
Encourage wildlife gardening and the reduction in pesticide use	1	1
Interpreting the local heritage and environment and understanding human impacts	1	1
Increase the involvement all sections of the community in parks and open spaces	1	1
Develop 'Friends of' groups	1	1
Raise the community's capacity for involvement in the management of parks and open spaces	1	1
Build the capacity of voluntary sector organisations to undertake whole site management	1	1
Provide training opportunities or programmes for volunteers ... to undertake maintenance and management of parks or ecological sites	1	1
Green and Sustainable learning		
Provide curriculum support at the appropriate levels	1	1
Provide opportunities for children and young people	1	1
Provide life-long learning opportunities for all in relevant subjects	1	1
TOTAL	12	13
Visitor/User numbers	200,000	20,000
Cost to the council per user (2011/2012)	£0.31	£0.94