1. **Reason for report**

1.1 This report provides an update on the ‘Thyme Out’ project which obtained external funding through the successful award of £308,320 from the Big Lottery’s Reaching Communities Fund. At the Adult and Community Services Portfolio meeting held on the 10 March 2009 Members requested regular six-monthly updates on the progress of the participants and project since the start of the Scheme in May 2009.

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

2.1 That the PDS Committee and Portfolio Holder notes the progress of the project which aims to target improving life chances of adult with learning disabilities.
Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: N/A.
2. BBB Priority: Supporting Independence. also Quality Environment and Excellent Council

Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Estimated cost £427,510 over three years
2. Ongoing costs: Non-recurring cost.
3. Budget head/performance centre: None
4. Total current budget for this head: £427,510 over three years
5. Source of funding: £308,320 - Big Lottery Fund
   £56,460 - Environmental Services
   £62,730 - Adult and Community Services

Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional): - two additional members of staff funded by the Big Lottery for the life of the project.
2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: - N/A

Legal

1. Legal Requirement: No statutory requirement or Government guidance.
2. Call-in: Call-in is applicable

Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): - 40 people with learning disabilities living in the London Borough of Bromley, over the life of the three year project, will benefit from training and work experience leading to possible full-time employment and thereby reducing dependency on Council systems.

Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? <please select>
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments:
3. **COMMENTARY**

**Project Delivery**

3.1 In February 2008 Adult and Community Services undertook a consultation with its service users to ascertain if their training and recreational requirements were being met. This consultation highlighted the lack of gardening activities available to them. The consultation also highlighted the service users’ desire to contribute towards their own care plans enabling them to control what they do, how and when they do it in order to equip them to engage with the wider community and be recognised as independent contributors to society.

3.2 In response Bromley Fields Studies Centre (BFSC) organised gardening ‘taster sessions’ that proved popular. A number of participants asked if they could continue to work with BFSC and an external funding bid to the Big Lottery’s Reaching Communities Fund for £308,000 was successfully secured to develop the project into ‘Thyme Out’.

3.3 The Bromley Field Studies Centre held a highly successful taster day on 21 April 2009 in the grounds of the Civic Centre, Bromley inviting people with learning disabilities, their families and carers living within the London Borough of Bromley to learn more about the Thyme Out project. Twenty people with learning disabilities were recruited.

3.4 The first cohort of 20 participants started their training on 11 May trained and supervised by two newly-recruited horticulture staff, David Bloor and Lizzie Buckingham. Three of the participants require one-to-one support which they continue to receive from their existing support staff provided by Adult and Community Services. The first cohort will complete their training by October 2010. A further 20 people will then be recruited in October 2010 to carry out their training for the following 18 months, to complete in April 2012. The project will deliver horticultural and life skills training to a total of 40 people with learning disabilities.

3.5 The Thyme Out headquarters is based in the “Alligator House”, a previous porters’ mess room and a derelict conservatory, situated within the Civic Centre grounds. The space has been renovated by funding from the Big Lottery and the London Borough of Bromley.

**Participant progress**

**Practical Training**

3.6 English Landscapes, the Council’s grounds maintenance contractors, handed over responsibility of the grounds maintenance of the Civic Centre’s seven acre site on 1 June to the Bromley Field Studies Centre and the Thyme Out project. All team members have successfully and fully engaged in the tasks required to maintain this high profile site and have learnt basic horticultural techniques in a short space of time.

3.7 The project has surpassed all expectations, with all participants settling in and enjoying the project. It has taken two months for the majority of participants to become familiar with the site and to gain the confidence to move from area to area independently. Attendance has been 99% with all participants arriving on time, undertaking the training and work with great enthusiasm taking great pride in their work and achievements. In the short amount of time since the start of the project staff and participants report a growing confidence and pride in the Thyme Out project’s activities and associated events. Four participants are already able to carry out tasks and activities with minimal supervision. As part of the Big Lottery contract the project will be seeking feedback, in the form of a questionnaire from the participants, to assess the wellbeing, health and confidence from individuals over their 18 month training period.
Qualifications

3.8 On 31 August 2009, 19 out of the 20 participants completed and achieved a certificate in the British Red Cross’ Inclusive First Aid Programme.

3.9 Participants have started working towards the accredited qualification City and Guilds, National Proficiency Test Council Skills for Working Life, Entry Level 2, in Horticulture, full qualification by October 2010.

Community Events

The Thyme Out launch

3.10 The actor James Nesbitt and The Worshipful The Mayor Councillor Douglas Auld helped launch Thyme Out on 29 June in the mayoral suite at the Civic Centre, Bromley. The high profile and well received event was attended by approximately 150 people, with representatives from the local community, voluntary sector, Primary Care Trust, Councillors and London Borough of Bromley staff and local community. Guests were entertained with a light lunch and refreshments, and speeches by Councillor Graham Arthur, Councillor Julian Benington and James Nesbitt. A planting workshop was organised by the first cohort of Thyme Out participants, a tour of the Civic Centre grounds conducted by the Friends of Bromley Town Parks and Gardens and informal lawn games were enjoyed by the guests.

Plant sales

3.11 The Thyme Out team has delivered further plant sales which have been enthusiastically attended by approaching 500 people in total. The sales have enabled the project to generate further interest and promotion of the project to the local community, staff and users of the Civic Centre as well as opportunities for the local community and staff to engage with the Thyme Out participants. A series of events and sales have been planned throughout the life of the three-year project.

