

**Decision Maker:**      **Environment PDS Committee**

**Date:**                      **25 June 2013**

**Decision Type:**      Non-Urgent                      Non-Executive                      Non-Key

**Title:**                      **FRIENDS ANNUAL REPORT**

**Contact Officer:**      Louise Simpson, Development and Community Manager  
Tel: 020 8461 7864 E-mail: louise.simpson@bromley.gov.uk

**Chief Officer:**              Nigel Davies, Executive Director of Environment and Community Services

**Ward:**                      All

---

1. Reason for report

- 1.1 This report updates Members on the work carried out by the Department working in partnership with the Friends (volunteers) of the Borough. The document provides a summary of the progress made from April 2012 to end March 2013.
- 1.2 Appendices providing a more detailed report are attached.

---

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

**That the Environment PDS Committee**

**2.1 Comments on the annual report; and**

**2.2 Records Members' thanks to the volunteers for their significant and valuable contribution.**

## Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy
  2. BBB Priority: Quality Environment Contributes to other BBB priorities.
- 

## Financial

1. Cost of proposal: N/A
  2. Ongoing costs: Recurring Cost: £60.6k 2013/14 onwards
  3. Budget head/performance centre: Streetscene & Greenspace
  4. Total current budget for this head: £68.9k plus additional external funding secured
  5. Source of funding: Revenue budget 2012/13 plus additional project funding delivered through external funding opportunities
- 

## Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 11
  2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: 5 FTE
- 

## Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Non-Statutory - Government Guidance
  2. Call-in: Not Applicable
- 

## Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): All Bromley residents and visitors
- 

## Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? No
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: N/A

### 3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 Friends are local people who work alone or as part of a group to improve their environment, helping to make their area a better place in which to live and work. By becoming a Bromley volunteer, our Friends receive advice, training, supervision, tools and equipment. The continual dedication and selfless work of these individuals has ensured our parks, streets, woodlands and countryside sites are safer, cleaner and greener. Volunteers play an important role, connecting communities through events, activities, carrying out consultation and raising funds.
- 3.2 Some Friends initiatives can be managed by volunteers independently of close officer support. In the case of Park Friends, without close guidance and support from the Council, the network would not be able to achieve what it does. This includes expert practical support, as many officers, across all disciplines, give up their own personal time to help Friends deliver projects in the evening and at weekends. It is this partnership, which enables volunteers to have confidence that they are doing the right thing for their environment whilst protecting the Borough's green spaces.
- 3.3 There are numerous examples of the great work volunteers do, far too many to mention in this report. Examples can be found in the Friends Annual Report appendices and/or are available on request.