Tour of the site

3.12 The Thyme Out participants have taken part in the two monthly park tours conducted by the Friends of Bromley’s Parks and Gardens for the local community to illustrate the heritage of the seven parks situated within Bromley’s town centre. In the coming months the participants will become more involved in the tours to enable them to improve their customer skills as well as use the opportunity to publicise the project and encourage further integration.

Forthcoming events

3.13 The following events have been planned to the end of the year:

● Bulb planting workshop - 22 October for staff

● Composting workshop in partnership with WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme - www.wrap.org.uk) and the sustainability team - November 2009

● A Christmas plant sale - December 2009

Awards

3.14 As part of the Celebrate Bromley events the Thyme Out team have been awarded a Bromley People for Parks flag and a bronze award for improving a community space. The Thyme Out
A project will apply for a Green Flag (a national quality standard for parks and green spaces) for 2010 and entry to the National Garden Scheme in 2011.

**Management of the Civic Centre Grounds**

3.15 A management plan for the Civic Centre grounds, including a biodiversity schedule, has been compiled. The plan will shape the maintenance schedule, community activities and improvements for the site over the next three years.

**Employment and volunteer opportunities for participants**

3.16 Bromley Mencap, Jobmatch will begin work with the Thyme Out project from November 2009 and until the end of the project in 2012. Jobmatch will work closely with all 40 participants to help them find meaningful voluntary, paid and unpaid employment. The Bromley Field Studies Centre will contribute and assist with this service by sharing its database of employers, partners and expertise in this area.

3.17 A range of options for the continuation of the Thyme Out project and progression for participants taking part in the scheme are currently under discussion. For example:

- **a)** A large external environmental contractor with potential contracts being delivered within the London Borough of Bromley has made contact regarding the scheme and initial discussions have taken place.

- **b)** The London Borough of Bromley's Supporting Employment and Social Enterprise contract is currently being re-tendered with a specification for the successful provider to create a number of social businesses. Early discussions with the incoming provider will be arranged.

- **c)** London Borough of Bromley's environment team will be approached to discuss landscape maintenance options in addition to the management of the Civic Centre grounds.

3.18 The steering committee formed in February has met twice this year and will continue to meet quarterly during the life of the project. The committee has representatives from the Friends of Bromley Town Parks, Bromley Mencap, Jobmatch, Bexley and Bromley Advocacy group, the LBB environment team, Bromley Field Studies Centre, Adult and Community Services and two members from the local community with learning disabilities. The group supports and advises the project and will be asked actively to look for ways of continuing with the project at the end of Reaching Communities' funding through other partnerships and additional funding.

**4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The Thyme Out project meets the key objectives of a number of local (Bromley) and national planning priorities.

- **a)** **Bromley's Community Plan**
  - People, particularly vulnerable adults, are free to lead active independent lives
  - People with disabilities are able to maximize their potential

- **b)** **Adult and Community Portfolio Plan: Priority Outcome 4**
  - Enhancing opportunities for all to have greater access and ability to make choices and exercise control over their own lives
c) Bromley’s Day Service Strategy
   • Day opportunities should be provided in inclusive settings with more opportunities for learning and employment

5. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 A budget summary is shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget Summary</th>
<th>2009/10</th>
<th>2010/11</th>
<th>2011/12</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£</td>
<td>£</td>
<td>£</td>
<td>£</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial capital works</td>
<td>47,546</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>47,546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staffing</td>
<td>71,858</td>
<td>73,780</td>
<td>76,034</td>
<td>221,672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultancy</td>
<td>2,318</td>
<td>24,553</td>
<td>25,290</td>
<td>52,161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General running expenses</td>
<td>24,851</td>
<td>40,198</td>
<td>41,082</td>
<td>106,131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Costs</strong></td>
<td><strong>146,573</strong></td>
<td><strong>138,531</strong></td>
<td><strong>142,406</strong></td>
<td><strong>427,510</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2 The table below sets out the funding analysis of the Thyme Out Scheme:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Funding</th>
<th>2009/10</th>
<th>2010/11</th>
<th>2011/12</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£</td>
<td>£</td>
<td>£</td>
<td>£</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Lottery</td>
<td>107,433</td>
<td>98,801</td>
<td>102,086</td>
<td>308,320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Services</td>
<td>18,540</td>
<td>18,820</td>
<td>19,100</td>
<td>56,460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult &amp; Community Services</td>
<td>20,600</td>
<td>20,910</td>
<td>21,220</td>
<td>62,730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>146,573</strong></td>
<td><strong>138,531</strong></td>
<td><strong>142,406</strong></td>
<td><strong>427,510</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3 It should be noted that the balance of the required matched funding totals £199,000 which is for an ‘in kind’ contribution made up of existing staff time £29,000 and the use of accommodation £170,000.

5.4 £18,540 per annum will be re-directed from the current grounds maintenance budget for the Civic Centre site to the Thyme Out project. Accordingly, at the end of the three-year project the grounds maintenance contractor will revert to the amount in the specification and associated budget unless a continuation strategy has been sought for Thyme Out.

6. **PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 A horticultural team leader and assistant have been in position since April 2009. The full cost of employing these staff on fixed term contracts for the life of the three year project is covered within the grant’s allocation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Applicable Sections:</th>
<th>Legal Implications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Background Documents:</td>
<td>Big Lottery – Reaching Communities – Grant Offer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Access via Contact Officer)</td>
<td>Big Lottery – Reaching Communities – Application</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>