#### External Funding

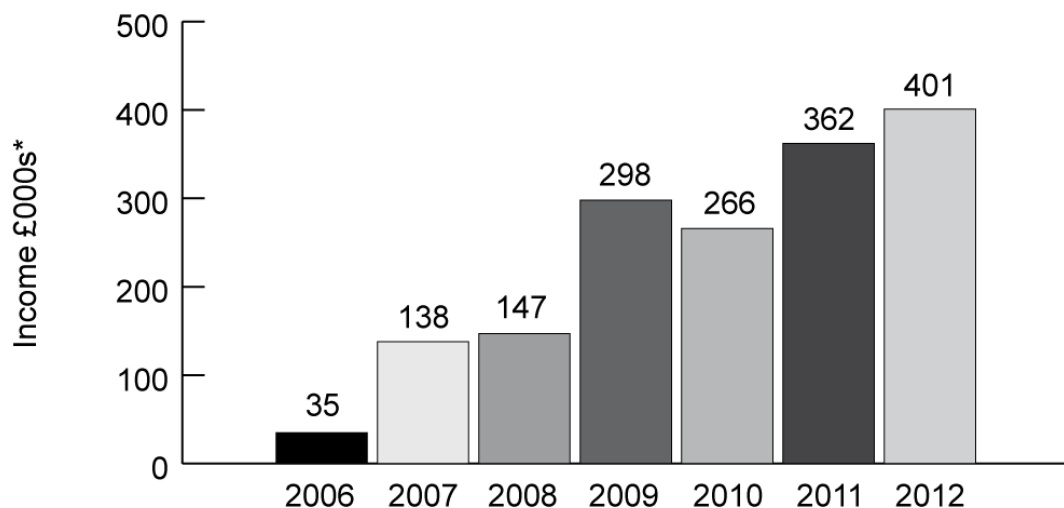
- 3.4 In the past year, volunteers from over 20 of Bromley's community groups have worked alongside officers to secure an additional £401,300 of external funding for enhancements across a variety of green space sites. This figure includes income from a range of sources including grants, donations and sponsorship, with many of these groups being successful in securing funds from several funders. In some cases funding is 'held' by LBB, in other cases funds are held by the community groups themselves.
- 3.5 Of the £401,300 secured this financial year, £88,400 was applied for during 2011/12 and £312,900 during 2012/13. The total sum applied for during 2012/13 was actually £342,600 with the difference in the amount awarded being due to a small number of applications being rejected, or a lower offer from funders than was originally applied for. .
- 3.6 Members should note that at the time of writing this report, £275,800 of external funding applications submitted in 2012/13 is still pending a decision.
- 3.7 External fundraising expenditure for LBB in 2012/13 was £133k, £62k of which was from funding secured during 2011/12 and £71k of which was secured during 2012/13. As shown in the table below, £289k of funding secured in 2012/13 is due to be spent on projects that will be delivered during 2013/14:

	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>
LBB spend	£133k	£190k
Community spend	£41k	£99k
<b>Total</b>	<b>£174k</b>	<b>£289k</b>

- 3.8 In addition to the £401,300, £175,000 of investment was also secured for improvements to parks and green spaces. This included £155,000 provided by Transport for London through the Local Implementation Plan programme and £20,000 of DEFRA funding for the Maintenance of Surface Water Drainage assets for Glassmill Reservoir.
- 3.9 The Parks and Greenspace Fundraising Team work alongside these groups to guide them through the fundraising process and provide advice and support at every step. Applications for external funding are only made if they would be beneficial to park landscapes and/or the

community. Examples of the type of fundraising requests and successes this year can be found in the Friends Annual Report appendices. A fundraising thank-you event was held in May 2013 to celebrate the successes of the community groups involved in securing external funding over the past two financial years. This event was an opportunity to showcase projects and allow groups that normally wouldn't meet collectively, to network.

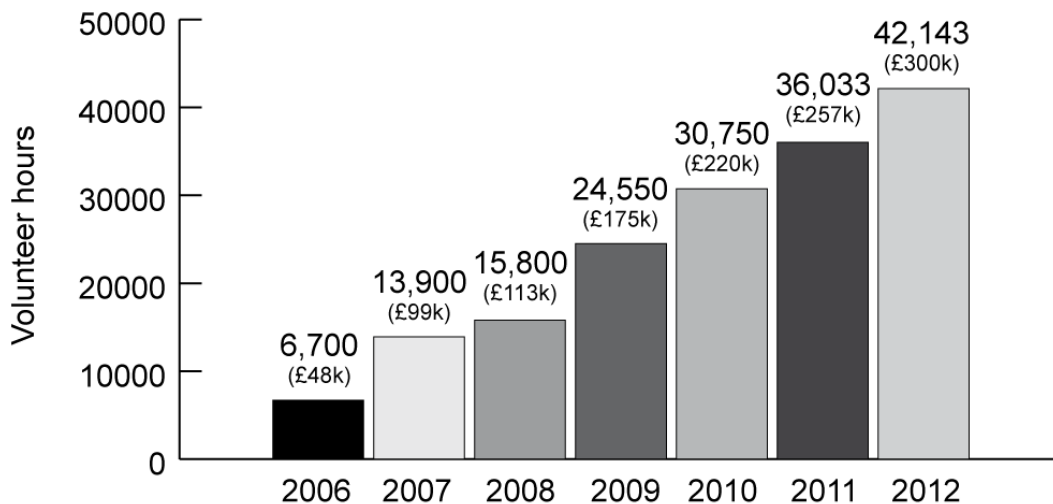
- 3.10 This year has seen an increase in the number of requests from Allotment Associations for advice and guidance on fundraising activities. Two dedicated training sessions were attended by 16 of these groups.
- 3.11 The amount of sponsorship secured by Friends and officers has also increased this year through the continuation of existing relationships and the development of new ones. Examples of these can be found in the Friends Annual Report appendices.
- 3.12 The delivery of fundraising secured for projects sometimes crosses financial years. A series of grants secured from the Big Lottery's Community Spaces programme in 11/12 were delivered on-site this financial year. These capital schemes, in total over £110,000, included the transformation of South Hill Woods, enhancements of play facilities at Glentrammon Recreation Ground and introduction of a children's trim trail at Chislehurst Recreation Ground. Further details can be found in the Friends Annual Report appendices.



*\*Friends of parks and green spaces*

### **Volunteer Hours**

- 3.13 The Friends have donated 42,143 hours for the betterment of Bromley. Street Friends have continued monitoring and reporting, and Snow Friends have kept their streets cleared of snow during the three snow episodes this winter. Nash, Green Gym and Grow Time have delivered 8,748 hours of work and River Keepers have provided 240 hours wading through the River Cray clearing fly tipping and providing vegetation clearance.



### Green space volunteers

- 3.14 The notion of supporting people who want to improve their area is something we have done for many years now, improving the Borough beyond what we, the Council could do alone. Our Park Friends continue, either as individual groups or by helping officers to deliver in partnership with other organisations to deliver positive change. In the past twelve months the Friends of Crystal Palace Park, Well Wood, High Broom Wood, South Hill Woods & Kingswood Glen, High Elms, Biggin Hill, Cray Valley, Chislehurst Recreation Ground and St Paul's Cray have all contributed a significant amount. More information can be found in the appendix.
- 3.15 The grant for the Riverkeepers scheme concluded in 2012, and officers have continued working closely with the group to ensure the River Cray remains clear of litter and the conservation work continues. The adult group meets every other Monday and tasks include clearing footpaths, planting reed beds, small tree work and the redevelopment of the area behind the Nugent Estate. Local residents have commented on how wonderful the river looks thanks to this team's efforts.
- 3.16 Bromley Countryside Volunteers are a highly trained group that work across all countryside sites and have undertaken 2 practical conservation tasks per week throughout the year.
- 3.17 Tree Friends (previously known as Basal Buddies) is gradually expanding. As well as basal growth removal, their repertoire will soon include; young tree maintenance, mulching and watering, monitoring, and minor pruning.
- 3.18 The Ranger Service is an important component in the Friends delivery. Working side by side with groups they have: assisted 162 Friends activities (386 staff hours); carried out 780 maintenance tasks; collected 381 piles of fly tipping; removed 141 patches of graffiti; and removed 19 cars and 10 motorbikes from green spaces. The Rangers have also played their part in supporting Bromley's countryside - following additional training, they have delivered 360 countryside maintenance days to enable site manage plans to be progressed. This is very important work because if these tasks are not carried out, Bromley could see the demise of vulnerable Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's)
- 3.19 The grounds maintenance officers have provided an additional 5,000 plants and shrubs throughout the Borough, assisted with 14 Friends work days, worked with Friends to deliver management plans for urban parks, and improved GM mapping information – a huge undertaking that not only makes working with contractors easier, but provides detailed information to residents requests including those asked through Fix My Street.

## **Street Friends and Snow Friends**

- 3.20 Our Street Friends have grown in number to over 3,700, helping officers keep neighbourhoods clean and tidy by reporting problems such as fly tipping, potholes and removing leaves, graffiti and litter to supplement the work of Bromley's contractors.
- 3.21 The popularity of the Snow Friends scheme continues to grow. From the beginning of April 2012 to the end of March 2013, 141 new groups were formed bringing the total to nearly 300 groups around the Borough (approximately 4,000 individuals). Throughout the year Bromley distributed a further 631 scoops and 2,530 bags of salt – all helping to keep pavements and roads free of snow during the winter period.
- 3.22 Bromley welcomed the 2<sup>nd</sup> Orpington Scouts on board to become its first official Scout Snow Friends group. Officers now intend to expand the scheme to other groups throughout the forthcoming year.

## **Working with young people**

- 3.23 The Community and Development Team, aided by the Rangers Service has continued to enhance Bromley's offering specifically aimed at young people. We have built on relationships with schools, groups and other organisations listening to the views of the consultative panel, BYAP and improving the environment with partners including Thames21 and the Challenge.

## **Promotion**

- 3.24 Over the past 12 months, the Information Centre at BEECHE has received over 8,800 visitors. This valuable resource provides a main point of contact for many residents interested in environmental education and provides a valuable promotional opportunity for Friends Groups wanting to contact the wider public, as well as opportunities to promote Snow & Street Friends, and Waste & Recycling programmes.
- 3.25 The annual Responsible Dog Ownership campaign was held in May 2012 at various parks across the Borough. Participating Friends of the Parks groups were sent packs of leaflets, posters and dog-waste bags to use within their parks to promote responsible dog ownership. Staff promoted Responsible Dog Ownership at subsequent events later in the year, at the Priory Gardens Fun Day and in Crystal Palace Park in conjunction with Battersea Dogs and Cats Home.

## **Events**

- 3.26 The Friends of South Hill Woods and Kingswood Glen secured funding to engage a landscape historian to investigate the past behind their park. This work contributed to one of the last heritage Blue Plaques being installed in the Borough to commemorate Sir Thomas Dewey. Sir Thomas was a benefactor to Evelyn Hellicar who designed St Marks Church and the Parish Church in Westmoreland Road. He served the then Borough of Bromley as the Charter Mayor in 1903-4, and was a major benefactor of the local cottage hospital, education establishments and community groups including the Scouts and Guides.
- 3.27 Croydon Road and Chislehurst Recreation Grounds were part of the Bandstand Marathon, the official closing event of the London Olympics 2012 Festival. On Sunday 9th September, music rang out at 225 bandstands, parks and town centres throughout the UK, with around 9,000 volunteer performers taking to the stage and entertaining the local crowds. The Friends of Croydon Road also organised a second Olympic celebration, *Community Games*, promoting sport and cultural activities. Some 350 plus people attended throughout the day.

- 3.28 New to The Cray Valley this year was the Haunted Hoblingwell Halloween event run by the Friends of Hoblingwell. Local children were invited to participate in a storytelling event, leading through the woods, performed by The Kent Stage Academy of Performing Arts. The Friends Group prepared the site with litter picks and conservation work and decorated the woodland into a weird and wonderful world. After the dusk event, children were then invited to learn the Michael Jackson 'Thriller dance' and perform for parents before dancing to a Halloween disco at the Rugby club at Hoblingwell Recreation Ground.

### **Healthy Lifestyles**

- 3.29 Grow Time continues to run successfully at Poverest Allotments. After receiving Health Lottery funding the group have employed their own horticultural project leader. They are now focusing on becoming self-financing and this has encouraged individuals to take a mentoring role with new volunteers, reducing reliance on Council officers. Fund raising has been consistent with flowers and herbs sold at the local Country Market and community events, and the ever popular Christmas wreaths and Easter baskets. Nutrition sessions have been on-going and have been contributed to by all members of the group cooking and sharing healthy lifestyle practice. As part of a holistic approach, officers have been working alongside the local community centre to improve health and wellbeing for residents. A plan has been submitted to improve the kitchen facilities enabling healthy cooking sessions for a variety of different groups, and linking in with the Grow Time project that will be supplying fresh produce and using the kitchen for nutrition training.
- 3.30 At Brook Lane Community Nursery, Veolia has been removing fly tipping from the site free of charge, but it has delayed the project. Due to the site being an ex-allotment, the soil is perfect for growing but has made it difficult going for heavy vehicles and plant - even so, over 100 tonnes of fly tipping has now been cleared. The trees have been removed from site free of charge by a woodsman who agreed to take the felled timber as payment for his work. Veolia has donated a new gate to maximise security and many tonnes of recycled hardcore to enable vehicle access at the entrance. This spring, community work days have progressed.
- 3.31 One year on from the start of the Leaves Green Tree nursery project, and with support from the Friends of Biggin Hill, the tree stock is now at the stage where Friends groups are able to request trees to plant in their own parks, providing a cost effective mechanism to ensure tree succession for future generations.

### **Sport**

- 3.32 Grass-roots sports providers continue to benefit from their membership of the Bromley Parks Sports Federation and its dedicated independent website. Members have achieved external funding for improvements to Chislehurst Recreation Ground, and football and cricket facilities at Goddington Park. Sports providers continue to actively promote sporting and recreational use and access in parks and work with officers to improve pavilion and playing field assets across the Borough.

### **Conferences and Awards**

- 3.33 The Snow Friends Conference in July 2012 brought the Snow Friend co-ordinators together in the Council Chamber to network and share best practice.
- 3.34 Success was achieved at Bromley Stars – the Development & Community Team won the Partnership award for their work with Friends and Caroll Long received the Employee of the Year award for her community work in the Crays.

- 3.35 Friends were awarded local and regional Mayors' awards – they received two of the 6 Mayor of Bromley Awards, and Friends of Chislehurst & Walden Recreation Ground received Team London achievement certificates from the Mayor of London
- 3.36 The Friends of South Hill Wood & Kingswood Glen has received the LEAF Tree & Woodland Award 2013 (GLA) in recognition of a project that has involved the whole community. Antisocial behaviour such as drug taking, fly tipping, and vandalism led to the group forming, and it has been fully supported by the local community, Police and Bromley's Community Forester. Completed projects including improvements to woodland access, breaking down barriers to people using the woods and engaging with residents, local groups and youths to transform the site through monthly conservation days, a school design competition, and teacher training. A family woodland festival with environmental arts & crafts, heritage and wildlife walks, music, scavenger hunts, bird box making, and art exhibition by local schools was organised by the Friends to celebrate their achievements.
- 3.37 Parks & Countryside volunteers have been recognised through a range of awards: Team London Achievement Certificate; (Mayor of London award); LEAF Tree & Woodland Awards 2013 (Mayor of London award); Green Flag Community Award; Unsung Hero Award; London In Bloom Neighbourhood Achievement Award; Bromley Environment Awards, Garden Awards and Mayor's Civic Reception.

### **New Initiatives**

- 3.38 The Council's grounds maintenance contractor, the Landscape Group, is working with Groundwork to train long-term unemployed people via the Job Centre with a view to giving them future seasonal employment.
- 3.39 Officer mentoring of a pupil from Nash College who, with the aid of his support worker to experience working with the Park Team. The student has been taking on tasks including clearing a new training plot at Grow Time and working in the river.
- 3.40 Two Outdoor gyms were funded by Public Health and installed at Betts Park (over 230 attendees attended the launch) and Farnborough Recreation Ground (280 attended the launch). Feedback from visitors was highly positive with a good proportion requesting further information about becoming a Friend of the Park.
- 3.41 The GLA London Downlands Area Framework 7 of the All London Green Grid has been launched providing a very usable tool to attract external funding for a variety of green space projects across the Borough (details can be found on: <http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/AF07%20London%E2%80%99s%20Downlands.pdf>)
- 3.42 A volunteer from the Friends of Willet Rec not only carries out the repairs to the pavilion, the public toilets, and even the park gates, but now has also taken on the public toilet cleaning responsibilities.
- 3.43 The Council continues to support and recognise volunteers and has launched the Unsung Hero award for volunteers. Nominated by Friends for Friends, twelve special individuals received the first Unsung Hero Awards in November 2012 from the Environmental Portfolio Holder in recognition of their efforts.
- 3.44 Six Bromley Street Environment Officers are now engaging with Street Friends in each of their areas arranging community clean ups. These have included: 50 Petts Wood residents collecting 90 bags of rubbish over a two day period, seven people cutting back 600 metres of overhanging vegetation in St Marys Cray and 34 teenagers collecting 68 sacks of rubbish in Hayes.



- 3.45 The Friends have worked with officers to produce a tool kit. It will guide decisions, and provide information to help improve the effectiveness of the groups and the relationship between the Friends and Council during this climate of reduced resources. The document, which will be available on the Friends website, will provide generic information about the Friends movement as well as more specific items such as risk assessment templates, insurance details and useful phone numbers.

### **Moving Forward**

- 3.46 Fundraising priorities for 2013/14 have been developed by officers working alongside community groups, Members and the wider community in response to identified needs. As previously, the approach will involve seeking a range of grants and sponsorship to enable delivery.

## **4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The Council seeks to empower communities by working with individuals and groups to improve their local environment. One of the key aims set out in the Environment Portfolio Plan 2012/15 was to "Promote the activities of Friends groups in enhancing the borough's parks and street scene".
- 4.2 Friends are voluntary partners who actively participate in the development and maintenance of individual parks and residential streets. Their activities form part of the Divisional Action Plan, the Bromley Biodiversity Plan and Building a Better Bromley. Their role is also recognised in recent Central Government White Papers – *Healthy Lifestyles Healthy People; Proposals for a Public Health Outcomes Framework (Spring 2011); The Role of Local Government in Promoting Wellbeing (Spring 2011); and the Localism Act (2011)*.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 In the past year Friends groups and officers have brought in additional external funding of £401,300 for investment in the Borough; and an additional £175,000 through partnership working, as well as more than 42,000 hours of volunteers' time.
- 5.2 In addition, contributions in kind were made by Kier (Bromley's Street Cleansing contractor) for litter picking and leaf collection events, and Veolia for providing staff, fly tipping and landfill costs to clear Brook Lane Community Nursery.
- 5.3 £36,881 was spent in 2012/13 from the Parks and Greenspace budget and £18,384 from the Highways / Streetscene budget to support the delivery of Friends activities – this included training, the purchase of tools and protective clothing, and pump priming of large and small parks improvement works. It also included insurance to cover Friends events, and safety equipment and training for Council officers. In addition to 5 dedicated FTE, other Council officers provide dedicated support to specific Friends activities.
- 5.4 Actual expenditure incurred during 2012/13 resourced from external funding totalled £133k. £62k of this funding was secured during the previous financial year.
- 5.5 £289k of the external funding secured in 2012/13 will be used to deliver projects during 2013/14.

5.6 The table below shows the split of expenditure between the Council and Friends groups: -

	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>
	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>
<b>Expenditure funded from external resources</b>		
LBB spend	133	190
Community spend	41	99
	<hr/> 174	<hr/> 289
<b>Expenditure funded from Street Scene &amp; Greenspace budgets</b>		
Parks and Green Space	37	31
Highways	18	30
	<hr/> 55	<hr/> 61
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<hr/> <b>229</b> <hr/>	<hr/> <b>350</b> <hr/>

<b>Non-Applicable Sections:</b>	Legal and Personnel Implications
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	Appendices are attached.